

## Section 3 – Partnerships

This section provides a review of key partnerships the City of Bloomington has fostered as part of its video communication activities. The following paragraphs also touch on opportunities to expand or redefine such partnerships where appropriated within the context and goals of this report.

### Brief Partnership Audit

The following key partners of the CoB are reviewed in alphabetical order.

#### AT&T

<http://www.att.com/gen/investor-relations?pid=5711>

This incumbent telephone operator offers IPTV services through its fixed line infrastructure under the U-verse brand in the Bloomington market. The company thus pays franchise fees to the City of Bloomington and therefore financially supports local PEG activities.

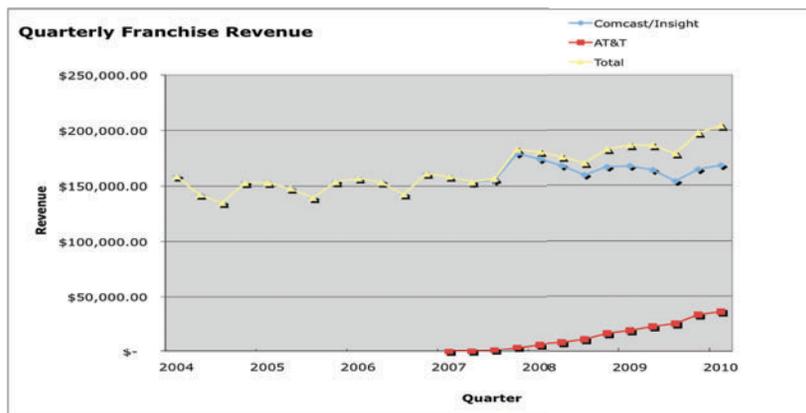


Figure 31 Quarterly Revenue from Video Franchise Fees, City of Bloomington

As Figure 31 indicates, contributions have increased steadily since the launch of the U-verse service. This stable increase in franchise income derived from U-verse will position AT&T as a more important PEG partner over time.

The cost allocation for equipment and equipment location fees has been a contentious issue in the past. However, recent outreach activities by the company's VP for external affairs seem to indicate a greater willingness to absorb cost on the hardware side, subject to the CoB entering into a written agreement with AT&T on this matter. This development improves the potential viability for CATS to provide high quality feeds of all its PEG channels to the local U-verse ingest center.

The original proposal by AT&T would have seen encoding equipment placed in rack space at the PEG operator. CATS objected to this approach saying it had neither the space, nor funds to cover power, cooling or UPS adaptations for such a solution. It also felt unable to meet any potential engineering support implications that might arise from such an arrangement (See appendix for response to AT&T).

Image quality and channel placement have been the other main issues associated with PEG delivery on AT&T. The current PEG portfolio on U-verse is presented in a separate area, outside the main electronic program guide (EPG) and at significantly reduced bandwidth compared to other video services on the platform.

According to feedback from AT&T, PEG services have had their bandwidth allocation increased recently but are still not on par with commercial TV services on the platform.

The style of presentation, through the separate PEG application on channel 99 of the U-verse TV service tends to isolate PEG channels from the general content portfolio and inhibits effective display of EPG information. The decision to carry channels this way may stem from the very fact that Comcast has been highly uncooperative with regards to allowing PEG stations in its service area to supply EPG data to its platforms. Thus hardly any instances of program guide information feeds exist for PEG channels. AT&T's style of presentation masks this shortcoming to some extent and is promoted as a feature by the

company, since all regional PEG content (from most providers in Indiana) is conveniently accessible in one location. Thus the “channel 99” solution may have well been born in part out of necessity and usability concerns.

Yet, this approach only perpetuates and replicates the status quo of most PEG services on cable, where viewers are left un-informed and wondering about which program they are currently watching and what shows are coming up next, due to the lack of guide data. As a relic from the days of analogue distribution PEG is information poor and less accessible than other services on the consumer’s set-top box.

The CoB orchestrated a joint letter submission to the IURC (Indiana Utilities Regulatory Commission) in 2007 outlining CoB, Telecom Council, CATS and WTU’s objections to AT&T’s connection proposal and platform. The documents, in particular the CoB’s submission, outline the common objections to AT&T’s U-verse platform. These documents are included in the appendix.

Furthermore, CATS, through MCPL, formally expressed in writing in February 2009 its objection to the IURC with regards to the general PEG channel placement, reduced image quality compared to commercial channels and ongoing lack of carriage of its channels on U-verse (See appendix for MCPL resolution and related letters).

