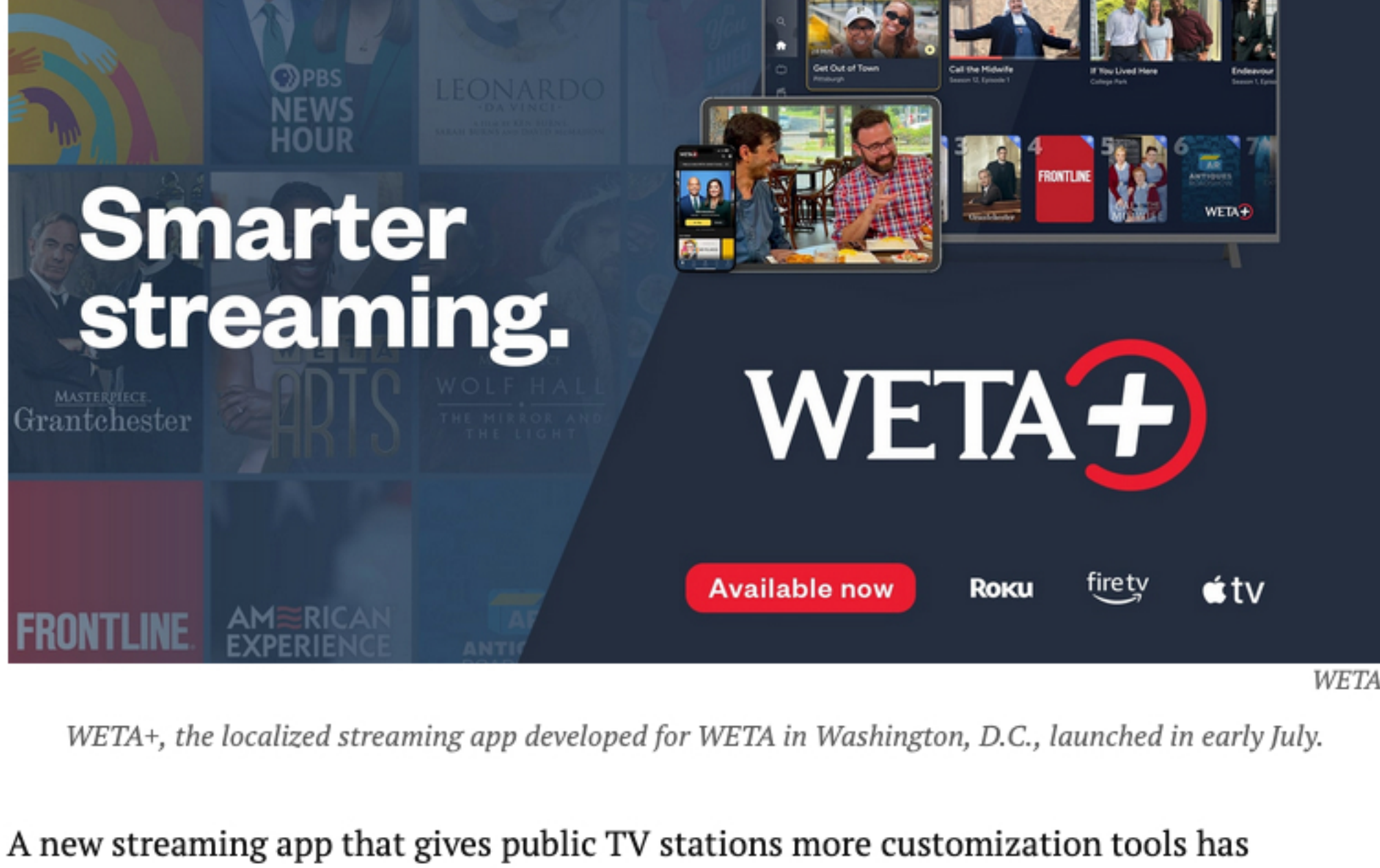
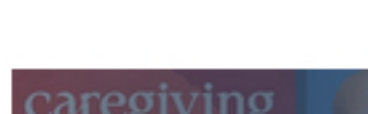


With Local Public apps, stations aim to build loyalty with more streamers

By Julian Wylie July 30, 2025



WETA+, the localized streaming app developed for WETA in Washington, D.C., launched in early July.

