

**Meeting Summary**  
**MetroGIS Coordinating Committee**  
**MN Counties Insurance Trust Bldg. – Room 313**  
**September 21, 2005**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Read called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and asked the members to introduce themselves.

Members Present: *Cities:* Steve Lorbach (AMM: core cities - City of St. Paul); *Counties:* Dave Drealan (Carver), Randy Knippel (Dakota), Scott Simmer (Hennepin), John Slusarczyk (Anoka), David Claypool (Ramsey) and Jane Harper (Washington); *Federal:* Ron Wencil (USGS); *Metropolitan:* David Bitner (Metropolitan Airports Commission); Rick Gelbmann and Mark Vander Schaaf (shared seat - Metropolitan Council), and Nancy Read (Metropolitan Mosquito Control District); *Schools:* Dick Carlstrom (TIES); *Special Expertise:* Brad Henry (URS Corp.); *State:* David Arbeit (LMIC), Joella Givens (Mn/DOT) and Robert Maki (DNR); *Utilities:* Al Laumeier (CenterPoint Energy).

Members Absent: *Academics:* Will Craig (U of M); *Business Geographics:* Chet Harrison (CB Richard Ellis); *Cities:* Bob Cockriel (AMM: suburban cities - City of Bloomington); *Counties:* Jim Hentges (Scott); *GIS Consultants:* Terese Rowekamp (Rowekamp Associates); *Metropolitan:* Gordon Chinander (Metropolitan Emergency Services Board), *Non-Profits:* [vacant]; *Watershed/Water Management Organizations:* Ned Phillips (Rice Creek Watershed District).

Support Staff: Mike Dolbow, Steve Fester, Randall Johnson, and Mark Kotz

**2. ACCEPT AGENDA**

Henry moved and Givens seconded to approve the agenda, subject to hearing Item 5c following Item 5a and to hear the DataFinder Update proposal prior to the other two Project Updates under Item 5b. Motion carried, ayes all.

**3. ACCEPT MEETING SUMMARY**

Givens moved and Henry seconded to approve the summary for the Committee's June 29, 2005 meeting as submitted. Motion carried, ayes all.

**4. SUMMARY OF JULY 27<sup>th</sup> POLICY BOARD MEETING**

Chairperson Read summarized actions of most importance considered by the Policy Board at its July 27, 2005 meeting. She noted that several testimonials from Board members citing benefits realized from MetroGIS's existence were given following a comment that the Metropolitan Council was in the process of conducting an internal program evaluation of MetroGIS.

**5. ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**a) Emergency Preparedness – Regional Solution Recommendation**

Knippel provided an overview of the Emergency Preparedness Workgroup's recommended internal regional solution as presented in the agenda materials, including the process used by the workgroup to define the proposed solution, proposed data creation and refinement roles that would be shared by the counties, regional data themes that were developed to test the proposed solution and others that will be added as the solution matures, and the website that the solution relies upon to provide access to the various EP datasets that will be part of the envisioned solution.

In response to a question from Maki as to whether any of the subject regional data themes are currently operational, Knippel commented that the seven counties have decided among themselves the "theme manager" role assignment for each of the 14 data themes associated with the Strategic National Stockpile requirements; the web application for providing access is operational on the Council's server that supports

DataFinder; numerous additional data needs have been identified and are listed in the agenda materials; and a web-based method has been implemented by the workgroup to track progress toward fulfilling each of the data needs across all seven counties.

Vander Schaaf commented, and the group concurred, that he would like to see: 1) the list of endorsements from the Emergency Management community expand quickly, 2) a transition begin as soon as practical whereby the leadership positions currently held by workgroup members are filled by members of the Emergency Management community and 3) periodic updates from the workgroup as the interim solution is tested and refined.

Bitner asked if the proposed plan includes incorporating Emergency Preparedness related data that is managed by organizations other than the counties, such as weather and climate data produced by NOAA. Knippel responded that the current focus is on building a base map that is consistent across the seven counties from data typically produced by local government. As the initial focus is achieved and as working relationships are established beyond local government additional data opportunities can be explored.

