



2003 Annual Report

MetroGIS

Strategic partnerships reap benefits

While the terrible tragedy of 9/11/01 is more than two years behind us, we live with its aftermath and its lessons every day. One of the clearest lessons for government is the critical importance of geospatial data in planning for and responding to emergencies.

From its beginnings, MetroGIS has worked diligently and successfully to build an infrastructure of regional geospatial data, and the culture and tools for sharing the data. With our local and regional partners, we've built a Web-based catalog of datasets that provides users with quick, convenient access to a diverse and growing body of key regional data. We've developed an innovative Web mapping service for viewing and distributing the data. Activity on our DataFinder site, both visits and downloads, is impressive and growing.

Just as importantly, participants in MetroGIS have created a culture of sharing both data and knowledge about how to develop and use the data. New relationships have formed among GIS managers and technicians, planners, surveyors, and a host of other government employees and policymakers. This has led to increased communication, better decisions, and increased efficiency through collaboration on common needs and reduced duplication of effort.

These relationships are valuable assets as MetroGIS and its state, federal and nonprofit partners work to better prepare for and respond to a variety of potential emergencies. In 2003, MetroGIS formed an Emergency Preparedness Work Group. The group's objectives are to develop applications for quick distribution of relevant data in times of emergency, and educate emergency management professionals about the potential and importance of GIS data in emergency preparedness and response.



Victoria Reinhardt,
MetroGIS Policy Board Chair
Ramsey County
Commissioner

MetroGIS is working closely with the Governor's Council on Geographic Information, which formed a committee to do complementary work. That committee's focus is on state-level policy development and planning issues related to emergency preparedness.

We formed other strategic alliances in 2003 that are leveraging technology and sharing data and expertise to improve government services and reduce costs. Among these is a partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to establish a "common geospatial data

language" to describe road sections in the Twin Cities area. Another is with the Metropolitan 911 Board to integrate GIS technology into the day-to-day work of the seven-county metropolitan region's 27 emergency dispatching facilities.

These initiatives illustrate, as MetroGIS matures, how we are expanding our focus from gathering and creating data to developing applications to improve its usefulness. In 2003 we also developed a Web-based mailing label application that runs on top of the regional parcel dataset. It's based on a prototype created by Carver County. In 2004, MetroGIS will convene users to determine what other common business applications should be explored for development at the regional level.

Though invisible to the average citizen, these efforts bear fruit each day across the region. With GIS data, quickly obtained, governments make better decisions about issues that make a difference in people's lives—disease control, highway construction, school attendance boundaries, crime prevention and others. MetroGIS's mission of data sharing makes government more efficient and effective. We can be proud of our work.

2003 -

A Year of Transition for MetroGIS

From its beginnings, participants in MetroGIS have worked diligently and successfully to build an infrastructure of regional geospatial data and tools to distribute the data. In 2003, the focus began to shift more clearly to developing applications for using the data. MetroGIS formed partnerships that leveraged regionwide data infrastructure and data-sharing experience to help a variety of initiatives move forward.

Major milestones in 2003

Preparing for emergencies - MetroGIS and the Minnesota Governor's Council on Geographic Information undertook a major initiative to help the region and the state better prepare for and respond to emergency events. The MetroGIS Emergency Preparedness Work Group has three primary tasks:

- 1) Organize and standardize relevant data, and develop applications for quick distribution in times of emergency;
- 2) Reach out to GIS professionals to gather data and enlist help with the project; and
- 3) Reach out to the emergency management community, to educate them about the potential and importance of GIS data in emergency preparedness and response.

Assisting 911 dispatchers - The Metropolitan 911 Board recruited MetroGIS to assist with an ambitious project to integrate GIS technology into the day-to-day work of the seven-county metropolitan region's 27 emergency dispatching facilities, or Public Safety Answering Points. The goal of the project is to instantly provide dispatchers with accurate maps of the locations of callers from wired and wireless telephones. MetroGIS will assist in defining procedures to: 1) accomplish improved consistency and currency of GIS data, in particular, street address data; and 2) help integrate address data with other commonly used geospatial data.

Creating mailing labels - MetroGIS developed a Web-based mailing label application, based on a prototype created by Carver County, that runs on top of the regional parcel dataset. The first version is slated for release in early 2004. The application meets a common business need of local governments (creating mailing labels). An advantage of the new regional GIS application is that it allows users to quickly and easily create mailing label sets that cross jurisdictional boundaries. In 2004, MetroGIS will convene users to determine what other common business applications should be explored for development at the regional level.

Identifying road segments - The Minnesota Department of Transportation initiated a pilot project with MetroGIS to establish a "common geospatial data language" to describe road sections in the Twin Cities area. Once established, tested and approved, the language will increase the productivity of GIS users by enabling them to easily combine road and highway information from multiple sources. It will also result in clearer information for decision-makers. Collaborating in the project are the Metropolitan Council, The Lawrence Group (TLG) and local governments.

Expanding data distribution - The Minnesota Land Management Information Center and MetroGIS teamed up to develop GeoIntegrator, a statewide, Web-based geospatial data distribution tool that expands the capabilities of MetroGIS's DataFinder Café and integrates Café into the state's geospatial infrastructure. GeoIntegrator is anticipated to launch in 2004.

[Read more](#) about the benefits of collaboration to address the common needs of MetroGIS stakeholders.

2003 Policy Board Members

Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County, Chair	Jim Kordiak, Anoka County, Vice Chair
Gary Delaney, Carver County	Patrice Bataglia, Dakota County
Randy Johnson, Hennepin County	Bob Vogel, Scott County
Dennis Hegberg, Washington County	Tony Pistilli, Metropolitan Council
Terry Schneider and Gary Schiff, Association of Metropolitan Municipalities	
Conrad Fiskness, Metro Chapter of Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts	
Antoinette Johns, Technology Information Education Services (School Districts)	

Primary Sponsor Metropolitan Council
MetroGIS Staff Coordinator Randall Johnson, 651-602-1638
Mears Park Centre
230 E. Fifth Street, St. Paul, MN 55101-1626
Phone 651-602-1363 Fax 651-602-1674 TTY 651-291-0904

www.metrogis.org - For current information on MetroGIS activities
www.datafinder.org - The regional geodata discovery and distribution tool