

Meeting Notes
County Data Producer Work Group
Wednesday, July 30, 2003
MCIT Building

Members Present: Dave Drealan - Chair (Carver County), Jane Harper (Washington County), Randy Knippel (Dakota County), Bill Brown (Hennepin County), Jim Hentges (Scott County)

Members Absent: David Claypool (Ramsey County) and Gary Swenson (Anoka County)

Staff Present: Randall Johnson (MetroGIS) and Kathie Doty (MetroGIS) and Alison Slaats (MetroGIS/Metropolitan Council)

Summary of July 2, 2003 meeting:

The document was circulated before the meeting and is posted at <http://www.metrogis.org/data/datasets/parcels/index.shtml#private2>. No changes were suggested.

1. License for Non-Government Access To Parcel Data

It was reported that neither the Dakota or Hennepin County attorneys had reviewed the most recent draft Attachment A). Bill Brown commented that rather than hold up the entire process, that the group should consider moving forward without Hennepin County. The group decided to wait another month and decide options at that time if not all of the counties have approved the document. Chairperson Drealan agreed to add a footer to stipulate the date of the document and to send staff the final version to post of the web site.

2. Performance Measures

Kathie Doty summarized the findings of an interview that she and the Staff Coordinator had with David Arbeit as directed by the Coordinating Committee in April. The Committee had asked staff to investigate a methodology devised by Arbeit to estimate benefits that result from automated data discovery and downloading. Doty commented that although Arbeit's methodology was devised to measure data user benefits, the same method appeared to be applicable to the producer community and a possible means to address Performance measures 6 and 7. She shared a proposed formula with the workgroup for comment:

$$\frac{\# \text{ download events}}{2080} \times \# \text{ hours in producer time savings per download} = \text{equals "improved efficiency measured in FTEs"}$$

Harper commented that a certain percentage of the downloads are likely occurring because the data are available electronically which would not have been requested of the county(ies) if non-electronic access were not available. The group concurred but also noted that these occurrences are still a user benefit not withstanding that the county would not have previously had to deal with them manually.

The group agreed that one hour would be a good estimate of the average amount of time the counties spend serving requests manually (receive the phone call, research the request, locate and package the data, and distribute it to the user). It was also agreed that downloads via Café, as opposed to FTP, are best reflected by the one hour service time estimate which generally involves some type of custom day extraction. This estimate is for servicing requests from only other government users and thus does not include any time for collection of fees.

It was conceded that the real beneficiary of the automated access is the user and that the licensing inconsistencies and time consuming procedures are a huge part of the obstacles to overcome.

3. Mailing Label Application

Alison Slaats demonstrated a prototype regional mailing label application, which she had developed from Carver County's application, noting that the buffer function crosses county boundaries. All agreed that the demonstration proved the regional application a technically feasible. Alison then raised several questions for which she requested direction prior to finalizing the application for more in-depth testing. The group agreed to the following actions:

- 1) Immediately implement two minor design improvements (add all three address types as separate choices and add links to the metadata to explain and define each choice).
- 2) The user of the data would be advised of inconsistencies in the data between the counties through a link to the metadata but no changes will be pursued to address these inconsistencies until following the parcel data users forum planned for September 25th. Staff commented that any desired data improvements (reformatting, convert from paper to electronic, etc.) that could be dealt with as one-time expenditure would qualify for funding that accompanies the data sharing agreement. He also emphasized that no changes are intended for which the producer does not have a business need to support.
- 3) It was understood that preprocessing was needed to deal with four issues (Attachment B, Item 1) related to the seven individual county parcel datasets that either slowed the application or would have caused it not to “find” certain addresses and, as such, currently precludes remote access to any of the seven county parcel datasets. Carver County had proposed this capability to provide data more up to date than associated with the quarterly updated regional parcel dataset. The group agreed that quarterly updates would suffice for Version 1 of the application.
- 4) Given issues that may surface concerning impacts on existing revenue streams, further policy dialogue will be needed to decide if and when to proceed. It was recognized that all affected parties must agree on a balance between preserving revenue streams and improving efficiencies.
- 5) A password will be provided to workgroup member to test the application with their staff against their particular business needs. Each member agreed to do so and report desired enhancements at the next workgroup meeting.
- 6) Member Knipple agreed to contact ESRI to confirm if ArcIMS can be used within their own shops to generate mailing labels for which a fee is required.
- 7) It was agreed that Chairperson Drealan would report to the Policy Board that evening that the application is technologically feasible, testing by the counties is pending through mid-September, and that talks were pending to seek a balance between preserving existing revenues and improving efficiencies.

3. Fees Proposal for Subscription and Volume Discounts

Randy Knipple summarized the fee proposal that he had developed and which the group agreed to in principle to at the May 8th meeting. He reiterated that the proposed schedule is intended to promote more sales and less work to serve requests through more use of pre-built datasets. (See the May 8 meeting summary for the specifics.)

A complication was raised by the William Brown with Hennepin County. He noted that the Hennepin County Assessor is currently receiving making substantial revenue by selling access to the entire parcel attribute dataset (no parcel boundaries) for \$.06/parcel. Brown is looking for ways to accommodate the \$.05/parcel for the regional parcel dataset (parcel boundaries and 25 normalized attributes). He noted that he would be speaking with county officials to seek approval as a pilot or in some other way seek permission to participate in the proposed fee schedule.

