



March 2002 Information Sharing and Project Updates

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a) **MetroGIS tests new Internet data distribution tool**

During the month of April, MetroGIS will be testing a new Internet-based mechanism to view and distribute geospatial data. The new tool allows users to:

- Define a geographic area of interest, large or small;
- Select the data themes and attributes they want; and
- View the data online with or without GIS software and/or download the source data for the selected area using a wide variety of software.

By providing the user with the ability to obtain subsets of datasets (e.g., parcels, street centerlines, census geography), the user will spend less time assembling and manipulating data for their geographic area of interest. This subsetting function also expedites data access by making possible Internet access to large regional datasets, such as parcels, that cannot be distributed over the Internet as a whole.

The new tool—developed for MetroGIS by Syncline, Inc., of Boston—also:

- Supports source data download requests in many commonly used geodata formats.
- Gives producers of data that are components of regional datasets the flexibility to either house the data on DataFinder or deliver it from their own server. The location of the data will be transparent to the user who enters the system via DataFinder.
- Provides a robust security module and the means to easily modify business rules to implement any and all data access restrictions, for example, licensing, endorsed by the MetroGIS community.
- Provides a state-of-the-art system architecture that complies with Open GIS Consortium standards.

MetroGIS invited an estimated 40 users to participate in the test. The tool is expected to be operational for all users at www.datafinder.org in July. For more information, contact Alison Slaats, Project Manager and support for MetroGIS DataFinder.

b) Performance measures project advances

The MetroGIS Policy Board in April is expected to approve a Performance Measurement Plan that will help gauge the organization's progress in meeting its goals. As a first step, the board in January approved a set of preliminary performance measures related to users, producers and overall outcomes including:

- Number of visits/sessions to the DataFinder Web site;
- Number of entities visiting DataFinder;
- Number of whole or partial datasets and regional datasets downloaded through DataFinder;
- Number of entities listing metadata on DataFinder;
- Hours of data-producer staff time saved; and
- Anecdotes or case studies about how MetroGIS's products and services have impacted stakeholder operations, systems, and decision-making.

MetroGIS staff has since developed several measurement methods and reporting procedures for board consideration and implementation starting in the spring of 2002. The first phase will include in-depth interviews with data users to document benefits. The Performance Measures Plan and reporting will be posted at www.metrogis.org.

c) Launch of Reengineered & Enhanced MetroGIS Information Website

On February 26th, MetroGIS's redesigned and enhanced MetroGIS general information website at www.metrogis.org went live. Each of the Committee members should have received an email on March 4th inviting you to visit the site.

Staff believes the new design and new key word search capability combine to provide intuitive access to the wide range of information on the site, including: the vision, guiding principles, historical information covering the gambit of projects and Board actions, team work plans, annual reports, data standards, roles and responsibilities, benefits studies, presentations, affiliations, project reports, calendar of meetings, participants, etc. The information needs section (<http://www.metrogis.org/data/index.shtml>) also addresses the relationships among MetroGIS's common information needs, related regional data solutions, and the seven NSDI Framework Themes. The site also includes a presentations and reports section that includes more material than previously presented, such as the 1996 study conducted on the benefits Dakota County was experiencing from use of GIS technology.

Staff's objective during the redesign process, which took over nine months, was to provide the MetroGIS community with a handy resource through which to locate information about a variety of aspects of MetroGIS's background and activities, meetings, participants, etc. as well as to provide a comprehensive documentation of MetroGIS's activities.

d) "Second Generation" GIS Data Sharing Agreement & Regional Parcel Dataset

During the week of March 11, the Metropolitan Council and each of the seven county boards completed the process of approving MetroGIS's the second-generation data sharing agreement (<http://www.metrogis.org/about/history/sharing.shtml>). Through this agreement, the counties have authorized the Metropolitan Council to assemble parcel data produced by them and redistribute it as part of the regional parcel dataset to government and academic interests. The data specifications and custodian roles and responsibilities were adopted by the Policy Board in January 9, 2002. (See Item C2 below) Six of the seven counties have also agreed to a common licensing document. Hennepin County will continue to use the license that they have been using for government organizations under the current data sharing agreement. In addition to parcel data, each county has also acknowledged that they will continue to share non-parcel data without agreement as they have for the past 4+ years under the Interim GIS Data and Cost Sharing Agreements.

e) Priority Business Information Needs (See <http://www.metrogis.org/data/index.shtml> for complete information about each of MetroGIS's common information needs.)

