

Billerica Access Television

Massachusetts – Community TV's Heartland

Billerica Access Television (BATV) is a successful model of community television. Located just west of Boston and east of Lowell, Massachusetts, Billerica has a population of 40,000. Remarkably, over 500 of its citizens, ranging from age 12 all the way up to some very active elder community members, are video producers or contributors to BATV.

BATV maintains two studios – a larger main studio and a hot studio that does not require any crew support. The studios are fully equipped and complemented with three edit bays and field equipment for remote shooting. BATV also offers classes in shooting and editing to the community.

In a typical week 10 – 12 hours of original programming are created for three distinct channels: Public Channel, Educational Channel, Government Channel. Each of these channels is available on Billerica's two cable systems—Comcast and Verizon FiOS.

Dynamic Programming

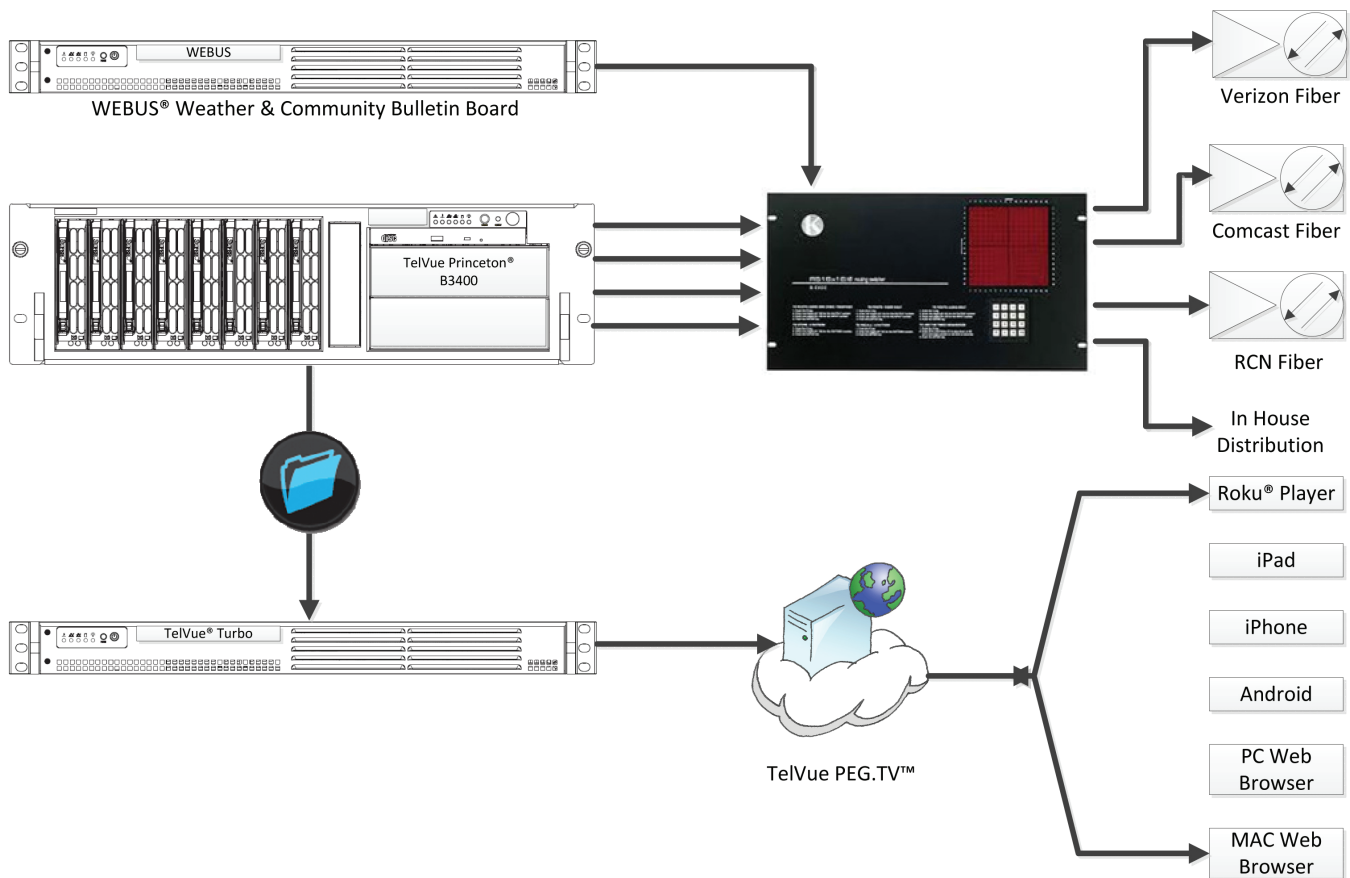
Programming on the Public and Educational Channels includes high school sports, church-based broadcasts, documentaries, and youth group meetings. In addition, about 30-40% of the schedule consists of externally produced content that BATV's resident sponsors volunteer to BATV. The government channel broadcasts a wide range of Billerica government functions ranging from open zoning and public works meetings to deliberative council sessions.

To manage its broadcast operations for the channels, BATV chose the TelVue Princeton® B-3400 server with four independent composite video output channels. One output is used for internal distribution to viewing locations within the station. The remaining three channels are used to feed the local video providers via a composite to fiber handoff. The channels use TelVue's WEBUS® system to provide weather updates and community bulletin boards as continuity programming to fill in programming gaps throughout the day.

New Media Outlets

BATV also makes all of their content available online via the TelVue® PEG.TV™ streaming and video on demand service. With the TelVue® Turbo™ Workflow Accelerator, posting new content into the TelVue® PEG.TV™ is a single click process. When new content is ingested into the TelVue Princeton® server, checking a box in the content's detail page starts the transcoding process. When the transcoding to a web friendly format is complete, the TelVue® Turbo™ posts the new file, with all of the original metadata, for video on demand use. The TelVue® PEG.TV™ service currently allows visitors to the BATV site access to more than 600 videos in seven categories.

Sam Schauerman, BATV's Executive Director sees new technology adding complexity to the overall process, with more support needed on the production side, trickier learning curves and more complex interactions with the cable companies. Sam is also seeing the rise of citizen journalism and new production methodologies that squeeze down the shooting to airing cycle. He finds these trends exciting, but also more demanding on their BATV's equipment and facilities.



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