

## Meeting Summary

### Phase II Workgroup Beyond Government Users: Future Directions for MetroGIS

August 29, 2006

(Metropolitan Counties Insurance Trust Building)

The meeting began at 9:50 a.m.

#### Attending:

Sally Wakefield, Coordinating Committee member – 1000 Friends of Minnesota  
Jason Johnson, Welsh Companies  
John Carpenter, Excensus

#### Support Staff:

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

#### 1) Results of Sharing August 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting Summary with November 15 Forum Participants

Staff commented that one person, Will Craig, responded. Craig also volunteered to participate on the workgroup but could not attend this meeting. No other discussion of this topic.

#### 2) Review / Refine Most Promising Opportunities

Cornell commented that two ideas identified during the group's brainstorming on August 8<sup>th</sup> (*expand Policy Board membership and "develop a process to return improved data to the data stream"*) appear to have potential as substantive action items but were not discussed in detail by the group at the last meeting.

The group concurred that the idea identified at the last meeting of expanding the membership of the Policy Board should be added to the list of most promising, achievable opportunities. The group also concurred that: a) the open source data model concept agreed upon on August 8<sup>th</sup> should be clarified to include the concept of *returning improved data to the data stream* and b) the five opportunities documented in the August 8<sup>th</sup> meeting summary should be merged into mutually exclusive topic areas as follows:

- ***Expand Policy Board membership to include non-government interests***
- ***Foster an Open Source Data Model*** – (*includes "develop a process to return improved data to the data stream", "implement effective ways to integrate data from multiple sources", and "develop a process to post suggested corrections for consideration by the custodian"*)
- ***Foster a Marketplace for Geospatial Data Resources*** (*includes "focus groups to identify potential connections"*)
- ***Implement Application Finder concept***
- ***Foster statewide adoption of Principles that Underpin MetroGIS.*** (The group concurred that although it had not had an opportunity to discuss this concept, it should remain on the list of most promising opportunities for further investigation.)

The group then spent much of the remainder of the meeting talking about the desired characteristics of an Open Source Data Model. The purposes of pursuing this model include facilitating:

- a) Rapid identification of data problems and potential quicker resolution of the problems by providing a vehicle for interests beyond the primary data producer to offer modifications (spatial and attribute) as anomalies are identified. (e.g., explore the potential of adding a virtual field(s) to the primary database for users to post suggested changes and accompanying explanations to enable the community to “see” data issues as they are identified. The goal is to replace the current filtered process, whereby an email is sent to the producer with no means to track activity related to addressing the request with a more transparent process that fosters adding value to the source data.)
- b) Capture of changes being made to the data by users that may have value to others. (e.g., adding of related/supplement attribution.) Sally Wakefield and Jason Johnson commented that they believe it is in the public good to foster a system capable of capturing data enhancements made by the broad community of users to share with one another and thereby reduce the cost of data development and cleaning for all.
- c) Creation of a solid foundation for the rapidly emerging web-based applications environment which to be fully effective requires accurate, trusted, reliable data in the form needed (standardized) for machine to machine access.

Identification of the latter characteristic led to a comment by Carpenter that non-government interests, such as his, are generally not opposed to paying a subscription fee to access accurate, trusted, reliable data in the form needed, if the fee is less than they would have to invest to accomplish the objective on their own.

Carpenter commented that geospatial data, in the context of an open source model, should be viewed as two basic components: 1) a physical repository for line work and ID’s that is stable and can be counted on to be available and 2) attributes which are maintained in a flexible manner that permits applications/users of applications to pick and choose among many files containing similar themes of data (e.g., housing type, natural resources, land use, etc.)

At the suggestion of Cornell, the group concluded that a pilot project which is focused on parcel data would be a good way to demonstrate the viability of the group’s open source data model concept to primary data producers (in this case the counties) as well as demonstrate that providing opportunities for non-government and other government users to post and share their parcel-related data can and will produce added value. Finally it was acknowledged that the private sector typically does not have a lot of time to study proposals but would rather launch a project and learn from the test.

Pilot Project – Test Open Source Model: The group agreed on a high-level concept for a pilot project designed to refine procedures and test the hypothesis that broad access in an Internet environment to line work (parcel boundaries) with IDs will catalyze contributions of attributes produced and maintained by others that are valuable to the community, including the counties.

The characteristics of the pilot project were agreed upon as follows:

- a) Understanding of the potential value and costs is needed. Seek county approval to allow line work (parcel boundaries) and attributes to be made available for application development whereby users of the application would have “view-only” access.

- b) Non-government interests would be sought out to add attributes they maintain as well as identify data anomalies in the source data via a virtual environment (separate from the source data)
- c) Assess the viability of the idea of a subscription fee for non-government participation (add data to a system that is openly available to others). The idea of the producer granting a credit toward the standard subscription fee would also be investigated for data posted by a user that is valuable to the primary producer, with the understanding that any data added with no or limited value to the producer would not count toward a reduction.
- d) The virtual environment to which data are added would be hosted by a non- government interest subject to compliance with specifications that satisfy the view-only access limitation to the source data.