The group agreed to defer further discussion until the next meeting to give Brown an opportunity to explore options. At that time, the group will return to finalizing the one-year pilot to test the \$.05/parcel collaborative distribution mechanism.

(Editor's note – At the July 2nd meeting the following tasks were assigned but had not as yet been accomplished:

Randy Knipple agreed to draft a letter summarizing the purpose, philosophy and actual proposed fee schedule that staff would send to all of the non-government contacts on MetroGIS's mailing list for comment and to encourage them to forward to others who may have any interest. It was decided that providing an on-line fee calculator would be desirable. No decision was made as to who would build it or how much effort it might take to implement.

Kathie Doty agreed to review the letter once drafted by Knipple and William Brown agreed to draft a statement for the email cover. Knipple also agreed to speak with the Dakota County attorney to insure the message and fees are consistent with the Data Practices laws.

4. Access by Utility Companies to Parcel Data

Representatives from Xcel Energy, CenterPoint Energy Minnegasco, and the Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative met on July 10th with Dave Drealan, Carver County Planning Director and Chair of MetroGIS's County Data Producers Workgroup and the MetroGIS Staff Coordinator to explore the possibility of utilities accessing county parcel data, without fee, in return for sharing their utility facility locations aligned with the county-produced parcel data. Some government uses of the utility data include emergency management, right-of-way management. The utilities are interested in the parcel data to improve the mapping accuracy of their facilities and improve operations that rely upon addresses. All concluded that this exploratory meeting was fruitful and that the talks should continue. The next steps will include providing the utilities with a sample of the regional parcel dataset to evaluate.

5. Joint Purchase of Air Photos

Time ran out before this item could be discussed.

6. Next Meeting

It was agreed to meet from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on September 17th, immediately before the Coordinating Committee meeting.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Submitted by,

Randall Johnson, AICP
MetroGIS Staff Coordinator

ATTACHMENT A
(Received by email July 25, 2003)

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8. GOVERNING LAW

The laws of the State of Minnesota shall govern all questions and interpretations concerning the validity and construction of this agreement and the legal relations between the herein parties and performance under it.

ATTACHMENT B

MetroGIS

Cooperation, Coordination, Sharing Geographic Data



Wednesday, July 30, 2003

Submitted by Alison Slaats, Metropolitan Council

Mailing Label Application Update

Summary

The Carver County Mailing label application was examined to assess its usefulness for a metro-wide mailing label application.

The benefits of the Carver county application are that it has a relatively easy to use interface and so would be simple for non-GIS users to use; it includes a great method for removing duplicates from the address list and provides two methods for creating mailing labels.

The structure of the Carver county application and the size of the parcel datasets require that some pre-processing of the Regional Parcel Dataset be done. This would mean that the data would be updated quarterly.

I suggest using this application as a starting point for a metro mailing label application. I would like direction in how to proceed with this project. I welcome all suggestions, general and specific. If the group agrees to move ahead with this project, then I would appreciate feedback on in at least these two areas: Data related issues and problems, and Application Interface and Functionality.

1. Data related issues and problems

1.1. *Is it reasonable to pre-process the MetroGIS parcel data to optimize performance?*

This could mean that data are indexed, tabular data are stored in a different database (i.e., Access or Oracle). By doing this, we are essentially preventing the use of “remote” datasets. This means that the mailing label data would be updated quarterly, assuming the current roles and responsibilities remain unchanged. A few reasons for pre-processing are:

- Application was written to use parcel data from a database (proves to be quicker for straight tabular queries).
- Create PIN field without PIN prefix for searching
- Create city/street pull down lists
- Remove leading/trailing spaces in some fields (e.g., in bldg_num field a query of “1234” would not find “ 1234”).

1.2. *How should we deal with differences between the population of fields/attributes for different counties?*

1.2.1. Which fields should we use for mailing labels, or should we give the users a choice?

1.2.2. The choices are OWNER, TAXPAYER, or actual PARCEL ADDRESS.

Alternatively, we could give the user the choice of these to select from. Each of

these addresses has problems related to the completeness of the data for some counties. (See attribute excerpt from Regional Parcel Dataset metadata.) Metadata shows differences between data content from different counties. If, for example, no owner name is given, should the application automatically put “owner of parcel #XXXX”) on the label, or “Resident”?

- 1.2.3. City list – from CITY field – may or may not reflect the actual city because mailing address maybe used in the field, not the actual CTU within which the parcel exists.

2. Application Interface and Functionality

- 2.1. How should security be handled? Should a user only have access to the parcel data they have a license for – i.e., 3 different scenarios: a) all counties, b) Hennepin only, c) 6 other counties.
- 2.2. Can we set a limit on a buffer search? What is a normal search and what would a good limit be - perhaps $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ mile?
- 2.3. When parcels are buffered, should the application zoom to the extent of the buffer?
- 2.4. Do we need a disclaimer for use of the application and/or a printable map. If so, what should this text be?
- 2.5. For map navigation, would a drag box pan and zoom be preferable to the click method now in place?
- 2.6. Is a clear selection button a good idea?
- 2.7. What changes should be made to the general layout and or functionality of the interface? Colors, size of buttons, text vs. words on function buttons etc. For example, make the address search a two step process – a) choose city b) type address and select street.
- 2.8. Any other suggestions