

Meeting Summary
MetroGIS Coordinating Committee
MN Counties Insurance Trust Bldg. – Room 205
June 29, 2005

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Read called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and asked the members to introduce themselves. Chairperson Read then acknowledged this would be Lee Whitcraft's last meeting as he is retiring from TIES effective June 30th, and presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation for his valued advocacy for the use of GIS technology by school districts. Lee commented that school districts have definitely benefited from MetroGIS's efforts and wished the Committee members well.

Members Present: *Academics:* Will Craig (U of M); *Cities:* Steve Lorbach (AMM: core cities - City of St. Paul) and Bob Cockriel (AMM: suburban cities - City of Bloomington); *Counties:* Scott Simmer & Bill Brown (shared seat - Hennepin), John Slusarczyk (Anoka), David Claypool (Ramsey) and Jane Harper (Washington); *Federal:* Ron Wencil (USGS); *Metropolitan:* Rick Gelbmann and Mark Vander Schaaf (shared seat - Metropolitan Council), Nancy Read (Metropolitan Mosquito Control District); *Schools:* Lee Whitcraft (TIES); *State:* Joella Givens (Mn/DOT), and Robert Maki (DNR); *Watershed/Water Management Organizations:* Ned Phillips (Rice Creek Watershed District); and *Utilities:* Al Laumeyer (CenterPoint Energy)

Members Absent: *Business Geographics:* Chet Harrison (CB Richard Ellis); *Counties:* Dave Drealan (Carver), Randy Knippel (Dakota), and Jim Hentges (Scott); *GIS Consultants:* Terese Rowekamp (Rowekamp Associates); *Metropolitan:* David Bitner (Metropolitan Airports Commission) and Gordon Chinander (Metropolitan 911 Board), *Non-Profits:* [vacant]; *Special Expertise:* Brad Henry (URS Corp.); and *State:* David Arbeit (LMIC)

Support Staff: Steve Fester, Randall Johnson, and Mike Dolbow (MetroGIS Staff Support)

Visitors: Jeff Corn (Longfellow Community Council) and Mindy Erickson (Mn/DOT)

2. ACCEPT AGENDA

Cockriel moved and Maki seconded to approve the agenda, as submitted. Motion carried, ayes all.

3. ACCEPT MEETING SUMMARY

Harper moved and Givens seconded to approve the summary for the Committee's March 30, 2005 meeting as submitted. Motion carried, ayes all.

4. SUMMARY OF APRIL 20th POLICY BOARD MEETING

Chairperson Read commented that the actions of most importance by Policy Board at its April 20, 2005 meeting were the adoption of vision statements for the E911 Compatible Street Centerline and Occupiable Units regional solutions, as well as the Board request for staff to arrange for a forum for non-government interest community to identify challenges and opportunities it believes MetroGIS should consider during its Strategic Direction Workshop. She noted that additional information about these topics is provided in the Project Update Report (Agenda Item 6).

5. ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) MetroGIS DataFinder Café – Upgrade Proposal

The Staff Coordinator summarized the proposal as outlined in the agenda report. The group concurred with staff's suggestion to form a special purpose workgroup to better clarify design needs, document costs for design options, and offer a suggested plan of action for Committee's consideration at a subsequent meeting. It was acknowledged that such a plan might point out some actions that could be taken which might not involve out-of-pocket expenditures.

All agreed with the need for the desired plan to be user-driven. It was further agreed that the task of documenting user needs can rely in large part upon the survey conducted by MetroGIS staff in May 2005 (included in the agenda packet) balanced by the opinion of the expert workgroup members as to the functionality that will likely emerge as commonplace even though it is not currently recognized as such by the user community. It was generally agreed that whatever application design is pursued that it should be easy to expand and/or modify.