After statewide franchise laws were introduced the IURC was tasked with overseeing video service providers and handling consumer complaints (for consumer complaints regarding the above or other PEG carriage related issues please use: [http://www.in.gov/iurc/consumer/complaint\\_form.html](http://www.in.gov/iurc/consumer/complaint_form.html)).

Neither Comcast nor AT&T has addressed the implicit shift in user expectation towards having working EPG data on all available channels. Given that both operators are in direct competition and easily accessible local content can actually provide effective differentiation as well as build good will, an opportunity for cooperation between AT&T and the CoB’s PEG services exists.

If PEG content in the Bloomington market were provisioned with full guide information as part of the normal U-verse EPG then AT&T could actually market itself as the “community friendly” provider.

Even if AT&T chose to provide these channels at higher compression rates compared to the commercial services, the more functional EPG placement would present a significant improvement over both the current situation on U-verse and increase usability of PEG content compared to Comcast Cable. It is likely that interactions between operator and customer will ultimately regulate the picture quality minimums over time. At least this is what past behavior of other operators seems to suggest based on the author’s experience.

CATS and the CoB should aim to utilize the new, more cooperative stance of AT&T to try and develop this solution. AT&T stands to gain fully provisioned free local content including free guide data. While comparatively small in size, Bloomington could serve as a test market for the service and provide a demonstrable (marketable) example for AT&T’s positive engagement with local communities.

Despite the opportunities for future cooperation, it should also be noted that telecommunication lobby groups have been pushing for legislative changes at the State level that would negatively impact the local PEG communities throughout Indiana. A recent failed attempt sought passage of a law prohibiting the operation or establishment of local telecommunication boards.

The aim of this measure was to diminish the capacity of local government units to articulate a position, and thus hold a presence in the debate, with regards to consumer issues in the telecommunication space. By seeking to remove consumer complaints procedures from local Indiana communities and centralizing them at a statewide level through the IURC, this measure would have effectively silenced any unfavorable local civic discourse about operators.

Thus while not all parts of AT&T can be considered allies or supporters of the PEG mission, constructive collaboration between AT&T and the CoB/CATS holds the potential to innovate the PEG user experience and create value and differentiation opportunities for individual AT&T

business units. A pragmatic approach to this relationship appears in the interest of all parties involved.

### BTV

<http://btv.ucoz.com/>

This award winning documentary production program run by Bachelor Middle School in Bloomington currently has no direct ties to CoB video activities. The consistently outstanding quality of work that originates from this program would make it a perfect candidate for expanded cooperation with CATS, particularly with regards to expanded future online activities.

### CATS

<http://catstv.net/>

The relationship between CATS and the City of Bloomington has been described and analyzed in great detail throughout this report. Therefore this section will only provide a very brief summary of key points.

CATS, as the main PEG operator in Bloomington, provides high quality services for a subset of local government video content. Its main objective in this regard is that of a transparent recorder of meetings without specific editorial intervention. This places CATS in a unique position of trust and neutrality.

CATS has been a strong advocate for the PEG mission and supported the City in lobbying activities by articulating the history and ethos of community access television. This included filing a complaint before the IURC, through MCPL, in Feb 2009 regarding the lack of carriage of its PEG channels on AT&T's U-verse service. The complaint also included an objection to the high level of compression applied to PEG content on U-verse as well as the placement of PEG channels outside the normal EPG. See appendix for MCPL resolution and related letters.

This part of the appendix also includes the main joint letter submission to the IURC (Indiana Utilities Regulatory Commission) orchestrated by the CoB in 2007 outlining CoB, Telecom Council, CATS and WTIU's objections to AT&T's connection proposal and platform. The documents, in particular the CoB's submission, outline the common objections to AT&T's U-verse platform. (Please refer to AT&T partnership further above in this section for additional background information).

However, CATS has been less active with regards to technical support and infrastructure advice.

Beyond the day-to-day activities covering the recording and telecasting of government meetings CATS and the CoB have also engaged in a number of special projects. CATS took on the Real Media streaming server, used for on-demand access to parts of the government meeting archive over the Internet, after the demise of "HoosierNet".

The CoB also provided a special grant to initiate a major archive digitization project at CATS. At the time it was hoped that this would get CATS to a stage of operational readiness, which would warrant ongoing funding of this activity. Unfortunately the implementation of this first attempt was neither swift nor particularly successful. At this point no solid archive digitization process is operational. A shortcoming, which the recommendations of this report outlined in section 1 seek to address.

As identified elsewhere in this reports, CATS currently lacks a solid foundation for technical ICT project management and delivery and the CoB has expressed willingness to assist in developing these skills (subject to time and resource constraints within the CoB ITS department itself).