The group concurred that the pilot would be deemed a success when data begins to show up on the virtual website that is of value to others. All agreed that if the pilot is successful the processes developed would be transferable to data other than licensed data, such as parcels.

### **3) Next Steps**

The group concurred that additional work is needed to finalize the details of a proposal to the Policy Board and that the group should meet in the next two weeks, if possible, to refine the proposal.

Staff agreed to consolidate the opportunities identified at the August 8<sup>th</sup> meeting into mutually exclusive categories, as defined at this meeting (Attachment A), summarize the discussion at this meeting and distribute the summary for comment, and query the group by email to set up a meeting before September 15, 2006.

### **4) Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Prepared by,

Randall Johnson, AICP  
MetroGIS Staff Coordinator

## ATTACHMENT A

### MODIFIED PARTNERING OPPORTUNITIES (As defined at the August 29<sup>th</sup> Workgroup Meeting)

#### **Most Promising, Achievable Opportunities:**

- *Expand Policy Board membership to include non-government interests*
- *Foster an Open Source Data Model*
- *Foster a Marketplace for Geospatial Data Resources*
- *Implement Application Finder concept*
- *Foster statewide adoption of Principles that Underpin MetroGIS.*

A brief explanation of each “most promising” opportunity follows:

#### **Opportunity: *Expand Policy Board membership to include non- government interests***

*(The group concurred that although it had not had an opportunity to discuss this concept, it should remain on the list of most promising opportunities for further investigation.)*

#### **Opportunity: *Foster an Open Source Data Model***

The best available data is not always provided by government. The concept of an *open source* data model holds promise as a means to create a reliable framework through which to encourage data contributions by non-government interests important to improving overall data quality, reliability, and completeness. Such a model could 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 to an open source structure will also promote investment and partnering opportunities. Improvements in the functionality and reliability of existing applications, such as geocoding, are dependent to a large degree on improvement in data quality. For instance, geocoding based upon streets is “old technology” and an effort should be made to use more precise addresses associated with parcels and occupiable units. Non-profit and private sector interests should be looked to as potential sources of address data to add value to the existing government supported data resources.

MetroGIS’s role should be 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* should be recognized as a higher priority than building additional regional data solutions, though it was acknowledged that additional solutions to common needs would be useful.

#### **Opportunity: *Foster a Marketplace for Geospatial Resources***

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. A *marketplace* concept, which provides geospatial data and application access options, could range from bartering to subscriptions. 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 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. The focus

should be on applications and web services that are not part of the standard desktop suite (e.g., commercial GIS software).

To achieve the open source model, the various sectors/interests need to better understand the geospatial resources of others and what might be valuable to their needs. A series of *focus groups* among the various interests is suggested to identify potential connections. All interests should be invited to participate, regardless of their current capabilities as their ability to contribute may not be readily identifiable at this time. Topics that should be explored include data produced and used as well as capabilities to use and produce geospatial products.

The goal should be to expand the user community (market), not close it down when budget constraints exist or are pending. A distributed system of producers of property related data is suggested that creates a one stop access point for parcel-related data produced by government and non-government interests alike. Expansion of the user base expands potential partnerships to pursue collaboratively other next-generation enhancements valuable to all.

**Opportunity: *Implement ApplicationFinder concept***

The 2006 Regional GIS Project referred to as the “Service Broker” project under the direction of the Mn Department of Geographic and Demographic Analysis (GDA) builds on the ApplicationFinder concept initially debuted by MetroGIS in December 2004. Achieving the geospatial resources marketplace concept requires a reliable means to search for and access existing applications and services, whether or not they are freely available, and achieve a set of standard principles for design to encourage interoperability. These specifications should be tested and refined in the current pilot project.

**Opportunity: *Foster statewide adoption of Principles that Underpin MetroGIS***

(To be defined. See the November 15, 2005 Forum summary for baseline information.)

## **ATTACHMENT B**

DETAILED COMMENTS  
(Captured by Rich Cornell on Flip Charts)

### **Metro GIS Public/Private Partnerships August 29, 2006**

“There has got to be a way to capture data produced by others for the public good.”

Recommend that MetroGIS sponsor a private/non-profit/government work group to lead a transactional process that results in returning improved data to the data stream.

This effort will result in expanding resources toward a vision of absolutely accurate parcel data and housing codes.

#### Draft design components

- No filter
- Six month review
- Web based
- Trust worthy attributes
- Source identification
- Built on standardized, accurate, quality factors
- Equal exchange of value

#### Work group design and participation

Open process

#### Other proposals

- Increased private/non-profit membership on Policy Board
- ApplicationFinder