Finally, the group concurred that the requested plan of action should include (not necessarily be limited to) the following options. (If possible, acquire cost information directly from vendors.):

- 1) Document functionality currently provided by the Café tool (application) that can be acquired via commercial off-the-shelf products and the associated cost.
- 2) Document current Cafe functionality that requires customization and document the cost to fill gaps between commercial off-the-shelf products and current DataFinder Café functionality.
- 3) Offer suggestions, based upon user needs and workgroup member knowledge of the technology environment, for which, if any, of the identified functionality gaps (Item 2) should be abandoned due to insufficient documented need.
- 4) Offer suggestions, based upon user needs and workgroup member knowledge of the technology environment, for any functionality enhancements that have sufficient user need but are not currently supported. The recommendation should include a general migration path (phasing plan) to accommodate the desired enhancements if the findings are not sufficient to complete the entire project at one time. (Note: this phasing plan also applies to Item 5 – the key being flexibility to allow possible expansion of the base design.)
- 5) Identify policy and technical considerations if Café's functionality (delivery of geospatial data and web-services) expands beyond simply finding and downloading source datasets.

Motion:

Craig moved and Givens seconded to create a workgroup tasked with preparing a recommended plan of action that incorporates the direction from the Committee outlined above. Motion carried, ayes all.

The following Committee members volunteered to serve on this workgroup: Gelbmann, Givens, Lorbach, and Maki.

Editor's note: Additional discussion about the importance of stabilizing the Café's functionality occurred during discussion of Agenda Item 5b. In particular, the Committee acknowledged the need to act alone now that LMIC's responsibilities and support resources have been dramatically reduced which no longer permit a collaborative project as had been hoped for last year. The Committee also noted its preference to forward its conclusion on to the Policy Board for consideration at its July 27 meeting that this project has merit for use of project funds.

b) Regional GIS Project Proposals

The Staff Coordinator summarized his findings concerning each of the proposals, as outlined in the agenda materials, emphasizing that each warrants further consideration but that additional information is needed regarding the scope of work and associated expenses. A representative from each proposer was then invited to summarize the specifics of their respective proposals. All concurred with Gelbmann's general comment that offering this opportunity to propose projects for funding via MetroGIS resources provides a valuable forum through which to identify collaboration opportunities that might not otherwise be identified.

Proposal A – Common Parcel Data Query Application Design: Harper, representing the County Data Producers Workgroup which submitted this proposal, summarized the key points of this Proposal (page 18 in the agenda materials) as: 1) it would establish a common framework for online querying of parcel data whether accessed via MetroGIS or an individual county, 2) it is based upon an online application that

is operational in a South Carolina county, 3) the source code would be made available and customizable, and 4) several of the counties are currently in different stages of similar work. This project was conceived because the proposers would prefer to take advantage of this window of opportunity to collaborate and leverage resources; an opportunity that the proposers believe would also greatly benefit the user community. The basic features would be the same from county to county and the regional application but each entity would also have the ability to support functions that the others do not wish to support.

Harper concluded her comments by noting that the proposers believe that a standardized look and feel among the access portals would simplify and enhance access to the unprecedented regional parcel dataset, which has been a key focus of MetroGIS's efforts for the past several years.

The Committee agreed that a standardized application interface across the region could result in substantive efficiencies from the ability to leverage programming and related support resources; in other words, achieve a coordinated enterprise as opposed to the alternative of several similar but uncoordinated applications.

Craig commented that he strongly supports the proposed concept of a coordinated application interface among the counties but **asked who would have access and under what conditions** (e.g., the general public and non-government interests, without the need for prior licensure, or would access continue to be restricted to licensed government and academic interests)? Staff commented that the concept of unlicensed, view-only access to parcel data via an online application has previously been a discussion topic before the Committee and that the Policy Board endorsed such a policy in July 2004 subject to approval by each county in conjunction with a proposal from the Emergency Preparedness workgroup. The group asked Harper to pass this access question along to the proposer workgroup to address in a revised proposal, should it decide to incorporate feedback received from the Committee.

Although all agreed the proposed concept warrants further consideration, several members expressed concern about the appropriateness of purchasing the specified application from an unknown developer. Maki added that this type of application involves a **risk area involving emerging standards**, in particular regarding communications between services, and, as such, cautioned that the documentation needs to be clear on the standards and development processes used to develop the application. Maki further commented that he would prefer the proposed application to be part of a fully integrated enterprise. Whitcraft commented that his area of expertise involves software development and concurred with Maki's cautions. A general consensus was that it would be easier to recommend approval of a **general concept as opposed to the specific application** that is cited in the proposal. Harper made note of this feedback to share with the other proposers.