Given CATS's core function as a video services provider, it is understandable that ICT related project management of the scale and complexity anticipated for its future has so far been outside its set of competences. Going forward this issue should to be addressed with targeted training of CATS staff and additional support by its technology partners within MCPL and the CoB. However, such support needs

Careful management to enable an actual skills transfer and buildup at CATS rather than serve as a temporary substitute for structural deficiencies within CATS in this area.

Ideally the above process should empower relevant staff with ITS project management skills and also lead to the creation of a position for a dedicated new media specialist/developer (see section 4). It is acknowledged that funding constraints may ultimately delay such recruitment in the short term.

The City of Bloomington has expressed a keenness for greater technical collaboration in the future. Based on the analysis of this report CATS would be particularly well placed to help develop domain specific (TV production) training resources for both organizations. In return WTIU might be a good partner for CATS for skills development/transfer in the technical domain. Such collaboration should also encourage more active engagement on infrastructure decisions jointly with WTIU and the CoB.

The City of Bloomington is committed to continuing the positive relationship with CATS by jointly reviewing and evaluating the applicable goals set forth in this document. The CoB will collaborate with CATS to develop a practical and successful approach for executing relevant recommendations and to further strengthening the position of PEG in the Bloomington community.

## Comcast

<http://www.comcast.com/corporate/about/pressroom/corporateoverview/corporateoverview.html>

Despite the transition to a statewide video franchise system Comcast continues to provide an unaltered PEG service for the Bloomington market. PEG channels are offered with standard channel placement on the analogue part of the cable distribution system without bandwidth limitations.

However, electronic program guide (EPG) data is not available for CATS originated PEG channels. Comcast thus far has been unwilling to allow CATS to provide this data to the listing service used by Comcast to source this data for its EPG.

This is despite both the listing service provider (Rovi Corporation) and Comcast having the technical capability to accommodate such data feeds for local stations. (The PBS affiliated W-TIU stations carries full EPG data for the Bloomington market).

Given that there is some minor cost associated for Comcast in allowing CATS to provide guide data to its listing service provider, a proposal for cost sharing should be considered by CATS and the CoB to encourage Comcast to change its position. The benefit to PEG audiences would be significant in terms of improved accessibility and usability of PEG content on their cable set-top boxes.

Currently Comcast still provides local emergency over-ride capability for the Bloomington market. Questions remain about how future changes to the Comcast infrastructure and the evolution of the emergency broadcast/alert system at the federal and state level might impact this service.

At this point the relationship between Comcast and the CoB seems relatively stale. The loss of a local cable operator presence after consolidation and statewide franchising has created a significant barrier to engagement. Political lobbying at the state level may be required to resolve pending issues in the short-term.

If managed carefully, continuous constructive engagement (attempts) combined with stronger competitive pressures on Comcast, through a strengthening AT&T presence in the local market, may help improve the cable provider's responsiveness to CoB needs/concerns.

## Ellettsville

<http://www.ellettsville.in.us/>

For the purposes of video services, the partnership between the CoB and the Town of Ellettsville (ToE) covers the joint funding of CATS, the main PEG operator for the Bloomington Market.

The ToE has been a consistent funding partner in the past and contributed half of its franchise revenues (earned in the preceding year) to the operations of CATS. Due to significant financial problems this year the ToE was able to meet its funding obligations and Monroe County (another member of the CATS funding partnership) agreed to cover the resultant shortfall. Please refer to section 1 of this report for a more detailed breakdown of the funding arrangement for CATS.

Due to its geographic location the provision of live video links to cover government meetings has been hampered in the past. Smithville Digital might be a suitable partner to negotiate better connectivity to allow future coverage in real-time of ToE related meetings, should the demand arise.

It is hoped that the ToE will overcome its current financial difficulties and resume its funding activities for CATS in the future.

## IU-UIITS (University Information Technology Services)

<http://uits.iu.edu/page/ltxt>

The interactions between Indiana University and its host communities are multi faceted and diverse. Two particular elements stand out for the purposes of this report. One with the University's television operator WTIU, which is also responsible for the operation of one of Bloomington's PEG channels (TIU-World), the other with the Information Technology Services department (UIITS) covering a range of technical and communications related aspects.

Empowering People (EP): Indiana University's Strategic Plan for IT (<http://ep.iu.edu>) speaks to engagement beyond the university and

UIITS has a long history of community involvement in cities with IU campuses.

