

**Meeting Summary**  
**MetroGIS Coordinating Committee**  
**MN Counties Insurance Trust Bldg. – Room 313**  
**December 14, 2005**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Read called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m., asked the members to introduce themselves and share any information they believe may be of interest to the group.

Members Present: *Academics:* Will Craig (U of M); *Cities:* Steve Lorbach (AMM: core cities - City of St. Paul); *Counties:* Randy Knippel (Dakota), Scott Simmer (Hennepin), and David Claypool (Ramsey) *Federal:* Ron Wencl (USGS); *Metropolitan:* David Bitner (Metropolitan Airports Commission); Rick Gelbmann and Mark Vander Schaaf (Metropolitan Council), and Nancy Read (Metropolitan Mosquito Control District); *Special Expertise:* Brad Henry (URS Corp.); *State:* Joella Givens (Mn/DOT) and Bart Richardson for Robert Maki (DNR); *Utilities:* Al Laumeyer (CenterPoint Energy), and *Watershed/Water Management Organizations:* Ned Phillips (Rice Creek Watershed District).

Members Absent: *Business Geographics:* Chet Harrison (CB Richard Ellis); *Cities:* Bob Cockriel (AMM: suburban cities - City of Bloomington); *Counties:* John Slusarczyk (Anoka), Dave Drealan (Carver), Jim Hentges (Scott), and Jane Harper (Washington); *GIS Consultants:* Terese Rowekamp (Rowekamp Associates); *Metropolitan:* Gordon Chinander (Metropolitan Emergency Services Board), *Non-Profits:* [vacant]; *Schools:* Dick Carlstrom (TIES); and *State:* David Arbeit (LMIC).

(Editor's note: due to heavy snow, four members called to say they could not attend.)

Visitor: Metropolitan Councilmember Pistilli, the Council's representative to the MetroGIS Policy Board.

Support Staff: Randall Johnson and Steve Fester.

The following members shared information for the group:

- Richardson (DNR): a Land Cover Workshop will be held on Friday December 16 for current producers of the source dataset; also, a peer review forum is being planned for 2006 for users to define desired enhancements.
- Givens (MnDOT): MnDOT's base map will soon be available via an ArcIMS application and related applications for general web access to construction activity and maintenance activities are under development, as is a water resources application.
- Wencl (USGS): a Webcast was in progress regarding the orthoimagery initiative described on page 48 of the Committee's agenda packet.

**2. ACCEPT AGENDA**

Givens moved and Henry seconded to approve the agenda, subject to moving Item 5e (2006 schedule) to the end of the agenda. Motion carried, ayes all.

**3. ACCEPT MEETING SUMMARY**

Henry moved and Bitner seconded to approve the summary for the Committee's September 21, 2005 meeting as submitted. Motion carried, ayes all.

**4. SUMMARY OF OCTOBER 19<sup>th</sup> POLICY BOARD MEETING**

Staff summarized actions of the Policy Board at its October 19, 2005 meeting, as outlined in the agenda report.

**5. ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**a) Election of Officers**

Chairperson Read turned the meeting over to Vice-Chair Knippel for the election of a Chairperson for 2006, noting she is willing to serve another year as Chair if that is the wish of the Committee.

Craig moved and Bitner seconded to nominate Nancy Read to serve a second term as Chair. Henry moved and Givens seconded to crease nominations. Motion carried ayes all.

Vice Chairperson Knippel called for the vote to elect Nancy Read as chairperson of the Coordinating Committee for 2006. Craig moved and Bitner seconded to reaffirm Read as the Committee's Chairperson for 2006. Motion carried, ayes all. Knippel turned the meeting back to Chairperson Read.

Chairperson Read asked the Vice Chairperson if he is willing to serve another term as Vice Chair if that is the wish of the Committee. Knippel stated that he is willing with the understanding that if reelected, his willingness to serve again as Vice Chair should not be seen as a willingness to serve as chair the following year.

Craig moved and Givens seconded to nominate Randy Knippel to serve a second term as Vice Chairperson. Henry moved and Givens seconded to cease nominations. Motion carried, ayes all.

Chairperson Read called for the vote on the motion to elect Randy Knippel as Vice Chairperson of the Coordinating Committee for 2006. Henry moved and Givens seconded to affirm Knippel as the Committee's Vice Chairperson for 2006. Motion carried, ayes all.

