

**Meeting Summary**  
**MetroGIS Coordinating Committee**  
**MN Counties Insurance Trust Bldg. – Board Room**  
**June 18, 2008**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chairperson Wakefield called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.m. and asked the newest member, Mark Doneux to introduce himself.

Members Present: *Academics:* Will Craig (U of M); *Cities:* Jim Engfer (AMM: core cities - City of St. Paul), Harold Busch (AMM: suburban cities - City of Bloomington); *Counties:* Pete Henschel (Carver), Randy Knippel (Dakota), Bill Brown (Hennepin), David Claypool (Ramsey), and Jane Harper (Washington); *Metropolitan:* David Bitner (Metropolitan Airports Commission), Gordon Chinander (Metropolitan Emergency Services Board), Rick Gelbmann and Mark Vander Schaaf (Metropolitan Council), and Nancy Read (Metropolitan Mosquito Control District); *Non-Profits:* Sally Wakefield (1000 Friends of Minnesota); *State:* Christopher Cialek for David Arbeit (GDA/LMIC), Joella Givens (MN/DOT); *Utilities:* Allan Radke (Xcel Energy); and *Watershed/Water Management Organizations:* Mark Doneux, Capital Region Watershed District.

Members Absent: *Business Geographics:* Patrick Hamilton (CB Richard Ellis); *Counties:* John Slusarczyk (Anoka) and Jim Bunning (Scott); *Federal:* Ron Wencil (USGS); *Schools:* Dick Carlstrom (TIES); *State:* Tim Loesch (DNR); and *Special Expertise:* Brad Henry (URS Corp.)

Open Seats: *GIS Consultants and Non-Profits*

Support Staff: Randall Johnson and Jonathan Blake (MetroGIS staff support team)

Visitors: Mark Kotz (Metropolitan Council and member of the Technical Leadership Workgroup), David Brandt (Washington County and Chair of the Technical Advisory Team), and Bob Basques, City of St. Paul (proposer of a Regional GIS Project).

**2. ACCEPT AGENDA**

Vice Chairperson Wakefield suggested addressing Business Items 5f, g, and h, as needed, after Item 4, to give Chairperson Brown time to arrive so that he could participate in consideration of Item 5a. Member Harper moved and Member Givens seconded to modify the agenda, as suggested. Motion, carried ayes all.

**3. ACCEPT MEETING SUMMARY**

Member Bitner moved and Member Claypool seconded to approve the March 27, 2008 meeting summary, with four modifications (shorten Vander Schaaf's comments second paragraph from the bottom on page 3, change "Owen" to O'Neill in members present section, drop a repeated sentence in 3<sup>rd</sup> to bottom paragraph on page 2, and change "Reliant" to "Xcel" Energy for Member Radke's affiliation in the members present section). Motion carried, ayes all.

**4. SUMMARY OF APRIL POLICY BOARD MEETING**

The Staff Coordinator summarized John Hoshal's presentation about the state's initiative to develop interoperable GIS databases for fire stations, policy stations, hospitals/clinics, and schools for use in responding to emergency situations, noting the methodology developed by MetroGIS's Emergency Preparedness Workgroup is being leveraged. He also mentioned that the commentary about inaccuracies in the federal HISP Gold data did not go unnoticed by Chairperson Reinhardt. She made a point of commenting that involvement of local government in capturing and maintaining these data would go a long way to correcting substantive deficiencies.

The Staff Coordinator also noted that the Board had approved next step recommendations for solutions to shared application needs and 2008-2009 work plans, as recommended by the Committee.

## **5. ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **g) OGC Membership Proposal**

Technical Advisory Team Chairperson Brandt and the Staff Coordinator summarized the request from the Technical Advisory Team for direction from the Committee. A wide-ranging discussion ensued during which the members generally recognized that having an opportunity to comment on standards under development and having access to the specifications while under development would be beneficial. The members also concurred that the expectation that a 10-20 percent time commitment on the part of each participant was unrealistic for the benefit anticipated.

The members went on to recognize a need to clarify expectations of both parties. Staff was asked to follow-up with OGC leadership with a counter proposal that would permit MetroGIS to join as an umbrella organization with the ability to monitor OGC efforts and as a topic arose of interest to MetroGIS, have the ability to assign an individual(s) to participate in the OGC process. The members also generally concurred that the ability to comment on draft proposals would be of more value than the ability to vote, should that distinction have an impact on the membership fee.