For example the CoB and UIITS were recently able to arrange for fiber optic data connectivity to one of the fire stations on campus after completion of relevant background work. Furthermore, the BDU (Bloomington Digital Underground) advisory committee also counts two IU representatives as its members.

The engagement on technology matters between the CoB and UIITS tends to be collaborative and happens regularly at a high level within the organizations on telecommunication matters. This is often driven by good informal interpersonal connections between the parties rather than formally codified agreements. The interactions tend to be of a responsive and supportive nature with regards to ad hoc expertise exchange on a diverse range of topics from enterprise resource planning to messaging systems.

UIITS's leading competence in advanced network management (such as through its GlobalNOC serving the Internet2 project, see: <http://noc.net.internet2.edu/>) as well as its award winning network monitoring tool "Worldview" (see: <http://uitsnews.iu.edu/2010/04/23/ius-worldview-receives-internet2-idea-award/>) may become increasingly valuable as CATS and the CoB expand into media rich online delivery of PEG content.

The CoB values the positive relationship with UIITS, particularly in light of the unequal size and vastly different scale of access to resources of the two parties. Going forward the City of Bloomington would like to continue this relationship and is ready to actively maintain engagement in the spirit of EP for the mutual benefit of the local community and its University.

## MCPL (Monroe County Public Library)

<http://www.monroe.lib.in.us/>

Monroe County Public Library hosts the facilities for CATS the main PEG operator and is part of the funding partnership to sustain the local PEG services. A more detailed description of MCPL's role and contributions can be found in section 1 of this report.

The partnership between the CoB and MCPL with regards to CATS has suffered on occasions in the past due to lack of financial transparency. The current library administration however maintains a much more positive working relationship and has responded well to requests for increased financial transparency with regards to the operation of CATS. Thus at this point past issues regarding finance can be considered resolved.

The current MCPL board is supportive of CATS and its mission. Yet looking forward and drawing on past experience, the fact that CATS currently operates as a department of the library and is physically located in the MCPL building leaves it vulnerable to direct interference at will by its host/parent organization.

The current positive working environment cannot be taken for granted and going forward additional measures to protect free speech on PEG and enshrine the independence of CATS should be explored. Such measures are not about reducing the prominence of MCPL's involvement but much rather about codifying and securing its support.

For example the generous in-kind support provided by MCPL in terms of space and property services to house and sustain CATS should be clearly quantified and codified. Ideally such a lease and service contract would run for periods longer than a year to effectively isolate and protect these contributions from any future turbulence within MCPL.

Given the ongoing financial constraints associated with the bleak macroeconomic climate the creation of a suitable entity for CATS may also serve to open new additional ways of revenue generation for the PEG operator. Such benefits may become more pertinent as MCPL

faces new budget constraints due to changes to its own revenue structure in the coming years.

A more detailed discussion on the topic of a suitable alternative structure for CATS can be found in section 1 of this report.

MCPL remains indispensable and a key partner to the CoB in enabling the operation of CATS by hosting its facilities and supporting it financially and in kind. To further protect the most valuable elements of this arrangement without creating undue burdens for MCPL in the difficult years ahead, creativity and flexibility may be required from all parties involved as well as early and comprehensive planning.

## Monroe County

<http://www.co.monroe.in.us/>

The partnership between Monroe County and the CoB covers two areas.

- The joint funding of CATS
- The provision of the Monroe County PEG channel (Comcast channel 14)

Unlike the Town of Ellettsville and the City of Bloomington, Monroe County used to apply a different funding formula to its contributions towards the operation of CATS. As a result the County used to contribute less than half of its video franchise income (earned the preceding year) towards PEG operations.

This situation changed last year, when funding levels were increased to match the funding formula of the CoB and ToE. This year the County has also covered the shortfall of funding created by the financial crisis affecting the ToE, yet it is keen to see the ToE to eventually make a long-term commitment to funding PEG services.

The increase of funding by the County is a welcome and appreciated change. Its adoption of the CoB funding model, which allocates 50%

of the franchise revenue earned during the previous financial period to PEG funding in the current period, has significantly improved the financial flexibility of CATS in the near term. These funds should enable CATS to implement most, if not all, of the recommendations contained in section 1 of this report without the need for major additional grants.

The County has indicated that it is committed to the “50% funding formula” unless changes in law would necessitate a departure from the model. Furthermore, the County has also indicated a willingness to periodically assist CATS with investment in equipment.

Please refer to section 1 of this report for a more detailed breakdown of the funding arrangement for CATS.

