

Meeting Minutes
MetroGIS Socioeconomic Information Need Workgroup
Monday, April 7, 2003
County Insurance Trust Building
(1:30 to 3:30 p.m.)

1. Call to Order/Introductions

Members Present: Heather Britt (Urban Coalition), Paul Buschmann (Hennepin County), Dick Carlstrom, (TIES), John Carpenter (Excensus LLC), Will Craig (CURA-U of M), Amy Fisher (MN Dept. of Economic Security), Kathy Johnson (Metropolitan Council), Mary Karcz (Ramsey County), Sandra Paddock (Wilder Research Center), Barbara Ronningen (State Demographic Center), Heidi Welsch (Dakota County), Mark VanderSchaaf (City of St. Paul), and Tim Zimmerman (Hennepin County)

Staff Present: Randall Johnson (MetroGIS) and Tanya Mayer (MetroGIS/Metropolitan Council)

Chairperson Craig began the meeting at 1:35 by asking each member to introduce himself or herself.

2. Role of Workgroup

Craig and staff explained how the workgroup fits into the broader efforts of MetroGIS, desired outcomes and purpose of the workgroup's efforts, and a high-level strategy that had been endorsed by the MetroGIS Coordinating Committee prior to launching formation of the workgroup.

A question was raised about the proposed two-part strategy of evaluating existing published datasets and then investigate the Excensus option to address the information needs, as opposed to one after the other as presented in the high-level strategy. A decision was postponed until the workgroup has completed clarification of the actual information needs and begins to identify a course of action.

3. Review of Related Work to Date

Chairperson Craig and staff summarized the process used in the 1996 to identify the information needs statements for the entire MetroGIS community – some 850 – which were consolidated into 87 mutually exclusive information need categories and ranked. The result was 13 top priorities that were endorsed by the MetroGIS Policy Board, one of which was Socioeconomic Characteristics of Areas. Craig and staff also explained staff's first-pass effort to list in one table all the individual information need statements that pertain to Socioeconomic related topics to provide the Workgroup with a starting place.

Craig commented that the current thinking is that the data solutions to be pursued to address the final list of information needs will come from one or more of three sources:

- 1) Published data,
- 2) Data that are currently collected by government but which require some work to access in a form useable to the broad community. This effort will likely involve recommending data capture and reporting standards/guidelines to systemize among the producers to facilitate sharing, and
- 3) Investigate sources, such as the iBlock procedure and possibility others, needed to accomplish small area analysis that can not be adequately supported by the conventional government-produced data.

John Carpenter, principal of Excensus, at Craig's request, summarized his firm's iBlock product, who is currently using it, and plans for expanding its use. iBlocks, for residential areas, are generally a summary of data for three households, which are tied directly to parcels which provides a direct link to house and property data. About one-quarter of the Metro Area in terms of total parcels (250,000 of an estimated one

million parcels). Mr. Carpenter's firm, Excensus LLC, is in negotiations for a national pilot, which would complete development of the data for a thirteen county area, including the entire Metro Area. In addition to supporting sophisticated small-area analysis important to school districts and cities for planning and service support, including migration analysis.

Craig also summarized the accomplishments of the 2002 Census Accessibility Workgroup to improve access to published profiles for tracts and MCD's by converting these data to a GIS-ready format, setting it up in such a way that it can be downloaded via MetroGIS DataFinder, and providing more easily understood directions (tutorials) for using the data.

4) Further Narrowing of Information Needs Statements

The group agreed on four criteria that each member is to use to "score" the importance of each of the information needs statements. There were as follows:

- a) Value (to stakeholder organization) rating: High Medium and Low
(The group decided that it is not important to separate this criterion into the two components that have been used in the past – How important to the business of the respondent's organization and How dependent on others for the data)
- b) Resolution (mapping unit): County, City, Neighborhood/TAZ, Block, Parcel, Address
- c) Time Frequency: Monthly, Quarterly, Yearly
- d) Time Series: Current, One year, Five year, Ten years, and Twenty years

Staff was asked to modify the table to include a cell for each of these scoring criteria and send the modified table to the workgroup members to score individually. Craig volunteered to compile the scores and report the findings at the next meeting. Several members then offered several additional needs statements which staff agreed to add to the table for the scoring exercise.

5) Related Discussion

- a) The group discussed how it might interface with a newly established "community indicators" initiative that will hold its first meeting on April 9. Several of the MetroGIS socioeconomic workgroup members are currently affiliated with both initiatives. It was decided that the "community indicators" group should be looked to for additional perspectives at such time that the MetroGIS group decided to hold a forum to refine priority socioeconomic information needs. A concern was raised that the lead proponent from the community indicators group has been laid off and it not known whether other leadership will emerge.
- b) The group concurred that the tasks ahead of the Socioeconomic information needs are unique from those of previous information needs workgroups because the socioeconomic data are essentially attribute based, as opposed to the emphasis on boundaries associated with the previous common information needs statements.
- c) Mr. Carpenter also pointed out that a large part of the value of this workgroup's efforts will be looking for and implementing a bridge(s) to boundaries based data and that fixed geographies are often too large to address many of the information needs and that tools to improve small area analysis are desired.
- d) The group agreed that our interest is on small area data: county level and below.
- e) The group concurred there is a need to acquire trusted sources of data for daytime populations. A promising project, entitled Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), was briefly discussed. This project involves integrating specified files of data several federal data sources (ES202, Wage Detail, Social Security, IRS, and others) to create a hybrid dataset that better links employer and worker data. It was learned that Member Fisher, with the Mn Dept of Economic Security, is working closely with the national project leadership to pilot the technique in Minnesota.
- f) The group was of the general agreement that criminal justice/public safety information needs might be most effectively dealt with a separate initiative but that with the current high interest in this area

facilitating focus on a couple of key items could make something happen. Ronningen commented that BCA data she has worked with has required a good deal of effort to make useable for other purposes. Carpenter commented that one of the major issues is that summary areas used for public safety often do not match conventional summary geographies and in some cases summary is not possible, making sharing extremely complex and in some case simply not an option. It was generally agreed that an important contribution would be to make a case for more flexible and smaller summary geographies and efficient ways to “roll up” to standard geographies which are also interoperable with other datasets.

- g) The need for better information about definitions and compatibility among datasets were also acknowledged as desirable goals for the solutions that evolve from the workgroup’s efforts.
- h) The group concluded that there is no need to distinguish between source data and derivative products at this point in the workgroup’s efforts to refine and clarify the information needs. It was acknowledged that some derivative needs will involve applications as opposed to just data and that both are appropriate for the workgroup to address if priority common needs.

It was agreed to meet again on May 6, from 2-4 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Prepared by

Randall Johnson, AICP
MetroGIS Staff Coordinator