Craig commented that he believes that it would be a good idea to get a seat at the table and asked if others would be interested in joining the University to pay for the MetroGIS membership, assuming the OGC is open to modifying the proposal for individual organizations to join under the “aggregate” MetroGIS membership.

The Staff Coordinator agreed to share a draft response with members of the Committee before forwarding it to OGC leadership.

Chairperson Brown arrived and Vice Chairperson Wakefield turned the meeting over to him.

### **a) 2008 Regional GIS Project Proposals**

Chairperson Brown and the Staff Coordinator introduced this agenda item. Vander Schaaf reminded the group that a case needs to be made that the deliverables will provide real value to the region (no ranking of relative importance is intended by the order in which heard):

1) Address Points Editing Tool: Member Read began by noting that one-half of the requested \$13,500 would be used for product development and the other half for project management. She commented that the project management cost is higher than preferred but that sees no choice other than to outsource this task because no single organization has sufficient business need to assign staff to support this work.

Kotz commented that the objective of the proposed editing tool is to facilitate creation of an address point database that does not currently exist. A viability assessment last year estimated that roughly 40 cities would use the editing tool. Data ownership would remain with the cities, the entities that produce the data. He surmised that smaller cities are the most likely users of the proposed web-based tool, which they could use to directly maintain address data which are components of the proposed regional database. Kotz also noted that this tool would supplement, and not in any way interfere with current address transfer methods employed to move data from cities to counties/other entities unless those parties elect on their own to use the tool.

A wide ranging discussion ensued to clarify how the proposed tool is expected to work. The discussion included: interfacing with existing address data capture methods, using open source software as a possibility at the prototype level, explaining how the tool would likely have value for other applications as a foundation to build upon and that using the tool would likely result in more complete and accurate address data. Read concluded her comments by stating the proposal provides substantive time in the design phase to resolve these and other questions to the satisfaction of the parties.

Member Bitner offered two tests to apply to the Committee's review of each proposal, which he also stated he believes this proposal meets:

- (a) Usefulness to the community of the deliverable
- (b) Benefit of the project as a pilot to test solutions to issues that will be encountered by other projects important to the community.

Bitner concluded by stating that he believes the learning that would occur via this proposal would be valuable even if the only a fraction of the target users participated at the outset and that its presence would serve as a valuable catalyst to grow from or to decide that the concept is not viable.

2) Geocoder Extension for Landmarks: Member Read summarized how this proposal would expand the functionality of the currently conceived regional geocoder service. She noted that the \$5,000 estimate is soft because of several unknowns but that the "parks" landmark component is of sufficient value to the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District that it would be willing to consider paying for some of the cost.

In response to a question about sustained availability of data, with sufficient accuracy to be useful in the operation of the proposed service, a wide ranging discussion ensued about whether the landmarks data source could be effectively separated from discussion of the proposed service. In the end, it was generally agreed that an initial data source would be The Lawrence Group's landmarks dataset. It would be used to test the prototype and define improvements desired by the users to not only the service but to the data as well.

3) Implementation of a Community Based Hardware Infrastructure:

Bob Basques, the proposer and member of the Technical Advisory Team, began his comments by stating that the requested funding would be used to facilitate the prototyping of the concept. The required hardware would be donated by the City of St. Paul and the software would be no cost as it would leverage open source products. Included in the project would be development of authentication and data security enhancements. He closed his remarks by stating that the data management "backend" has been well thought out and that the project funding would be used for distribution-related functionality advancements.

In response to the initial question from the Committee asking for an explanation of how the proposed functionality would differ from the objectives set for DataFinder, Mr. Basques commented that the additional functionality would permit the data producer to define various settings for how their data are viewed (e.g., cartographic settings) and directly manage their data (update when they wish without going through the DataFinder manager as is presently the case) – in effect a more advanced means to accomplish part of the mission of DataFinder.