Laumeyer asked if the staff time needed to pursue this proposal would compete with the need to investigate options for upgrading of DataFinder Café. Staff commented that the workgroups would likely be separate.

A follow-up question from Laumeyer led to a request for more information about the **target user community and how they would benefit**. Harper briefly commented that the target user is not the GIS professional who wants access to source data but rather individuals from many backgrounds and levels of expertise who want a quick answer to a question that can be satisfied with a simple online query. Brown commented that the subject proposal is an attempt to reinvent (improve) the property query service that has been provided for some time by several of the counties.

The final topic of discussion involved the possibility of combining this query/mapping proposal with the analysis of options for addressing desired upgrades to MetroGIS DataFinder Café, given that both are likely to use Internet Mapping Service (IMS) software. It was agreed that the more important task is to clearly establish the **policy foundation as to how best to coordinate data distribution (downloading)**

and mapping needs (e.g., add functionality to Café for mapping or maintain data distribution as a separate application as is the current policy). The Committee concluded that it should task the workgroup created to investigate upgrading of DataFinder Café with developing a recommendation to address this need.

It was agreed to hear the next proposal before offering a recommendation concerning Proposal A.

Proposal B: Populate Attributes in Regional Parcel Dataset: Mike Dolbow, Metropolitan Council GIS Unit, summarized the proposal (page 21 of the Agenda materials). He began his comments by stating that the community is just beginning to scratch the surface of potential uses for the regional parcel dataset, which he believes is a major asset to the community. He noted that although substantial progress has been made to develop this asset, its value could be greatly increased if more of the 66 attributes were to be fully populated, noting that only 13 are currently well populated. He reiterated the long-standing policy that no county would be asked to expend any resources to populate attributes for which they do not have a business need. He encouraged those interested in further details to review the table provided in the metadata for a completeness status of each of the fields associated with the regional parcel dataset.

Dolbow then commented on suggested criteria for setting attribution completion priorities, such as a high priority could be given to situations where data are complete for all but 1 or 2 counties. Another option could be to focus on situations where 3-5 counties have completed 30+ percent of the desired data and that the presence of the remainder of the data would have wide value. Maki cautioned that a project plan is needed to set an expectation of achieving a certain completion threshold. This threshold should be associated with a level necessary to achieve a desired purpose(s) relative to an existing process(es) and that if there is not reasonable assurance this threshold can be met then no action should be taken until the threshold can be reasonably achieved.

Harper commented that Washington County has identified a business need to improve the completeness of its parcel attribute data for its own internal purposes and believes that Washington County officials would be receptive to working with MetroGIS on a project that would address both their and MetroGIS's needs simultaneously (e.g., review each data field, decide type of data needed, and estimate resources needed to capture the desired data.) She commented that a key need is to be able to clearly document the status of missing attribution in a report, noting that such a report is needed to have a productive dialogue with the assessors. She also expressed interest in a program to prototype a needs assessment process. Dolbow commented this type of documentation / prototype needs assessment process is consistent with the proposal before the Committee. This comment led to a short discussion about how the funding could be used, for example, to compensate counties for an intern's or other staff time to assist with desired evaluation and data population efforts. Claypool cautioned that the individual(s) chosen to work on this project must be very familiar with the data.

General Discussion

Chairperson Read summarized the purpose of this agenda item is for the Committee to offer advice as to: 1) whether a proposal has sufficient merit to warrant spending some of the Regional GIS Project funding and 2) the relative merit of each the three proposals presented (two addressed in this agenda item and upgrading DataFinder Café as dealt with in Agenda Item 5a), and general feedback for how the proposals might be improved. Maki commented that the Committee could only respond to the proposals as they are currently presented in the agenda material, unless comment is postponed until questions raised are addressed. The group concurred and elected to comment at this meeting as follows.

Proposal	Concept has Merit	Ready for Policy Board Review
<u>Proposal A</u> (Parcel Data Query Application)	Yes	No**
<u>Proposal B</u> (Complete Missing Parcel Attributes)	Yes	Yes
<u>Proposal C</u> (Upgrade DataFinder Cafe)	Yes	Yes

**Note: The Committee encouraged the proposers to modify their proposal as follows so that it could be considered by the Policy Board on July 27th: 1) Clarify the target audience(s), why the proposed application would benefit them, and any need for modification of current access policies and 2) address the Committee's concerns for purchase of an application developed for a county in another state by an unknown developer.