**b) Metropolitan Council's Program Evaluation and Audit of MetroGIS**

Mark Vander Schaaf, Director of Planning and Growth Management for the Metropolitan Council, introduced himself and commented on his ties to the GIS community while with the City of St. Paul, which included holding the position of GIS Coordinator and serving as chair of the Ramsey County GIS Users Group. He also noted that he had participated in MetroGIS forums and had served as a member of the Coordinating Committee, representing large cities. He then prefaced his remarks by noting that the Council's Evaluation and Audit Report was the source of most of the comments that he would be making and that much of the slide presentation had been created by the Director of the Council's Audit and Evaluation Unit for a presentation on November 7<sup>th</sup> to the Council's Community Development Committee. ([Click here](#) for the presentation slides and [click here](#) to review the Audit Report.)

The presentation began with an overview of the origins of MetroGIS, from the Council's perspective, and a summary of value received by the Council from MetroGIS's efforts. Vander Schaaf then commented on several "potential scenarios" identified in the Report regarding the future of MetroGIS:

- Maintain The Current Structure,
- Cost Sharing For MetroGIS Data,
- Withdrawal Of Council Funding,
- Policy Board As Advisory To The Council, and
- Create A Fee Structure (Non-Government Access) For MetroGIS.

Vander Schaaf then summarized four recommendations presented in the Report:

1. Assess the positive and negative attributes of the options and determine the optimal placement of MetroGIS and its relationship and reportability to the Council.
2. Financial accountability measures for MetroGIS should be established and practiced.
3. The Council should continue to evaluate its role, products and cost-effectiveness of MetroGIS on an ongoing basis.
4. A clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between the Council and the parties involved in MetroGIS should be documented to ensure that all parties understand their role in MetroGIS.

Vander Schaaf concluded his presentation by commenting on proposed immediate next steps, which includes discussion by the Council's Community Development Committee on Monday, December 19, of a roadmap and timeline for acting on the cited recommendations.

Committee members were asked if they had any questions or comments.

Vice Chairperson Knippel asked for clarification of Council's philosophy about providing leadership and fostering collaboration toward regional solutions that benefit the region as a whole. Knippel encouraged the

Council to address this question before launching into a discussion of specifics about MetroGIS. He also noted that he believes that the Audit Report tries to describe MetroGIS in black and white terms and in so doing does not account for the significant benefit from gray areas (intangibles) that are not easily quantified. He offered the example of the Council's current support of a forum to foster regional debate and agreement among all key stakeholders on standards and best practices, noting that this forum has established a trusted cooperative environment that, in turn, is paying dividends beyond the data involved. He also noted that knowledge sharing, which is a core function of MetroGIS, stimulates technology innovations that are resulting in improved effectiveness and efficiencies, also not easily captured in a black and white format (quantifiable inputs and benefits).

Craig agreed, but added comments about the value of MetroGIS to the image of the Metropolitan Council. His survey work, cited in the Audit Report, documented the value that MetroGIS participants placed on the process of being involved in these collaborative activities. Through MetroGIS activities they have come to know and respect others across the region, something that has been invaluable in their own work. They know that MetroGIS is supported by the Metropolitan Council and their image of the Council has improved greatly as a result of MetroGIS activities.

Claypool concurred that the region is a big winner, greatly benefiting from the standards that have been enacted and the duplication of effort that has been eliminated through collaboration to address mutual needs. He also made a point of stressing that the counties have made larger investments than the Council for development of geospatial data.

Claypool then called attention to a few conclusions presented in the Audit Report that he believes demonstrate that the author(s) does not understand MetroGIS well enough to make such statements. He also noted his disappointment that the Scenarios had a negative tone, given the vast benefits to the region and the Council over the past ten years that can be attributed to MetroGIS's efforts. He concurred with Craig that the Council's image has greatly improved over the past ten years among local units of government, due in large part to the collaborative environment fostered via MetroGIS's efforts; efforts which most stakeholders associate with the Council's support to foster the desired collaboration. He emphasized that ten years ago local government generally viewed the Council as bothersome, but that the situation is much different today. Not only are inter-organizational relationships vastly improved but also is the availability of data critical to effectively planning and operating regional systems. He stated that he is especially troubled by the reference in the Report that the Council might not be part of solutions that evolve through MetroGIS's efforts. He suggested that those responsible for this observation need to educate themselves on how decision making is actually conducted within the MetroGIS community. The Council has always been and is expected to remain a respected key stakeholder along with several others. Claypool concluded his remarks by offering a solution to keep the spirit of regional collaboration alive, should the Council decide its participation is no longer desirable. He believes that if such a situation were to arise that the counties would likely create a consortium with which the Council could negotiate to obtain the data they need from the counties.

