



Policy Board Members:

Victoria Reinhardt,
Chairperson
Ramsey County

Jim Kordiak,
Vice-Chairperson
Anoka County

Tom Egan,
Dakota County

Gary M. Delaney,
Carver County

Conrad Fiskness,
MAWD

Dennis Hegberg,
Washington County

Dan Cook,
TIES

Randy Johnson,
Hennepin County

vacant,
(Large Cities)
AMM

Terry Schneider,
City of Minnetonka
AMM

Joseph Wagner,
Scott County

Tony Pistilli,
Metropolitan Council

Coordinating Committee

Nancy Read,
Chairperson
MMCD

Randy Knippel,
Vice-Chairperson
Dakota County

Staff Coordinator

Randall Johnson,
Metropolitan Council

Wednesday, October 19, 2005

6:30 p.m.

**Metropolitan Council -- Room 1A
230 East Fifth Street, St. Paul, MN**

Agenda

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Mission Statement

“Provide an ongoing, stakeholder governed, metro-wide mechanism through which participants easily and equitably share geographically referenced data that are accurate, current, secure, of common benefit and easily usable.”

Meeting Summary
MetroGIS Policy Board
Room 1A, Metropolitan Council's Mears Park Offices
July 27, 2005

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Reinhardt called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Members Present: Gary Delaney (Carver County), Tom Egan (Dakota County), Victoria Reinhardt (Ramsey County), Joseph Wagner (Scott County), Molly O'Rourke for Dennis Hegberg (Washington County), Conrad Fiskness (Metro Watershed Districts), Terry Schneider (AMM- City of Minnetonka), and Tony Pistilli (Metropolitan Council).

Members Absent: Jim Kordiak (Anoka County), Randy Johnson (Hennepin County), Dan Cook (School Districts - TIES), and [vacant] (AMM - Large City Rep.).

Coordinating Committee Members Present: Nancy Read (Chairperson), David Arbeit, Rick Gelbmann, Jane Harper, Brad Henry, and Randy Knippel.

Visitors: Mark Vander Schaaf (Metropolitan Council), Dennis Welsch (City of Roseville), and David Bauer and Steve Lorbach (Ramsey County GIS Users Group).

Support Staff: Randall Johnson and Steve Fester.

2. ACCEPT AGENDA

Member Pistilli moved and Member Fiskness seconded to approve the meeting agenda, as submitted. Motion carried, ayes all.

3. MEETING SUMMARY

Member Egan moved and Member Pistilli seconded to accept the April 20, 2005 meeting summary, as submitted. Motion carried, ayes all.

4. GIS TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATION

The Staff Coordinator introduced David Windle and the demonstration topic. To David's surprise, Chairperson Reinhardt then presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation for his decade of leadership to the Twin Cities geospatial community. David will be moving shortly to his homeland of Australia.

Mr. Windle began his demonstration of the Ramsey County Online Maps and Data application by briefly explaining that the Ramsey County GIS Users Group pursued this application to provide easy access to countywide data with enough functionality to be useful, but not so much as to overwhelm the average user. He noted cost savings that the user group participants are realizing due to a significant reduction in calls for information that can now be readily acquired via the application (30+ percent reduction in Roseville). Ramsey County is also benefiting from improved data as a result of many new users identifying anomalies in the data. Windle also commented that the regional Planned Land Use dataset created via MetroGIS's efforts and the Council's regional existing land use dataset also play important roles in support of the application in addition to imagery, planimetrics and parcel data produced by Ramsey County and zoning data produced by the cities. He also noted that The Lawrence Group (TLG) had granted the User Group permission to use their street centerline data in such a way as to allow street intersections to be geo-referenced and located via query in the same manner as addresses to support public safety needs.

Windle then provided a live demonstration of many of the information query and viewing functions supported by the application. The User Group maintains both Intranet and Internet versions of the application. The primary difference is that the Intranet version supports queries by property owner name,

whereas, the Internet (public) version does not. The handouts from this presentation can be viewed at <http://www.metrogis.org/teams/pb/meetings/windle.pdf>.

Member Egan asked a question about the accuracy of the data and how the user can be reasonably assured that the data are reliably represented. Windle commented that a disclaimer visible on all pages of the application encourages the user to read the metadata (data about data) that are provided for each dataset to learn about the data's characteristics (accuracy, currency, etc.). The disclaimer also stipulates that the data being viewed are a representation of reality and that it is the user's responsibility to determine if the data are suitable for the intended use.