Mention of the proposed ability to set various cartography settings spurred a brief conversation about whether DataFinder is about access to data or access to information derived from the data, and that the latter is not currently being within the scope of DataFinder's objectives. Kotz noted that the proposal is consistent with the current thinking DataFinder/GeoServices Finder models, noting that each supports a searchable library of metadata for which the described data or web services can reside elsewhere, that is, the data and services do not have to be present on the DataFinder/GeoService Finder servers.

Several members commented that they would prefer to know that data producers would use the proposed functionality before authorizing scarce resources for a prototype. Staff commented that efforts have been made to encourage data producers to publish their data via DataFinder for nearly a decade with only limited success. Despite encouragement, to date, only 10 organizations publish metadata and only 8 organizations actually distribute their data via DataFinder.

In response, member Bitner commented that MetroGIS's emphasis in the past has been to precede investments with needs assessments. He also surmised that application-based investments, which are relatively new to MetroGIS's focus are different and warrant consideration of the "rapid prototype design process", acknowledging that each has its pros and cons but that for an expenditure of this

limited of an amount, the pros appear to outweigh the cons. Chairperson Brown responded by stating that the rapid prototype process is difficult to justify when asking others to fund the project.

Basques concluded his comments by offering to reduce the funds requested by one-half, noting to the basic concept could be prototyped for the lesser amount and that currently included enhancements could be pursued at a later time if the basic concept is demonstrated to be valuable.

#### 4) MetroGIS Mailing Label and Property Comparables Web Service Project

Member Knippel commented that a principle objective of this proposal is to demonstrate the usefulness of intelligent web services or component web services. The project would create a practical deliverable that queries the regional parcel dataset and returns information to users, in this case, mailing labels. Acknowledging that more funding had been requested than is available, he offered to reduce the scope of the project by dropping the property comparable component and thereby reduce the funds requested to \$5,000, noting that the basic concept can be evaluated with a less ambitious scope. He also noted that Dakota County is willing to host the proposed prototype application.

Knippel then summarized other benefits of the project in addition to the demonstrating the value of “component web services”, which included:

- (a) The technology/code developed could be reused for a base from which to develop other services that query against parcel data.
- (b) The open source solution would be available to application developers to leverage as the opportunity presents itself for solutions that do not involve parcel data.

In response to a question, Knippel commented that this component web services proposal would provide substantially more flexibility than the previous single purpose, “monolithic” mailing label application developed by MetroGIS which was retired a couple of years ago due to limited use. He noted that the proposed “component” solution would permit users to package the deliverable into their own applications and, thereby, eliminate the need to reinvent the technology with each new application. The proposed service would also be designed to support both spatial and attribute queries in such a way that the functionality would be portable for other uses.

In response to a question about who would have access to the application, given that it would “run” on the licensed regional parcel dataset, Knippel commented that the licensing uses are separate from the technology development. He added that he believes the presence of the proposed technology will help frame the policy issues, clarify ramifications for use beyond currently licensed users of parcel data, and provide a platform to test and implement tools to achieve access policy objectives.

The issue of missing and incomplete data was also raised with relationship to usability of the proposed address labels. Most agreed that the presence of this application would serve as a catalyst to improve accuracy and completeness of address data maintained within parcel records and that the technology should not be shied away from because the data currently are not as complete as desired. Most also agreed that the principal users, at least initially, would like be small communities that do not have internal capacity to buy, build, or integrate these web services on their own.

Committee Discussion: Chairperson Brown led the members through a voting-based exercise to decide the relative value of the proposals to the community. The results were as follows. The question was “do you think this project should be funded as Regional GIS Project”:

	<u>Yes</u>
• Address Points Editing Tool	13
• Geocoder Extension for Landmarks	12
• Implementation of a Community Based Hardware Infrastructure	4
• MetroGIS Mailing Label and Property Comparables Web Service Project	13

(Editors note: The proposers abstained from voting.)

Chairperson Brown then encouraged the members to offer suggestions as to the amount of funding that should be allocated to each proposal. With the exception of the “Implementation of a Community Based Hardware Infrastructure”, the funding amounts requested during the presentations were found acceptable. The group asked Mr. Basques if his project could use the \$1,500 not allocated to the three higher ranked projects. In the end, no funding was offered to Mr. Basques’ proposal because a specific deliverable important to the community could not be clearly articulated or guaranteed.