Laumeyer commented that accomplishments of MetroGIS make his job much easier and speaking generally on behalf of other users, stated these accomplishments are resulting in huge benefits to the region. He also noted that the Council should take pride in the cutting edge efforts of MetroGIS, efforts that have received national and international attention and awards.

Chairperson Read commented that one of the reasons MetroGIS has been successful is that the participants are doing things they have to do anyway but realized they can be more effective over the long term through collaborative solutions. As a result, she believes it is difficult to separate her work in MetroGIS initiatives from her work on related internal projects. She questioned how the Council's GIS staff were going to be able to accomplish the recommendation to segregate and track financial information regarding support of MetroGIS. She also noted that at the November 15 forum "Beyond Government Users: Future Directions for MetroGIS" she had recognized a recurring theme that the non-government community is mobilizing more and more to integrate GIS technology into their respective operations and, as such, are looking for more sources of reliable geospatial data.

Knippel reemphasized that applying a traditional business analysis model to government is flawed because the entities involved are not independent, competing against one another. Rather, government interests that serve

the Twin Cities all have the same clients/stakeholders – the taxpayer - and all have a stake in the successfulness of the region. He emphasized that a structure/philosophy is needed that can achieve and sustain inter-governmental cooperation that, in turn, produces benefits for the whole by looking beyond the interests of individual organizations. He closed by reiterating an earlier observation that the Report seems to be very narrowly defined and ignores intangibles (gray areas) whose benefits are sizable.

Wencl stated that from the perspective of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) and its primary sponsor, the Federal Geographic Data Committee, MetroGIS is a working example of the type of successful regional mechanism needed to achieve the vision of the NSDI. He concurred with Craig and Knippel that the Council is receiving a good deal of credit for its investment to support MetroGIS's efforts to foster collaboration. He also noted that NSDI proponents view the existence of the Policy Board as a major reason for MetroGIS's success. Wencl concluded his remarks by stating that the State of Minnesota should follow MetroGIS's lead and create a complementary mechanism capable of creating and sustaining statewide solutions to common information needs.

Craig commented that in some respects this Report is inconclusive in that it does not take into account intangibles, in particular, benefits to the region as a whole. He also noted that it is difficult to clearly articulate a response to the Council's question "where do we go from here" because the Strategic Directions Workshop has not been held.

Henry postulated that if the Council were to withdraw its funding that the collaborative environment would diminish. He asked the Council representatives if the Council wants the community to revert to the situation that existed when MetroGIS launched: no standards and significant duplication of effort. Vander Schaaf affirmed that the Council does not want the community to revert to the pre-MetroGIS environment. Henry followed with a statement that he believes that the cost to the Council to obtain data it needs from others and put it to use on its own would be more expensive than its cost to support MetroGIS's "foster collaboration" function.

Knippel followed with a question about how MetroGIS can best provide formal feedback to the Council's Evaluation and Audit Report, noting that he believes MetroGIS leadership should pursue an active role in the pending discussions about the recommendations and next steps outlined in the Report. He asked again that before dialogue is initiated on the Report's recommendations, that the Council reach agreement, at a policy level, regarding its interest and willingness to foster a collaborative environment to address common needs important to the region. Claypool emphasized that all affected parties need to be part of the discussions and that the current philosophy of an equal voice among the parties is critical to sustaining effective solutions.

**Motion:** Craig moved and Givens seconded to encourage the MetroGIS Policy Board to:

- Accept the four (4) recommendations presented in the Metropolitan Council's Audit Report for MetroGIS, as described at this meeting by Vander Schaaf.
- Recommend that the current structure be maintained, and
- Encourage the Metropolitan Council to involve MetroGIS stakeholders in the dialog as it examines options.