Channel 14 on Comcast Cable is allocated to County originated PEG content and also carries meetings covering the Ellettsville Town Council. This channel was originally allocated to the City of Bloomington but has been dedicated to predominantly County based programming by CATS through informal agreement with the CoB. This has enabled the creation of a dedicated outlet for government content related to County activities.

The County has expressed a desire to increase the coverage of public meetings further and is contemplating the installation of permanent equipment in the Courthouse meeting room in 2011. Such an expansion could include increased coverage of Ellettsville and RBB School Corporation activities but also cover other public entities such as the Plan Commission or Parks Board. Furthermore, the development of specialized program formats such as roundtable discussions is currently under consideration by the County.

The County did not negotiate any PEG channel allocations of its own prior to the transition to a statewide franchise system (which removed these provisions in franchise law but grandfathered in existing PEG channels) and thus does not own or run any dedicated PEG operations. All service needs are met through the channel provided by the CoB and the County’s participation in the CATS funding partnership.

The existing arrangements for funding and use of PEG infrastructure seem mutually beneficial to all parties involved. The CoB is able to leverage its own funding capacity and put its PEG channel assets to good use in the name of transparency and civic engagement, while the County gains access to an efficient PEG service provider without the need to actively manage or develop any TV production expertise of its own.

The County has expressed its appreciation of the services provided by CATS and is taking an active interest in developing its video services. This includes the desire to use links to content on the CATS government meetings archive from County webpages (once this feature becomes available) to make recordings more widely available on the web.

The County aspires to eventually expand coverage to all video service providers and satellite. To this end, the lack of carriage on both AT&T U-verse and Smithville S+TV of PEG content has been met with strong disappointment by the County.

Based on the analogous nature of the County’s and CoB’s use of video services, potential additional benefits may be realized by the two entities further coordinating their activities and service development. The County has indicated an interest in more regular meetings with the City to support such a process, starting with a drive to increase PEG service coverage.

### Smithville

<http://www.smithville.net/about>

This rural telecom provider, the largest independent telecommunications operator in Indiana, currently does not pay franchise fees to the City of Bloomington. This indicates that the company is currently not operating applicable video services within the city boundaries.

The provider is in the process of rolling out an IPTV service platform (S+TV) to its customers. The service is conceptually similar to AT&T's U-verse offering but is based on a different technology platform. Smithville and the CoB had been in negotiations for PEG carriage on this platform until recently. After seeking legal council on the issue Smithville decided, while in principal agreement to be supportive of PEG carriage, it did not want to formally codify by contract any arrangements with the CoB on this matter.

This move as temporarily stalled efforts to bring the comprehensive PEG portfolio created by CATS and the CoB to S+TV customers. At the time of writing this report negotiations were not considered final and the will for resolving this issue remained strong with the CoB. The CoB should ensure that any agreement with S+TV includes full EPG support for all PEG channels.

Beyond the engagement on IPTV matters the Smithville Digital division of the company represents a potential partner for supplying enhanced IP connectivity to local location hosting web video services. Please refer to section 4 of this report for a more detailed discussion on how such services could be implemented.

As a company deeply rooted in the local community of southern Indiana, Smithville potentially shares a lot of common ground with the CoB from which to develop the relationship further. The CoB and Smithville have been successful in reaching agreement on projects in the past. It seems likely that a positive working relationship will persist going forward, despite the recent setbacks on the PEG carriage issue mentioned above.

### WFHB

<https://www.wfhb.org/>

The CoB is collaborating with this community radio stations on grant funding for its digitization project and has provided seed funding for its antenna replacement project.

The Mayor's Office has provided funding to help with service area expansion in the past. Additional funding is derived through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and member contributions.

Despite this positive engagement the support from the City for WFHB is not as robust as for CATS. This is in part explained by the different domains the two organizations (CATS and WFHB) operate in as well as the fact that CATS is a direct service provider to the CoB through its meeting recording services.

The City is encouraging of a potential expanded partnership between CATS, WFHB and other local providers centered around enhanced news services and content sharing such as video recordings of interviews and events. As two organizations dedicated to free speech and community access to media further partnership development seems a natural fit.

WFHB possess access to, and is seeking to grow further, expertise in web content management based around "Drupal", the same platform proposed for the new online presence of CATS. As optimizing the administration and usability of "Drupal" does require specialist knowledge, a sharing of staff or volunteers to configure the respective "Drupal" implementations represents an opportunity to generate visible results quickly.