A new streaming app that gives public TV stations more customization tools has launched in Washington, D.C., and is coming soon to at least nine other cities.

The app, [WETA+](#), was developed for WETA by Cascade PBS, the Seattle-based station that's leading a streaming initiative now known as Local Public. The software application is built on top of PBS' streaming technology and gives stations more flexibility to enhance the user experience.

"WEE-Tah plus," as it's pronounced, is similar to what can already be found on the PBS video app and the PBS Passport member benefit. Miguel Monteverde, SVP and GM of WETA in Washington, said the new streaming option aims to build greater loyalty with audiences because it is designed for locally focused streaming.



Monteverde

"The future of our business is in streaming. We believe in broadcast, particularly when you're in the news business," he added, referring to WETA's ownership of NewsHour Productions. "But for most on demand viewing, people are streaming. We believed we needed to have more control over the streaming experience from everything including branding to determining what the promotional priorities are."

WETA+ is designed to be easily accessible for viewers who already use Passport, Monteverde said. "If you are already a WETA member and you have Passport access, you just log in with those same credentials on WETA+ and you just slide right in. You don't have to set up anything new."

Monteverde expects some viewers to stick with the PBS app and Passport if they are happy with it. But he's hoping that people who support WETA will want to try the new app because the experience is curated for them.

Local Public, which launched in 2020 as the Local Streaming Initiative, was [created](#) by Cascade PBS with support from the Public Television Major Market Group. WETA is among the nine stations with representatives on the initiative's [advisory board](#), most of whom plan to launch their localized apps in the coming months. Oregon Public Broadcasting is a founding sponsor of Local Public and holds a seat on the board but doesn't currently have a plan to launch the app.

Kevin Colligan, Cascade's VP of media and innovation, said in an email that his team is "in varying stages of discussion with additional stations of all sizes" and expects to have at least 20 stations signed on by the end of June 2026.

The Local Public apps created for WETA and other stations leverage PBS' Media Manager API and Passport metadata to distribute and curate streaming content. In an email, PBS Chief Digital and Marketing Officer Ira Rubenstein said, "We are proud of the infrastructure we've built to help meet audiences where they are and to ensure that it's a seamless experience for users to connect to their local stations."

While [rescissions to CPB funding](#) have created challenges for PBS, he added, "we remain committed to prioritizing quality essential services to stations, ensuring they can continue to serve their communities with exceptional local and national content."

WETA+ launches

Much of the programming available on [WETA+](#) is free to users who are geolocated in the D.C. metropolitan region. They can access five localized livestreams, including: WETA's primary broadcast channel; the nationally distributed PBS Kids and World channels; locally curated WETA U.K., which is dedicated to popular British programming; and WETA Metro, which features its local productions along with how-to shows, news and documentaries. WETA's Passport users currently receive all five of those channels in addition to NHK World-Japan and First Nations Experience, a network focused on Indigenous and Native American programs.

Viewers outside of D.C. who want to watch the livestreams or access a select group of programs such as *Masterpiece* must donate at least \$5 a month to WETA as members.

Monteverde is proud of the app's customization features, including the ability to curate collections under titles like "12 series that will make you smarter" and "trending in the DMV," which refers to the region that includes D.C., suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia. For now, the trending grid is manually curated by staff who monitor program usage data. Over time, Monteverde wants the app to have the capability of automatically tallying viewing metrics and populating the grids.

More than 100 [classic movies that are distributed through Lakeshore PBS](#) in Merrillville, Ind., also are available on WETA+, including *Gaslight*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*, *A Star is Born* and *Night of the Living Dead*. Monteverde said the films will be presented with introductions from a local film critic who will provide context to the historical importance of the movies.



Classic films like "Godzilla: King of the Monsters!" are available for streaming on WETA+.

"There was an opportunity to package those films up and promote them in this experience where we have control over what gets curated," Monteverde said. "We also get to explain the artistic merit of these and why they are worth watching."

Some films might be outside of what viewers expect to see on public television, but he thinks it's worth it because of the changed streaming landscape. "As we focus on our streaming future, I think we need to have a more expansive view about what programming and things we can offer that are still educational and fits with our brand attributes. The expectation is, 'If I'm on a streaming experience, I'm gonna be able to find a lot more than if I just turn on the TV.'"