A brief discussion ensued as to whether the \$1,500 remainder of available funds could be utilized by the other three proposals but no decision was made. During the discussion, Staff confirmed that the budget for this program would not be reduced in subsequent years if 100 percent of the funds were not used in this program year.

**Motion:** Member Bitner moved and Member Harper seconded to recommend that the Policy Board recommend that the Metropolitan Council authorize the following funding allocations:

• Address Points Editing Tool	\$13,500
• Geocoder Extension for Landmarks	\$5,000
• Implementation of a Community Based Hardware Infrastructure	\$0
• MetroGIS Mailing Label and Property Comparables Web Service Project	\$5,000
	\$23,500

Motion carried, ayes all

**c) Leadership Development Plan**

Consideration was postponed to the September meeting due to time constraints.

**d) GIS Demonstration for July Policy Board meeting**

The Staff Coordinator introduced this agenda item, noting that Chairperson Reinhardt had asked the Committee to consider inviting someone from the University of Minnesota to talk about the article entitled “Twin Cities Regional Parcel Data and Community Revitalization” that had been recently published in a national report by the Lincoln Land Institute of Land Policy.

Member Craig briefly explained the study and noted that Jeff Matson, a member of the U of M project team, could be available to make the presentation if the Committee so desired.

The Committee concurred with comments from Member Bitner that the Land Institute Study would be a good topic for the July Policy Board meeting and also that staff should encourage the leadership of the Twin Cities Economic Development Website to consider presenting at the October Board meeting. The Staff Coordinator agreed to follow-up with the Twin Cities Economic Development Website leadership.

**b) Regional Geocoder Application – Status Report**

Member Read commented that the project team expects the regional geocoder project to be completed before of the Committee’s September meeting and that a final report can be presented at that time. In the mean time, she encouraged the members to use the test version of application and to get back to her with any comments and or suggested improvements. She agreed to forward the URL for the test service to the Staff Coordinator who agreed to forward it to the members.

**h) Job Seekers – Policy Regarding Circulation of Resumes**

The Staff Coordinator explained the current procedures, as outlined in the agenda report. The members concurred with Member Craig’s preference that job seekers should be directed to the job listings posted on the GIS/LIS Consortium website. Craig preceded his comments with a statement that on the basis of an informal survey of organizations that had posted job openings on the Consortium site that most of those jobs had are filled by applicants who discovered them via the Consortium site. In the end, it was decided that the value of circulating resumes is not a good use of staff or Committee member time relative to directing the job seekers to the Consortium site.

A suggestion was also taken under advisement by GIS/LIS Consortium board members, who are also Committee members, to look into the option of providing prospective job seekers with a means to post their resumes on the Consortium website.

**e) Shared Application Needs – Phase II Workgroup Scope**

Mark Kotz, chair of the Technical Leadership Workgroup (aka Shared Application Needs Workgroup), explained that the workgroup members are seeking authorization from the Committee to proceed with a more integrated process of defining and addressing shared application and web service needs than had been originally anticipated when the workgroup was created by the Committee in March. Specifically, the workgroup requested permission to work on Steps 2-5 listed in the table on page 50 of the agenda packet as an integrated project in accordance with the organizational structure illustrated on page 49 of the packet. Kotz noted that the original direction was to address only Step 2 in the table of activities.

No objection was raised to the Workgroup's proposal and Committee thanked the workgroup for accepting this additional responsibility.

**f) Filling Open Seats on the Committee**

Member Craig moved and Member Harper seconded to appoint Larry Charboneau, with The Lawrence Group, to fill the GIS Consultant seat on the Committee that had previously been held by Terese Rowekamp, who resigned effective the March meeting. Motion carried ayes all.

Due to lack of sufficient time, there was no discussion of how the Committee wishes to proceed with filling the vacant Non-Profit representative seat on the Committee.

**6. PROJECT UPDATES**

There was no discussion of the items presented in the agenda materials.

**7. INFORMATION SHARING**

There was no discussion of the items presented in the agenda materials.

**8. ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Prepared by,

Randall Johnson, AICP  
MetroGIS Staff Coordinator

*and*

Mark Kotz  
Chair of the MetroGIS Technical Leadership Workgroup