As part of producing its daily local radio newscasts and weekly local TV news program "CATS Week", WFHB generates synoptic descriptions of key points in a large number of weekly government meetings. This information should be urgently collected and integrated into a revised metadata tagging process for local government meetings hosted online by CATS. Capturing this textual data, subject to review/vetting, could significantly enhance the search functional of the online meeting repository. The CoB should promote this issue as a matter of self-interest to enhance the accessibility of its record of the civic process.

The CoB is intent on continuing to develop this relationship and be supportive of WFHB.

## WTIU

<http://indianapublicmedia.org/about/#program-wtiu>

WTIU operates one of the Bloomington PEG channels on behalf of the CoB. The channel is Comcast #17 (TIU-World). As the television operator of Indiana University (IU) this also represents one of the many touch points between IU and the CoB.

The partnership between WTIU and the CoB covers two distinct domains.

- TIU-World
- Technical Expertise

Since the award of the channel, WTIU has changed its content, moving away from its initial focus on educators towards a broader mix of mostly PBS originated material. At this point it is not entirely clear what value WTIU derives from this arrangement since most of this content could be distributed through other means including its over the air broadcasts, triggering “must carry” provisions on cable systems. (For further information see:

[http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/cfr\\_2007/octqtr/pdf/47cfr76.56.pdf](http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/cfr_2007/octqtr/pdf/47cfr76.56.pdf)  
and <http://www.fcc.gov/mb/facts/cblbdcst.html>)

It seems surprising that WTIU and IU do not leverage the student body of the Department of Telecommunications and the School of Journalism more heavily to encourage and incorporate student productions more frequently into TIU-World’s schedule. Viewed from an outsider’s perspective, WTIU’s impressive studio and production infrastructure seems underutilized and could benefit from livelier student driven experimentation. It seems a questionable use of PEG resources when the on campus 24hour student channel IUSTV needs to use timeslots on CATS’s channel 7 to broadcast its programs while TIU-World simply relays PBS content already available through other means.

TIU-World is the only PEG channel with working electronic program guide (EPG) data on Comcast cable, allowing it to be recorded easily

with PVRs and offering easy access to its schedule through the set-top box interface. Unlike CATS, WTIU is not actively prevented by Comcast from submitting its guide data to Rovi, the EPG data provider for the cable operator.

Whether this is due to a better relationship between WTIU and Comcast in general or a byproduct of WTIU’s PBS affiliation remains open to question (Data submission uses PBS agreements). Comcast has in the past cited technical and policy reasons as to why PEG channels are not allowed to provide guide data, however the TIU-World example clearly seems to disprove these statements by the cable operator.

While not statistically predictive of the wider Bloomington audience, TIU-World proved to be the most widely consumed of all PEG channels in the local market (see Figure 17). Overall, thanks to the higher production values of PBS content and the more advanced delivery infrastructure available to WTIU, TIU-World’s “on-air” visual presence is the closest to network television standards out of all PEG channels.

The second partnership domain covers technical expertise on matters of television engineering.

The active engagement on technology matters with WTIU has helped the CoB to successfully leverage the station’s high level of expertise for projects such as the PEG hub. This work has established WTIU as the principal resource for television equipment expertise to the CoB, adding considerable value to the partnership.

WTIU has expressed interest in providing local news services in the past in return for financial support by the City. Entering into any exclusive arrangement for such services with a local provider would inevitably result in replication of effort and poor value for money. This statement is not limited to WTIU but seems particularly poignant given the privileged access to resources this station enjoys. The City should instead use its relationship with WTIU to encourage it to join co-operative efforts of other local providers to establish a sustainable local

news pool. For further information on this idea please refer to the end of section 4.

Furthermore the CoB should, in its capacity as the controller of local PEG channels, engage WTIU to step up its efforts to provide true local content alongside its established PBS output on TIU-World. The highly successful, interpersonal cooperation on technical matters between the CoB and WTIU staff could serve as a stepping stone and model to improve the representation of locally produced material on its PEG channel TIU-World.

The current arrangement, while highly beneficial in terms of technology advice, remains suboptimal in terms of effective use of PEG resources and leaves other campus originated content assets underdeveloped. While WTIU ultimately has little influence over activities of other IU departments, such as for example the School of Journalism, it could serve in a leadership role to initiate much needed change towards an integrated approach to media creation and operation on campus.

## Successes

Undoubtedly the greatest success is the fact that PEG services have been in continuous operation and expanded in Bloomington since the 1970s. The fact that PEG operations have survived both the consolidation of the cable industry and the transition to a statewide franchise model without interruption is testimony to the skill and dedication of CATS staff, MCPL and the special funding partnership that sustain it.

As methods of mass communication and content consumption habits change more rapidly than ever before all parties involved, funding and operating partners alike, will need to work flexibly, creatively and with fresh determination to continue this success story for decades to come.