WETA+ viewers also have access to local series such as *Signature Dish*, *If You Lived Here*, *WETA Arts*, *Get Out of Town* and *Feast Your Ears: The Story of WHFS*. WETA is also leveraging its [editorial partnership with The Atlantic](#) to provide content from The Atlantic Festival.

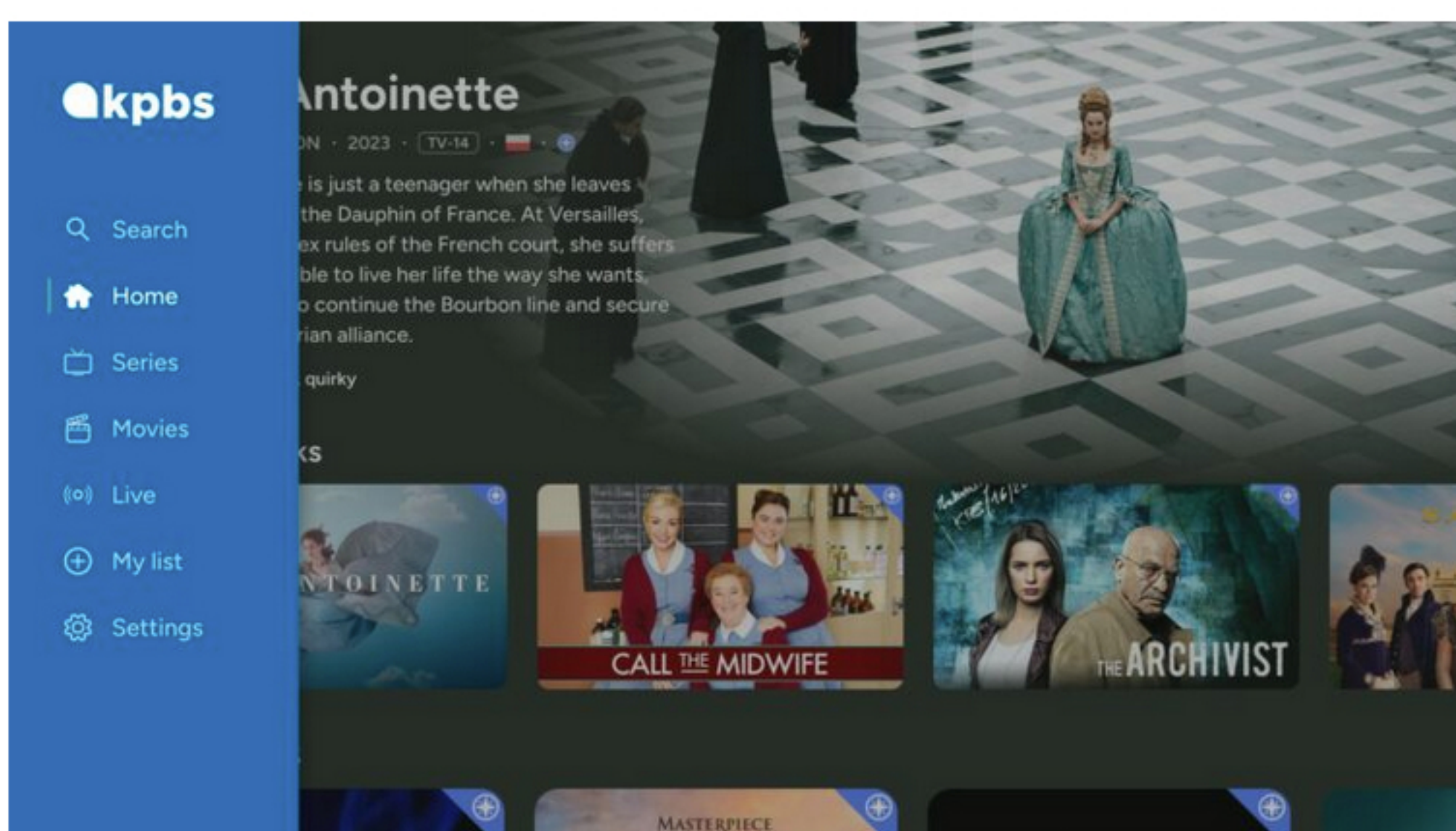
Up next

Six stations have soft launched their new streaming apps: WHYY in Philadelphia; Denver-based Rocky Mountain PBS; KPBS in San Diego; WHRO in Norfolk, Va.; PBS Charlotte in North Carolina; and KVIE in Sacramento, Calif.