Harper stated that emergency management services (EMS) officials need to eventually assume leadership roles but also concurred with the workgroup's strategy to build something that can be used to demonstrate how efficiencies can be improved. She emphasized that a window of opportunity currently exists, due to concerns raised by the recent hurricane disasters, to reach out to a higher level of EMS officials regarding desired refinements to the proposed the interim solution; refinements that could expedite development of applications and resources that utilize GIS technology during an emergency.

In response to a comment from Henry, the group concurred that the workgroup should incorporate a couple of examples into the presentation to the Policy Board to help the Board members understand how implementation of the interim solution is expected to benefit the Emergency Management community.

Wencl commented that he strongly supports the proposal because it is totally in line with the vision of the National Map and other federal geospatial initiatives that rely upon aggregation of local data. He also cautioned that the proposal represents a good deal of effort on the part of local officials to accomplish the stated goals. Wencl's comment led to a general discussion about the perceived value of the GIS community's efforts by the Minnesota Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM), given that its Executive Director, Daniel Johnson, has accepted appointment as co-chair of the Emergency Management Committee of the Governor's Council on Geographic Information.

Laumeyer commented that he is surprised by the apparent disconnect in understanding by local emergency managers of existing GIS capabilities as described by Knippel. Harper also asked that the group not assume that each of the county GIS units is well respected, understood, and a go-to for resources, noting that much needs to be accomplished to achieve these attributes in Washington County.

Prior to voting on the proposal, the group agreed that the report to the Policy Board should clearly state which counties have agreed to their designated Regional Theme Manager Role(s) and that the column labeled "owner" in the table listing the various data needs should be changed to Regional Theme Manager. The report should also communicate that organizations other than counties are involved and to name a few examples.

**Motion:**

Henry moved and Givens seconded that the Coordinating Committee:

- 1) Endorse the recommended strategy as described in the Workgroup's Project Report included in the materials as an interim solution to emergency preparedness information needs, including the Workgroup assuming the role of regional custodian, subject to the Workgroup:
  - a) Modifying the label "Owner" to "Regional Theme Manager" in the matrix of data listings,

- b) Taking appropriate measures to ensure that the list of endorsements from the Emergency Management community expands quickly,
  - c) Taking appropriate measures to ensure a transition begins as soon as practical whereby the leadership positions currently held by workgroup members are filled by members of the Emergency Management community, and
  - d) Providing the Coordinating Committee with periodic updates as the interim solutions is tested and refined.
- 2) Recommend that the Policy Board endorse the Workgroup's proposed interim solution and encourage the leadership of each county to commit to its support and any desired further refinement, subject to communicating to the Board that organizations other than counties are involved and that providing a few examples to assist the Board members in understanding the type of benefit expected to be realized by the emergency community from participating in the proposed solution.

Motion carried, ayes all.

**c) Procedures – Conducting Business Between Meetings**

Chairperson Read summarized the circumstances that led to adding this item to the agenda as outlined in the agenda materials.

Harper commented that when she served as the Chair of the Coordinating Committee, decision making between meetings via email occurred on a couple of occasions. She stated that as long as sufficient time is given for responses, it continues to be important to have a procedure in place to accommodate decisions that are needed between meetings since the Committee only meets on a quarterly basis.

The Committee concurred with Harper's support of maintaining a between-meeting decision option and agreed that three working days is a sufficient response period. It was also agreed that the subject line for the email correspondence should have a standard "flag", the decision must be urgent in the opinion of the Chair and standard quorum requirements must be satisfied. In addition, a follow-up message is to be sent to the Committee stating the results of the vote and the course of action to follow.

The Chair and the Staff Coordinator were asked to prepare an amendment to MetroGIS's Operating Procedures for Committee consideration at its December meeting.

**b) Regional GIS Project Proposal Updates**

**(1) DataFinder Upgrade**

Kotz summarized the results of the Workgroup's investigation and methodology used, recommended functional priorities for the Committee's review and comment, and recommended courses of action to achieve the priority functions, as outlined in the a handout given to the Committee at the meeting (see Attachment A). Maki, a member of the Workgroup, commented that DataFinder Café was ahead of its time and as such some of its functionality underutilized. The recommended option provided sufficient functionality for the community's current needs, as well as, adequate flexibility to grow as the need is identified.

