

August 11, 2006

Meeting Summary

Phase II Workgroup Beyond Government Users: Future Directions for MetroGIS

August 8, 2006

(Metropolitan Counties Insurance Trust Building)

The meeting began at 2:00 p.m.

Attending:

Sally Wakefield, Coordinating Committee member – 1000 Friends of Minnesota
Jessica Horning, Coordinating Committee member – Greater Mpls. Day Care Association
Jason Johnson, Welsh Companies
John Carpenter, Excensus

Support Staff:

Rich Cornell, Metropolitan Council Learning and Development
Randall Johnson – MetroGIS Staff Coordinator

1) Introductions

Staff asked each attendee to introduce themselves and briefly explain their interest in participating in this effort.

- Wakefield commented that she is interested in learning more about how non-profits might contribute to and benefit from solutions to common geospatial needs.
- Jason Johnson is interested in learning more about how the commercial real estate industry might contribute to and benefit from solutions to common geospatial needs.
- Horning commented that her organization can benefit from all three topical areas identified as priorities for candidate collaboration (Item b in the background information document distributed with the agenda materials).
- Carpenter stated that the private sector has a lot to offer if an integrated program is pursued.

2) Background Information and Questions

Staff summarized the results of the November 15, 2005 forum that launched this initiative, general expectations for the Phase II Workgroup, evaluation criteria adopted by the Policy Board, and expectations for the deliverable from the Workgroup. The members concurred with the expectations and had no questions.

3) Define characteristics of “most promising, achievable opportunities”

Cornell suggested that the group brainstorm on characteristics to define “most promising, achievable” and then apply the characteristics to proposals that expand upon opportunity concepts identified at the November 15, 2005 forum.

Carpenter noted that four guidelines adopted by the Policy Board may have the effect of constraining options as opposed to promoting creative solutions that have broad public benefit. He expanded that the future of MetroGIS is dependent upon continuing to expand the base of users, noting that partnerships with non-government interests could easily double user base. He

commented that private sector interests have access to resources (e.g., data and application) that are not currently available to the public sector.

It was acknowledged that the MetroGIS community initially viewed the product of MetroGIS in terms of data resources and that recently the notion of a “product” has expanded to include a role in the realm of applications used to manipulate geospatial data to address a host of information needs.

Opportunity: It was agreed that expanded access to the geospatial data resources would facilitate application development, which would create opportunity for the public and non-public sectors to leverage for their particular needs. The group briefly talked about a ***marketplace*** concept in terms of data and application access options that could range from bartering to subscriptions but all acknowledged that maintaining trust in data accuracy, completeness, and availability will be critical to achieving a marketplace capable of minimizing duplication of effort and broad leveraging of existing resources. The group also concurred that the marketplace should also support outsourcing of application needs as well as the preferences of some users who will want to bring an application in house to experiment with the code and functionality themselves. Finally, it was agreed that the focus should be on applications and web services that are not part of the standard desktop suite (e.g., commercial GIS software).

Opportunity: Jason Johnson commented that to achieve the marketplace concept, a means to search for and access existing applications and services is needed. He was unaware of the ***ApplicationFinder*** concept that is under consideration by MetroGIS and a related project of the Governor’s Council on Geographic Information. The group expressed support for the current efforts and concurred that the current design concept for a standardized means (template) to describe each application is important and that as many applications as possible should be searchable on the system regardless of whether they have free access or not. They also encouraged the designers to consider negotiating a set of standard principles for criteria design items to encourage interoperability.

Opportunity: There was a brief discussion of how an emphasis on ***data quality improvements*** could greatly improve the functionality and reliability of existing applications such as geocoding. Carpenter commented that geocoding based upon streets is “old technology” and that an effort should be made to use more precise addresses associated with parcels. Staff informed the group of the MetroGIS initiative to build a regional occupiable unit database to address the need raised by Carpenter. Staff acknowledged that county government has not acknowledged a business need for maintaining addresses of units so the viability of engaging cities (PSAPs) in the regional solution is being investigated. The group noted that non-profit and private sector interests are other potential sources to add value to the solution.

Opportunity: In response to a comment by Carpenter, the group affirmed that the best available data is not always provided by government. The concept of an ***open source*** model was suggested as a means to create a reliable framework through which to encourage data contributions by non-government interests. Specifically, create a means to encourage reliable connection of housing, utility, real estate and school district records with parcel data to greatly enhance data quality and in doing so open up application development opportunities important to all sectors. Moving away from a top-down to an open source structure will promote investment and partnering opportunities.