Motion carried: Nays-0, Ayes-13, Abstain-2 (Gelbmann and Vander Schaaf to avoid conflict of interest)

**c) Modification of Operating Guidelines – Decision Making Between Meetings**

Chairperson Read summarized the proposal, as outlined in the agenda packet. After a brief discussion, the group elected to modify the proposed language to allow the possibility of either the Chair or the Vice Chair appointing a designee if they will be out of the touch who can act in their behalf to initiate and act on proposals for decision-making between meetings.

**Motion:** Claypool moved and Givens seconded to grant first reading to the modify MetroGIS's Operating Guidelines and authorize "between meeting decision-making", as set forth in the amendment dated November 27, 2005, subject to modifying the first bullet in Article II, Section 5b and Article III, Section 9b as follows: The Chairperson and Vice-chairperson, or their respective designee(s), both conclude that the situation is urgent.

Motion carried, ayes all.

**d) 2005 Accomplishments and Annual Report Theme**

Staff summarized the key accomplishments in 2005, as outlined in the agenda materials. Chairperson Read summarized the proposed theme of the annual report “how the existence of MetroGIS is making a difference and facilitating improvements via e-government while doing so”. Craig commented that the theme should be stated more succinctly, but withdrew his remark when he learned that the proposed statement provides guidance for the preparation of the annual report and is not intended to be published. No additions or modifications were offered to either the proposed theme or the listing of accomplishments.

**Motion:** Givens moved and Bitner seconded to direct staff to continue the process of the preparing the annual report, as outlined in the agenda materials. Motion carried, ayes all.

**f) Non-Profit Representative Seat on Committee**

Chairperson Read commented on the process proposed in the agenda materials to fill the non-profit seat of the Committee. It was agreed that staff should contact all four of the candidates listed in the agenda report and ask them if want to be considered as a candidate. If more than one person is interested from a single organization, the Committee decided that the organization should decide who it wants to represent their interest. If more than one candidate is interested, staff was directed to ask each of them to draft a statement of their background and interest in serving that the Committee can review at its next meeting.

**Motion:** Givens moved and Wencil seconded to direct staff to contact each of the four candidates listed in the agenda report and inquire as to their interest in serving on the Committee and to carry out the procedures agreed upon at this meeting. Motion carried, ayes all.

Related Business: At Laumeyer’s request, the Committee briefly talked about the split-seat appointment for utility representation on the Committee. The Staff Coordinator explained she had spoken with Allan Radke, the other representative, on at least two occasions about whether he had an interest in rotating with Laumeyer and that in each case Radke stated that he was comfortable with the current situation. The matter was deemed settled and there was no further discussion.

**g) GIS Demonstration Topic for January Policy Board Meeting**

Craig explained the candidate presentation by Professor Shashi Shekhar as outlined in the agenda materials. The group concluded this presentation would be beneficial to share with the Policy Board at this time, but encouraged the presenter to draw parallels, to the extent possible, with ongoing work of the Emergency Preparedness Workgroup and the street and parcel data available for the Twin Cities. Craig agreed to communicate the Committee’s request to Professor Shekhar.

**Motion:** Givens moved and Knippel seconded to invite Professor Shekhar to present his “Evacuation Planning for Homeland Defense: A Capacity Constrained Routing Approach” presentation as the GIS Technology Demonstration at the Policy Board’s January 2006 meeting. Motion carried, ayes all.

**h) Regional GIS Project Program**

Chairperson Read explained she had added this topic to the agenda to initiate discussion soon on desired changes to the guidelines so that issues encountered in the 2005 program can be addressed before the 2006 program launches, hopefully in March 2006. She then asked for a brief update about each of the three projects that had been considered by the Committee at the September meeting.

Knippel and the Staff Coordinator talked about why a mutual decision had been made to cease the common web application design project as a MetroGIS-funded pilot project. Gelbmann explained that a funding proposal had been submitted for the DataFinder Café Upgrade project and that a decision is expected within the week. The proposal involves a software product called GeoCortex that would be used to enhance the ArcIMS core software that currently supports Café. Finally, the Staff Coordinator noted that the project involving filling in of incomplete parcel data fields has been suspended indefinitely because the project manager (Mike Dolbow) is no longer with the Council.

Chairperson Read suggested the creation of a workgroup to investigate and propose modifications to the 2005 program guidelines for consideration by the Committee at the March meeting that focus on how the process for actually spending the funds and on multiple year projects.