## Opportunities for Improvement

It has been mentioned before that CATS's ability to execute on some well-intentioned technical initiatives has not been as good as it ought to be. However, blame, for an essentially failed project like the first attempt at archive digitization or the very slow implementation of the web interface to the government archive, cannot be placed exclusively on CATS itself.

In hindsight, the CoB ought to also take a share of the responsibility in the outcome. By overestimating CATS's ability to effectively deliver complex long(er) ranging projects involving unfamiliar technology, it missed the opportunity to provide guidance and "create structure" through the grant funding agreement. Rather than providing one large lump sum, opting to disburse funds incrementally, tied to smaller milestones, might have helped encourage better project execution on CATS's part.

Going forward the main lesson from this experience is that the CoB, CATS and the wider funding partnership may need to take a more "directed" (milestone based) approach to funding and project development.

While slightly more labor intensive for both sides, as CATS would be expected to develop the initial milestones for review by the funding partners, this approach would help create conditions favorable to successful project delivery and early problem detection and resolution.

As a technologically more advanced environment demands more complex solutions, these actions should accelerate CATS's adaptation and skills development. The slightly higher upfront commitment in time and effort by the funding partners to review proposed milestones and develop a staged disbursement plan, is likely to pay off in the long run through less troublesome implementation and better use of funds.

## Thoughts on Select Regulatory Trends

The following paragraphs do not aim to provide a comprehensive review of the regulatory environment, as this would significantly exceed the space and resources afforded by this report. Instead some noteworthy developments in this space are briefly introduced and links to further resources provided.

The “American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009” provides \$7.2 billion to “to expand broadband access and adoption in communities across the U.S” (see: <http://www.broadbandusa.gov/>). These funds in part also underpin the long-range agenda formulated by the FCC in the “National Broadband Plan” (see: <http://www.broadband.gov/>). The latter touches on issues beyond digital infrastructure and includes a chapter specifically dedicated to civic engagement in the digital age (see: <http://www.broadband.gov/plan/15-civic-engagement/#r15>).

The plan’s call for facilitating transparency in government through means of electronic access, but remains relatively vague in its support for PEG. Recommendation 15.6 proposes a scheme to use resource and infrastructure sharing based on the efficiencies of “over-the-air” digital TV transmissions to free up spectrum (voluntarily) for auction. The proceeds from this auction should then be to fund digital delivery of public media content (see: <http://www.broadband.gov/plan/15-civic-engagement/#r15-6>). The “soft” wording and voluntary nature of the scheme seem to ignore commercial realities and thus undermine the strength of the commitment.

The aforementioned section 15 of the National Broadband Plan seems to be slanted towards national public media outlets over all, but it does provide some encouraging wording with regards to supporting access to local news. Another FCC project presents a more focused line of inquiry into the issues surrounding community centric news and information services (see: Future of Media & Information Needs of Communities in a Digital Age, <http://reboot.fcc.gov/futureofmedia/>). An FCC workshop held recently on “Public and Other Noncommercial Media in the Digital Era” (For detailed workshop materials see: <http://reboot.fcc.gov/futureofmedia/public-and-other-noncommercial-media-in-the-digital-era>) specifically listed “the possibilities for greater

*collaboration among noncommercial media entities such as public broadcasters, PEG channels, noncommercial web-based outlets, and other new media entities”* as one of its key issues.

This does provide at least some high-level endorsement for potential activities in this space in the Bloomington area. Please refer to the end of section 4 of this report for further suggestions.

The tacit appreciation of the value of such initiatives at the federal level may also provide at least some counter balance towards the argument for abolishing video franchise fees, which would remove one potential source of funding for such projects.

Yet, in the end the effectiveness of such support against the lobbying power of large telecommunications providers remains doubtful. As broadband access becomes increasingly pervasive, aided in part by infrastructure investment from “stimulus” funds, the ability of non-franchise fee paying IP video providers such as hulu.com to provide a truly national service will increase. Combined with the argument in support of “net neutrality” (for an explanation of the term please refer to: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Network\\_neutrality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Network_neutrality) as a potential starting point) last mile providers may argue that this puts their own IPTV offerings at a disadvantage to such “infrastructure light” providers.

This and other arguments may at best lead to a restructuring of franchise fees to either become universal (to include internet service providers) or see a rebalancing of the fee collection based on mode of delivery (wired vs. wireless). In a worst-case scenario the outcome could be a complete removal or severe reduction of franchise revenue for local government in the long run. Thus ongoing consideration for ways to protect and back up funding for PEG seems prudent regardless of the present short-term circumstances.