- (1) Street Centerline Dataset (*Produced by The Lawrence Group*)

(2) Regional Planned (Future) Land Use Dataset

(3) Regional Parcel Dataset

- *Public Sector/Academic Version:* On January 9, 2002, the Policy Board endorsed the desired data specifications and custodial roles and responsibilities for the regional solution. See http://www.metrogis.org/data/datasets/parcels/specs_roles_resp.pdf. The Metropolitan Council, serving in its role as regional custodian, will begin assembly of the parcel data produced by each of the seven metro area counties into a regional dataset once the “second generation” data sharing agreements have been executed. This should occur the week of March 11. The first release of the regional parcel dataset is tentatively scheduled for April 2002 on Compact Disk. The following quarter, we hope to distribute this data via the Internet Distribution Mechanism that is under development.
- *Non-Profit and Private Sector Version:* No distributions have occurred. Only two inquiries since made available in June 2001. Both occurred when the dataset was first advertised.

(4) Socio-Economic Characteristics of Areas. A Census Data Usability workgroup was formed at the December 13, 2001 meeting of the Coordinating Committee. Experience is proving the web-delivery mechanism to be inadequate, such as trouble extracting Factfinder data. The workgroup was formed to look at options for improving access, including a one-time download and formatting of data. The members include Will Craig (U of M), Mark Vander Schaaf (St. Paul), Jane Harper (Washington County), and Gary Swenson (Anoka County). The group’s work compliments work being done by a Census Committee at the Urban Coalition, which is looking to identify all local websites that present Census results (data or analysis). A major event for the group is scheduled for March 19. Barbara Ronningen, MN Demographic Center, will outline the current data access options: Datanet, American Factfinder, and Census CDs and DVDs. A brief report will be made at the March 20 meeting of the Coordinating Committee.

(5) 2000 Census Geography. A contract was executed in the fall of 2001 with The Lawrence Group (TLG) to align the 2000 census geography supplied by the U.S. Census Bureau with the parcel and street centerline data endorsed by MetroGIS. This means that this dataset (and the 1990 census geography which has been completed) will be interoperable (aligns with) other regional datasets. The 2000 regional dataset should be available by June 2002. The realigned 1990 dataset is currently available free of charge via MetroGIS DataFinder (www.datafinder.org) to any interest that wants access. Like the 1990 version, the realigned 2000 data will also be available via DataFinder free of charge.

Negotiations also got underway on December 4th with the U.S. Census Bureau, Metropolitan Council and The Lawrence Group to see if an agreement can be reached to integrate locally-produced street centerline data and minor civil division and county boundary data into TIGER. Randy Fusaro, Chief of TIGER, and Wes Flack from the Bureau’s Kansas City office visited the Twin Cities. This opportunity to meet with Mr. Fusaro came about as a result of discussions the MetroGIS Staff Coordinator initiated while on special assignment for the National GeoData Alliance last summer in Washington D.C.