To achieve the open source model, the group agreed that the various sectors/interests need to better understand the geospatial resources of others and what might be valuable to them. This recognition had to a suggestion that MetroGIS host a series of *focus groups to identify potential connections* among the various interests. The group also concurred that no interests should be precluded as their capabilities to contribute may not be readily identifiable at this time. Topics that would be explored should include data produced and used and capabilities to use and produce geospatial products.

Carpenter noted that in tight budget times, the goal should be to expand the user community (market), not close it down. This comment led to a suggestion consistent with the open source model idea to encourage a distributed system of producers of property related data. That is, add fields to the regional parcel dataset that are populated by other organizations (government and non-government alike). The point of the conversation was that a county-centric model was needed to focus and achieve the initial regional parcel dataset but that the technology and need exist to expand upon that initial model in a manner that greatly expands the user base and potential partnerships to collaboratively pursue other next-generation enhancements valuable to all.

Opportunity: In response to comment from Carpenter, the participants concurred they believe it is MetroGIS's role to foster creation of the data platform needed to support a wide range of applications that in turn provide the information needed to support day-to-day operations. *Implementing effective ways to integrate data from multiple sources* is currently a higher priority than building additional regional data solutions, though it was acknowledged that additional solutions to common needs would be useful.

Recap of Top Ideas:

Cornell asked each attendee to summarize the top ideas that they heard at this session:

- Wakefield: Potential for value enhancements / applications provided by non-government interests.
- Jason Johnson: General understanding of what others can offer and what we can use from them.
- Horning: Focus groups would be helpful. What others have and what our organization can contribute.
- Carpenter: Opportunities to look at value enhancements in non-economic terms – barter system. Opportunities for the sectors to work together for the benefit of all. If MetroGIS is serious about exploring partnering opportunities with non-government interests, they need to know that MetroGIS is listening and will act.

4) Desired Implementation Process

No discussion - Premature

5) Next Steps/Next Meeting

Each attendee indicated interest in continuing to meet to refine a proposal. It was agreed that the meeting summary should be sent to everyone who attended the November 15, 2006 forum and that more of the November 15 attendees should be encouraged to participate in the current effort to refine a proposal. Carpenter commented that if the suggested focus group initiative is pursued, something may need to be done to build trust that the experience would be a good use of the participants' time.

The group asked that the idea identified at the November 15, 2005 forum of promoting a statewide GIS cooperative effort be included as a topic of discussion at the next meeting even though it had not come up at this meeting.

Randall Johnson agreed to draft a meeting summary and distribute it for comment. A meeting date will be set once the group reviews the summary of this meeting.

6) Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Prepared by,

Randall Johnson, AICP
MetroGIS Staff Coordinator

ATTACHMENT A

DETAILED COMMENTS
(Captured by Rich Cornell on Flip Charts)

Metro GIS Public/Private Partnerships August 8, 2006

Characteristics

- What hasn't been opened in the past that could be opened in the future?
- Continue to build and expand a market of users
- Addresses community needs
- Access to resources, data, markets, from private
- Open source—applications (Geo coding) developed in the private sector
- Perception that the product is data is changing
- Policy barter
- Negotiate a set of principles

Propositions

Adopt open source concept as a long term strategy

- Build private representative into policy board
- Define focus
- Assure reliable connections
- A collaborative model
 - Data
 - Capabilities
 - Access to the market
- Identify and utilize categories
 - Housing
 - Utilities
 - School Census
 - Commercial real estate
- Develop a process to return improved data to the data stream

Applications

- Define “best applications” (ApplicationFinder)
- Create portal to applications that exist in general
- MetroGIS endorsement of applications
- Enhance geocoding models (move from street to parcel based - external data sets-improve address quality).
- Applications that serve a specific interest, not a part of conventional desk top suite

- Dialogue with counties regarding quality (“how to get the counties to accept that their addresses may not be right”)

Develop a subscription service on a web environment

- Trust in the system for accuracy
- What are the standards?
- Accommodate the user who wants to bring an application in house to experiment with the code and functionality themselves.
- Establish a process that maintains corrections, address enhancement work that has been done by not for profit.

Application

- Standardized Description
- User reviews
- Negotiate a set of principles for (Interoperability?)