Nashville PBS and WCTE in Cookeville, Tenn., are preparing to launch their apps. Buffalo Toronto Public Media signed on to the service in July and is in the early stages of app development.

Rocky Mountain PBS CEO Amanda Mountain said in an email that RMPBS+ is important for the station to attract and build loyalty with new viewers. "For our organization to be relevant with new and core audiences, we must undergo a digital transformation at scale with other colleagues around the system."

KPBS+ is almost ready to launch in San Diego, said KPBS spokesperson Heather Milne Barger. "We are emphasizing to our audience that KPBS+ is locally curated, which means that our programming staff have combed through thousands of local and national titles in the KPBS and PBS library."



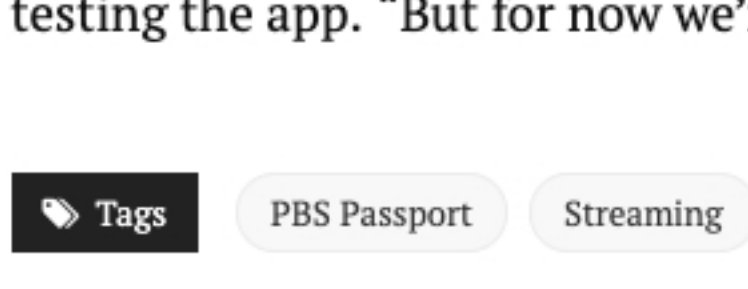
Costume dramas like 'Marie Antoinette' are among the popular PBS shows that will be promoted on Local Public apps.

KPBS has planned a "two-phased rollout" that starts Wednesday. That's when the app becomes available to staff and [Producers Club level donors](#) who give at least \$1,200 annually, Barger said. During this "friends and family" period, KPBS is asking viewers to download the app and provide feedback on the experience ahead of the full launch around September.

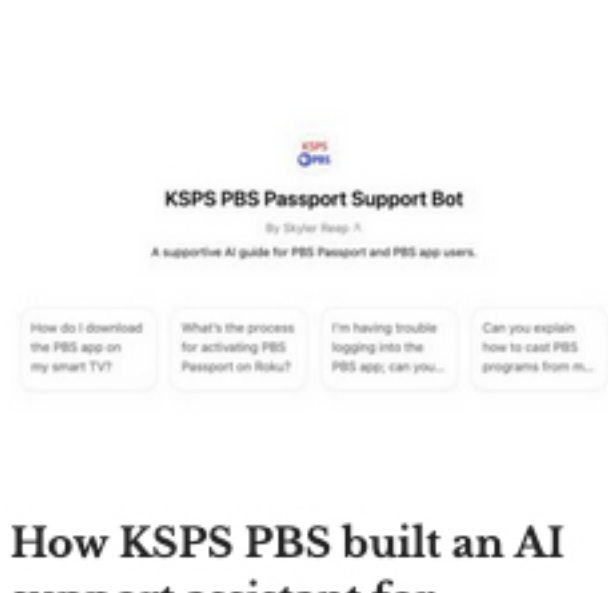
"We recognize that there will be confusion with both options available," Barger said of KPBS+ and PBS Passport. "We will all do our best to help our audiences decide what's best for them. These two apps are not in competition with each other. Our primary goal is to have people watch our content anywhere they prefer."

Nashville PBS delayed its launch because of recent cuts to its marketing budget after the rescission of federal funding. "I'm not sure what that timeline looks like with the loss of CPB funding," said Shane Burkeen, senior director of brand, digital and marketing, in an email.

KSPS PBS in Spokane, Wash., considered joining Local Public but declined. Skyler Reep, director of development, told Current in 2023 that KSPS was interested in the concept's goals but the cost to join was "prohibitive." Reep recently told Current in an email that KSPS looks forward to seeing streaming and revenue results from the stations that are testing the app. "But for now we're sticking with the PBS app."



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