(6) Lakes, Wetlands, etc. Paul Hanson of the Metropolitan Council’s GIS staff and member of the MetroGIS Technical Support Team serves as the MetroGIS liaison role on the Governor’s Council on Geographic Information (GCGI) Hydrology Committee. MetroGIS’s work plan assumes the state’s solution may also serve the metro region. Desired data specifications were identified by participants at the October 29, 1999 Information Needs Workshop which included MetroGIS representation. (Refer to the Information Final Workshop Documents at http://www.metrogis.org/data/info_needs/lakes_wetlands/turnaround.pdf) A recommendation to the GCGI from the Committee is expected shortly.

f) **2001 MetroGIS Annual Report**

A copy of the 2001 MetroGIS Annual Report is included with the Coordinating Committee's March 20 agenda packet. Jeanne Landkamer, under contract with MetroGIS, was the lead support for the document. 2500 copies were printed. About 1900 copies will be mailed, beginning Monday, March 18. A PDF version of the report will also be posted on the MetroGIS web site at www.metrogis.org. The mailing list includes the chief elected and chief administrative officials for all cities, counties, school districts, and watershed districts; regional agencies directors; media; legislators; city planners; city engineers; all MetroGIS Board, Committee and Team members; and a host of individuals who have asked to be placed on the MetroGIS mailing list.

g) GIS Delegation from Japan Visits MetroGIS

MetroGIS representatives met with officials from the Nippon Research Institute in Tokyo on Wednesday, February 20. The team is working for Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport. The national agency is exploring the creation of a GIS center or centers in Japan. After researching several GIS organizations in the U.S. from Japan, the consultants chose to visit MetroGIS because of its comprehensive and informative website and its "impressive business plan".

h) GCGI's LRM Committee – Progress with Statewide Parcel Dataset

The Land Records Modernization (LRM) Committee of the Governors Council on Geographic Information (GCGI) has been delegated the task of investigating a statewide parcel dataset solution. Several individuals on the LRM Committee are also active in MetroGIS's activities: David Arbeit, David Claypool, and Randall Johnson. Summary of actions:

- January 9, 2002: the GCGI accepted the initial recommendation of the Committee to organize as an I-Team (www.fgdc.gov/I-Team/) for the purpose of this investigation.
- February 28, 2002: the Committee received a preliminary draft of an I-Plan drafted by David Arbeit and created a subcommittee to draft a vision statement for a statewide parcel dataset. Lisa Skipton, Goodhue County Surveyor, agreed to chair the workgroup. MetroGIS Staff Coordinator Johnson volunteered to serve on this workgroup. The workgroup was charged with preparing the draft vision statement for consideration by the Committee on April 25.

i) National GeoData Alliance's (GDA) Board of Trustees Meeting February 2002

MetroGIS Policy Board Chair Reinhardt and the MetroGIS Staff Coordinator attended a GDA Board of Trustees meeting on February 1-2 in Chicago. The Board developed a detailed response to questions that NSGIC had raised about the benefit of the GDA to NSGIC and identified several projects through which it would like to promote understanding of the benefits that can be gained through the GDA. For more information go to www.GeoAll.net.

j) MetroGIS Staff to Present at Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Conference in Hungary

At the urging of Chairperson Craig, an abstract was submitted to present at the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Conference (www.gsdi.org), to be held September 16-19 in Budapest, Hungary. Our presentation proposal was accepted in February. The accepted abstract is attached. Staff Coordinator Johnson is planning to attend. Much of the material for the presentation will be taken from the document co-authored last summer by Johnson entitled Lessons from Practice: A Guide to Organizing and Sustaining Geodata Collaboratives (www.metrogis.org/documents/reports/index.shtml). MetroGIS will not be asked to reimburse travel expenses.

k) Call for Papers -National URISA Conference

URISA will be holding its 2002 National Conference in Chicago, October 26-30. April 1 is the deadline for submitting a presentation abstract (www.urisa.org/annual.htm). Staff Coordinator Johnson and the other co-author of the "Lessons from Practice" book, noted in Item H above, Dr. Zorica Nedovic-Budic, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, are planning to submit a presentation proposal.

Alison Slaats, Manager of MetroGIS DataFinder and technical manager of MetroGIS's Internet Enabled Data Distribution Project, has been encouraged to submit a presentation proposal to share key aspects of this state-of-the-art project.