Arbeit asked if the Workgroup had taken into account resources available from LMIC in its deliberation of options. Kotz confirmed that the Workgroup is aware of these resources and that as the design specifics are finalized they will be taken into consideration.

The group did not modify the list of functional priorities proposed by the Workgroup but Harper commented, and the group concurred, that the objective should be to select an option that goes as deep into the list of functional priorities as possible, leveraging all available resources. The Committee also agreed with the Workgroup that the specific hardware and software solutions needed to achieve specified functionality should be decided by DataFinder's custodian organization, with the assumption that DataFinder will continue to be hosted by the Metropolitan Council.

**Motion:** Arbeit moved and Wencil seconded to:

- a) Accept the functional priorities as recommended by the Workgroup (see Attachment A)
- b) Accept the Workgroup's recommendation that the Metropolitan Council, serving in its capacity as custodian of the DataFinder application, be permitted to choose between design options 2a-2d with the following understandings: a) the final solution achieves as many of the identified functional priorities as possible, b) all available resources (internal and external) are leveraged and c) the required hardware and software are compatible with the Council's internal needs.

Motion carried, ayes all.

## **(2) Common Web Application**

Knippel summarized update information provided in a handout that he gave to the Committee at the meeting (see Attachment B). He stressed that the intent of this proposed pilot project is to document whether multi-party collaboration to develop and maintain commonly needed web-based geospatial applications improves efficiencies. He explained the: a) target audience for the application as the general public, b) process used to develop the bid specifications, c) intention to receive 2-3 qualified bids from competing vendors, and d) intention to involve all affected parties in the selection process. He commented that the project has stimulated application-related dialogue that had not previously occurred, which the Workgroup perceives as a major benefit of project thus far.

Knippel noted, speaking as the Dakota County GIS Coordinator, that the proposed collaborative model will have more initial overhead than developing the application on their own but that in the long run he is confident that the collaborative arrangement will enable participants to share costs and expertise.

In response to a question from Henry concerning an explanation of the difference between the functionality associated with the proposed DataFinder upgrade and the proposed Common Web Application, Knippel clarified that the proposed common web application is not intended to serve as a data access tool, as is DataFinder, but rather the common web application would limit the user to queries of the source data for specified information supported by the application.

Vander Schaaf asked for clarification about the regional purpose since not all of the counties would be participating, given Hennepin County notice that they would not be participating. Harper commented that the purpose of this pilot project is to evaluate benefits that can be gained from collaboration, which does not necessarily mean all seven counties need to participate. She asked the group to reflect on early strategies employed by MetroGIS to build trust and cooperation and that eventually all seven counties did achieve a common policy regarding access to parcel data. She stated that, as with parcel data, not all of the counties are in the same place regarding geospatial application development and that this proposal is an excellent way to begin to build the environment necessary to achieve greater consistency over time.

Simmer noted that Hennepin County was concerned that the proposal calls for public access to parcel data, which led to the writing of the letter referenced above, and was seen as a potential conflict with their NAZCA installation. County staff believes the proposed functionality is provided by NAZCA, and therefore they see no benefit from participating.

Claypool raised a concern that the vendor that developed Ramsey County's web application that has similar functionality to that proposed via this project was not aware of this project until only recently. The Staff Coordinator asked Claypool if he had reviewed the proposed design specification and if he felt that were skewed to favor any particular vendor. Claypool commented that the proposed design specifications are fine and repeated his concern that a bids need to sought from a broad field of qualified vendors.

Chairperson Read asked for permission to extend the meeting until approximately 3:30 p.m. Permission was granted.

Bitner asked if the Workgroup would be willing to consider a non-ArcIMS solution. Knippel commented that there is no intention of ruling out possible cost-effective solutions. The assumption is that an ESRI-based solution would be the most cost-effective because each county with an IMS implementation utilizes an ESRI software platform and another is planning to install one in 2007.