**Motion:** Knippel moved and Bitner seconded to create a workgroup to recommend changes to the Regional GIS Project funding guidelines for consideration by the Committee at the March meeting. Motion carried, ayes all.

Bitner and Vander Schaaf volunteered to work with Chairperson Read and staff. Knippel agreed to assist in terms of helping to understand obstacles encountered with the 2005 common web application design project program proposal. Staff was asked to notify other members who were unable to attend to see if any of them is interested in joining the workgroup.

**i) Preparations for Pending Strategic Directions Workshop**

Chairperson Read noted that the theme for the pending workgroup established by the Committee in spring 2004 of “Are We Done Yet” is consistent with one of the questions raised in the Council’s Evaluation and Audit Report regarding the future of MetroGIS’s efforts. She also called attention to the Council’s conclusion that integrating “GIS and The Web” presents an important opportunity that is also consistent with a MetroGIS strategic initiative included in MetroGIS’s 2003-2005 Business Plan. She noted that the only area that deviated from current MetroGIS focuses involve organizational structure/governance topics. Read Chairperson stated that she believes a distinction can be made between what MetroGIS does and how it is governed regarding preparations for the pending Strategic Directions Workshop. She also encouraged the Committee to continue its preparations for the pending Workshop so as to not lose valuable preparation time, assuming the organizational issues will be resolved in the next few months.

After some discussion about timing and a need to respect the Council’s internal evaluation process regarding its relationship to MetroGIS, the group concurred that it would be helpful to host a technology possibilities forum prior to the Strategic Directions Workshop. The purpose would be to identify how the GIS industry and GIS technology are changing to provide a foundation of possibilities for discussion of strategic direction options for MetroGIS and supplementing ideas offered by non-government interests at the November 15 forum, entitled “Beyond Government Users: Future Directions for MetroGIS”.

It was generally agreed that February, if possible the fourth week, should be the target time for this workshop and that participation should be limited to individuals currently active in MetroGIS. It was also generally agreed that facilitation of this technology-focused workshop would not require the expertise of someone such as Professor John Bryson. Staff was, however, asked to investigate Professor Bryson’s availability for the pending Strategic Directions Workshop. Staff agreed to do so but noted that retaining Professor Bryson might require resources beyond the funding received from the Council.

**Motion:** Givens moved and Henry seconded to create a workgroup of the Committee to plan a Geospatial Technology Possibilities Workshop for February 2006 to identify where the GIS industry and technology are heading as a foundation for the pending Strategic Directions Workgroup. Motion carried, ayes all.

Craig, Knippel, and Vander Schaaf volunteered to work with Chairperson Read and staff to plan for this workshop. Staff was asked to notify each of the original members of the workgroup that had initiated planning for the Strategic Directions Workshop in 2004 to invite them in join the new workgroup.

**j) Annual Performance Measurement Report**

The Staff Coordinator noted that the 2005 Performance Measures Report that had been sent to members prior to this meeting is a preliminary draft because limited staff resources had precluded a more polished document for the meeting. Staff asked the Committee if sufficient detail had been provided concerning findings and conclusions to warrant forwarding an updated version (add summary graphics) to the Policy Board for consideration at its January meeting. Staff shared several key findings recognized from the 2005 performance measures data captured on a monthly basis for each of MetroGIS’s defined performance measures. No additions or modifications were offered regarding the preliminary findings shared with the Committee for comment.

Given the probability that the Policy Board will likely be discussing some aspect of the Council's Evaluation and Audit Report at its January meeting, the Committee concurred that it would be advantageous to also have the 2005 MetroGIS Performance Measures Report on the same agenda. Staff was encouraged to confer with the Committee Chair if direction is desired while finalizing the report for the Board's consideration.

**e) 2006 Meeting Schedule**

Chairperson Read summarized the proposed meeting dates presenting in the agenda report. Givens moved and Claypool seconded to approve the quarterly meeting dates as proposed and to add a special meeting in February for the Committee's proposed Geospatial Technology Possibilities Workshop. Motion carried, ayes all.

**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**

March 29, 2005, 12:30-3:00 p.m. (Special meeting tentatively set for February to prepare for pending Strategic Directions Workshop.)

**9. ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

Prepared by,

Randall Johnson, AICP  
MetroGIS Staff Coordinator