There are however occasional encouraging developments such as the “Community Access Preservation Act” (see: HR3745 CAP Act - <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-3745>), which aim to protect the PEG community interests at the federal level. The act has only entered the committee stage so far but has drawn the active support by the Alliance for Community Media (ACM), the main national

body representing PEG interests (see: <http://www.alliancecm.org/cap>). If successfully passed the CAP Act would resolve issues such as the unfavorable channel placement of PEG content on services like U-verse for example. It seems that

The introduction of the act has already drawn opposition by the NCTA (<http://www.ncta.com/>), the operators' industry body. The aforementioned link on the ACM website provides a detailed breakdown of the factually incorrect elements of the NCTA's response to the act.

With the potential to clarify and simplify the interactions between PEG operators and all types of wire-based video service providers, this act might increasingly attract the support of local government keen to develop or maintain PEG as a pillar for local accountability, civic engagement and transparency.

## Conclusion - Opportunity for Innovation

Large sections of this report deal with detailed operational and technical recommendations to improve PEG service production and delivery in the Bloomington market. Yet, without healthy and productive interpersonal relationships between the key stakeholders across the various organizations the breadth and quality of video services are unlikely to reach their full potential.

Unlike technology upgrades or even organizational change, relationship building in general is potentially the most accessible and inexpensive first step to carry forward and implement the recommendations of this report. The following areas present opportunities for the CoB to leverage relationships for the benefit of its PEG activities.

### PEG Summit

Use public local news as a vehicle to accelerate innovation in the PEG sector. With the existing cooperation between CATS and WFHB the foundations for such a service are already under development. The City could further accelerate the process by hosting a PEG Summit this fall to get key decision makers from CATS, WFHB, WIUX, IUSTV, The IDS

News Paper as well as WTIU and other interested parties to discuss modes of co-operation and agree on first steps for developing this project further. The CoB can offer a suitable neutral venue and use its own influence to encourage those parties otherwise hesitant to engage to attend this event.

### Bloomington Public Press Club

Even if the PEG Summit only results in a slight expansion of the existing cooperation between CATS and WFHB to pull in additional IU involvement, the CoB should help support the creation of a regular social meeting event backed by a virtual collaboration space open to all stakeholders, even those currently not willing or able to participate in a local news project. The goal should be to establish a regular forum for members of all local media organizations to exchange and develop ideas and contacts. Such a venue should equally be open to interested parties from funding partners and organizations interested in constructive and open dialogue.

Eventually such a group could exchange ideas and forge connections beyond the local region to involve public media organizations in other parts of Indiana, the ACM or public bodies like the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns (IACT). The goal would be to build and strengthen an informal network of individuals supportive of and passionate about PEG activities that can function as a resources and driver of innovation.

### Implementation Team

After this document has been delivered key stakeholders and beneficiaries of its recommendations should engage in a series of joint meetings with the CoB and other supportive funding partners to agree on the type, speed and level of implementation desired. The plan should be broken down into strands of projects assigned to a specific individual with overall implementation and reporting responsibility.

## Supplier Relations

Network with suppliers to form relationships with decision makers in the supplier's organization than can positively impact PEG delivery on their platform. Seek an understanding for the obstacles to problem solving on PEG issues, such as EPG data, in the supplier's organization and promote a co-operative pragmatic approach to resolving such issues. Specifically incremental changes such as trading of EPG placement for compression rate on U-verse and neutralizing cost concerns through cost sharing proposals may increase the likelihood of positive outcomes. Try to co-ordinate the official policy towards the supplier on PEG issues between all funding partners such as MCPL, ToE, CoB and Monroe County. Promote active information exchange between the funding partners on supplier issues. The CoB as one of the most active supporters may be best suited to evangelize these ideas to its peers in the funding partnership.

## Develop Involvement with the Kelley School of Business and the School for Public and Environmental Affairs

Both schools jointly offer the "Certificate in Social Entrepreneurship" (see:

<http://kelley.iu.edu/mba/academics/socialEntrepreneurshipCertificate.cfm>), which could provide a valuable source for future student and faculty advice on management and business issues pertaining PEG and not-for-profit organizations in general. IU's "Johnson Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation" at the Kelley School of Business would represent a good starting point to develop this relationship if so desired.

## Self Promote

Given its exemplary track record in supporting transparency and civic engagement through its PEG operation, the City of Bloomington should not miss the opportunity to more actively promote these facts through its various communications channels, including its website.



# New Projects