Drealan suggested that the Committee separate data access concerns from the general concept of investigating efficiencies that can be achieved by collaborating to develop and support commonly needed web applications. He stated that Carver County is in favor of pursuing the pilot because they are convinced that significant efficiency benefits are possible while enhancing their current e-government capabilities. Harper concurred and emphasized that the project should not be viewed as an all or nothing prospect and that development of a framework and incremental implementation has been proven to be an effective approach in the past. She reiterated that she is troubled by the thought that if only five counties are currently willing to participate that the project might not proceed. Knippel reiterated that the goal is to define ways to leverage resources with the understanding that not everyone is in the same place now but that over time greater cooperation is possible if a framework is in place. Henry concurred that a policy to collaboratively pursue support of common application needs is sound.

Maki reaffirmed that the pilot project goal to investigate efficiencies that can be achieved through collaborative design and support of commonly needed applications has a greater purpose than access policy related to any particular data proposed to be accessible via the application.

In response to a comment about the timeframe for securing funding for this pilot project, Vander Schaaf stated that a carry over of the subject funding into 2006 should not be ruled out and that moving slowly to thoroughly evaluate all aspects of the project would be viewed more favorably than rushing the project to meet a year-end budget deadline.

**Motion:**

Drealan moved and Harper seconded to:

- a) Assign the matter of data access policy, in particular pertaining to parcel data, to another workgroup (tentatively the County Data Producers Workgroup) and limit the Common Web Application Workgroup's efforts to investigation of the efficiencies associated with pursuing a collaborative solution to design and support of commonly needed geospatial applications. The Chair and Staff Coordinator were also encouraged to engage in the access policy dialogue and to keep the Committee apprised of progress made to address the issue.
- b) Direct the Workgroup to seek out bids from qualified vendors, evaluate the bids, and share the results with the Committee at its December meeting, with the understanding that no commitment has been made concerning access to licensed data or to spending pilot project funding at this point.

Motion carried, ayes all, with Vander Schaaf/Gelbmann abstaining.

**(3) Fill in Missing Regional Parcel Data Attributes**

There was no discussion of topic at the meeting due to lack of time.

(Editor's note: The proposer is no longer requesting funds for a forum(s) to explore possibilities with each county. The initial proposal requested \$500 for this purpose in 2005. Rather, the proposer plans to conduct interviews onsite with county staff to document the current situation in each county regarding Regional Parcel Data attributes that are yet not populated. The proposer will then offer alternatives compatible with the various county situations.

**d) GIS Demonstration Topic for October Policy Board Meeting**

Henry suggested that the Committee consider demonstrating the Pictrometry product to the Board at its October meeting. Chairperson Read suggested consideration of the website associated with the Emergency Preparedness interim solution. After hearing a short presentation from Gelbmann about the Natural Resources Atlas that was recently developed by the Metropolitan Council, the group concluded that it was a better fit in terms of demonstrating the benefits of data sharing. It was agreed that Pictrometry should be added to the list of options for future consideration.

(Editor's note: Policy Board Chair Reinhardt requested the Emergency Preparedness Workgroup to utilize the website cited above to help the Board members better understand the expected benefits of the proposed regional solution.)

**e) Preliminary 2006 Major Program Objectives**

Chairperson Read summarized staff's suggestion to maintain the same program objectives for 2006 as in 2005 until the pending Strategic Directions Workshop is held, which is tentatively anticipated to occur in spring 2006.

**Motion:** Givens moved and Maki seconded to maintain the status quo in terms of 2006 work programming until the proposed MetroGIS Strategic Directions Workshop is held. Motion carried, ayes all.

**f) Quarterly Performance Measures Anomaly Report**

Due to a lack of time there was no discussion of this item than to accept staff's request to modify the reporting period for document download metric related to performance measurement. The modified policy permits use of reporting based upon standard calendar quarters or metrics which results in data that will be two months old by the time the Committee sees the report.

**g) Google Earth – Possible to Leverage for MetroGIS Community's Needs?**

Due to a lack of time there was no discussion of this item.

**6. PROJECT UPDATES**

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**

December 14, 2005, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

**9. ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 3:49 p.m.

Prepared by,

Randall Johnson, AICP  
MetroGIS Staff