Relative Merit of Each Proposal

The Chairperson's request that the Committee offer advice on the relative merits of each of the three proposals resulted in resolute comments from Brown, Claypool, Maki, and Laumeier and then concurrence by the Committee that resolving the problems currently faced with an aging DataFinder Café and managing the existing investment is substantially more important than the other two proposals. The Committee's overall ranking was follows:

Proposal	Rank (Relative Importance)
<u>Proposal C</u> (Upgrade DataFinder Café)	1
<u>Proposal B</u> (Complete Missing Parcel Attributes)	2
<u>Proposal A</u> (Parcel Data Query Application)	3

The Committee also concurred that the matter of deciding how to best go about integrating data delivery functionality (DataFinder) with desired mapping and querying functionality should not be permitted to bog down efforts to upgrade the more important DataFinder Café functionality. It was agreed that the DataFinder Upgrade Workgroup should be charged with recommending a plan for how to best go about meeting both needs through an expandable design, including a phased implementation plan, as more funding may be needed than is available in 2005.

Motion:

Brown moved and Givens seconded to recommend to the Policy Board that the Board offer advice to the Metropolitan Council relative to funding each of the three Regional GIS Project proposals received, as follows:

- a) All three proposals have merit for further consideration for funding as a Regional GIS Project.
- b) Their relative ranking of importance to the MetroGIS community is: 1) Proposal C (Upgrade DataFinder Café), 2) Proposal B (Complete Missing Parcel Attributes), and 3) Proposal A (Parcel Data Query Application).

Motion carried, ayes all.

c) GIS Demonstration Topic for July Policy Board meeting

The Staff Coordinator summarized the staff report, which outlined several options for a demonstration to the Policy Board at the July meeting. It was agreed that David Windle should be invited to talk about the web application that the Ramsey County GIS Users Group has developed. The group concurred with Harper's suggestion to ask Windle to include in his presentation an overview about how Ramsey County is leveraging the User Group's investment.

Chairperson Read asked for permission to extend the meeting 15-20 minutes. Permission was so granted.

d) Fill Non-Profit Representative Seat on Committee

Chairperson Read asked Jeff Corn, Community Development Coordinator for the Longfellow Community Council in Minneapolis, to introduce himself and inform the Committee why he would like to serve as its non-profit representative. He commented that he uses GIS technology on a daily basis for

numerous functions and that he is also active in the Minneapolis Neighborhood Information System (MNIS) and the Minnesota 3-D (M3D) project. (Note: The M3D project is in process of developing an Internet-accessible and integrated system of employment, housing and development information and analysis tools for neighborhoods, community development corporations, employment trainers, businesses, central cities, suburbs, counties of the Twin Cities metropolitan region, and the State of Minnesota. The project launched in fall 2004 and is funded with a \$599,000, three-year grant from the federal Technology Opportunities Projects program.)

Craig moved and Givens seconded to accept Jeff Corn's request to fill the non-profit representative seat on the Committee that was vacated by Sandra Paddock when she left Wilder Research. Motion carried, ayes all.

e) Quarterly Performance Measures Anomaly Report

This item was not discussed due to a lack of time.

f) Postpone 9/22 Target Date for Strategic Directions Workshop

The staff Coordinator summarized reasons for recommending postponement of the September 22 target date for the proposed Strategic Directions Workshop, as a result of the Policy Board's request for a non-government perspective forum to precede the Workshop. The group concurred with the proposed postponement and establishment of a target date during the week of September 26 for the proposed non-government perspective forum.

Harper commented that although the postponement might result in the inability to secure Prof. John Bryson to facilitate the Workshop, she concurs that the need for non-government input is a more important consideration. The others concurred as well.

6. PROJECT UPDATES

Staff was asked to speak with LMIC officials for an update on how the recent changes in LMIC's organizational structure and funding might affect MetroGIS's efforts and that this information be passed along by email as opposed to waiting until the next meeting to share it.

There was no other discussion of this report due to a lack of time.

7. INFORMATION SHARING

There was no discussion of this report due to a lack of time.

8. NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

September 21, 2005, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

9. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

Prepared by,

Randall Johnson, AICP
MetroGIS Staff