Another member asked about the accuracy of the buffer tool, e.g., can the generation of mailing list for properties within a 350-foot radius of a specific property satisfy code requirements? Windle replied that the GIS buffering function is, in fact, more accurate than manual methods to identify properties within the desired distance. That said, he also stressed that users need to speak with someone from the organization that administers the rules to make sure use of a GIS will meet all of their requirements. Member Schneider concurred.

Chairperson Reinhardt thanked Mr. Windle for talking time out his last days with Roseville to share this application with the Policy Board and wished him and his family well in their relocation to Australia.

5. ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) Regional GIS Project Funding Proposals

Coordinating Committee Chair Read introduced all three proposals for funding as Regional GIS Projects and summarized the Committee's respective recommendation, noting that each satisfies the prescribed guidelines. She then introduced a representative for each proposal to explain the key points of the information provided in the agenda materials.

(1) Common Application Design for Web-based Data Queries

Randy Knippel, Coordinating Committee member and lead author of this proposal by the County Data Producers Workgroup, noted that the proposed application would provide a common look and feel for access to the regional datasets, whether via applications hosted by MetroGIS, the counties or others, as well as to other data such as those currently supported by the Ramsey County GIS Users Group. He emphasized that although the core functions would be the same for all installations of the proposed application, each host would have the ability to add functions that others may not need or want but that there would be no substantive difference in the general appearance from one installation to another – the user would simply have one or more additional buttons (tools) available to them on the more sophisticated sites.

Knippel explained another important objective is to permit all of the hosts to share expertise and resources to manage the sites, potentially resulting in significant efficiency improvements for the producers/hosts in addition to improved ease of use by the users. He concluded his remarks noting that the cost is not expected to exceed \$16,000.

(2) Fill in incomplete fields in Regional Parcel Dataset

Coordinating Committee member Gelbmann commented that this proposal would be pursued in two phases: a research component in fall 2005 that is not expected to exceed \$500 and a data capture/refinement component in 2006 that could involve \$22,000+. He stressed that the component planned for 2005 needs to be completed before a reliable cost can be determined for the 2006 component but, more importantly, that the 2006 funding is not requested at this time. The 2006 component would be considered along with any other proposals that might be submitted for those funds. Regardless of whether the project moves forward in 2006, the research proposed in 2005 would be valuable.

Gelbmann commented on the significant progress that has been made in the five years since MetroGIS implemented the initial regional parcel dataset and began efforts to normalize data produced by each of the counties for the specified descriptors (attributes) of parcels. He commented

that over this period the number of attributes has grown from 9 to 66, with an increase from 25 to 66 in 2004. So far, 13 of these 66 attributes are produced by all seven counties and normalization strategies are in place to permit “apples to apples” comparisons across the seven county area. Gelbmann then talked about the range of current completion for the remaining 53 attributes and the general strategy anticipated to accomplish this proposal and commented on some of the reasons for the missing information (e.g., differences in how the respective counties organize their data, some can be easily be added when identified, and others require further investigation to determine whether they can be cost-effectively filled.) He emphasized that no county will be asked to support any data management activities for which they do not have a business need. The thought is that there may be several one-time projects to convert or capture data that the counties would agree to support once the initial acquisition is complete.

Policy Board member Pistilli asked if the 2006 funding component is included in MetroGIS’s budget request that was submitted to the Council in April. Gelbmann confirmed this is the case.

(3) MetroGIS DataFinder Café – Update Proposal

Coordinating Committee member Gelbmann commented that DataFinder Café currently is utilized for 25 percent of the data downloads via DataFinder, with an upward trend. He summarized three capabilities available to Café users that are not available if the users are downloading data through the other method (FTP). These capabilities are the ability to: clip data for user specified areas, bundle multiple data themes in a single download, and acquire the desired data in several formats “on the fly.”

Gelbmann also noted that Café is three years old and that several of its software and hardware components need to be upgraded, which is the basis for this proposal. He commented that a survey of users is in progress to make sure that the design team is well aware of user preferences before deciding on a plan of action. He also commented that the Coordinating Committee has directed the design team (assuming the Board concurs this is a worthy project) to identify a broad architecture for not only data distribution but also for Internet querying and viewing of commonly needed data and to define how Café fits within the broad architecture. The goal is to complete the design work in time to complete the project or enter into a contract by year-end.

Board members discussed the relative merits of all three proposals. There was general concurrence with the Coordinating Committee’s conclusion that upgrades to DataFinder Café should be the highest priority. The notion of shifting all of the available project funds to Café was considered but ultimately the Committee’s suggestion to fund all three proposals was accepted by the Policy Board with the understanding that if a project cannot be fully funded, then whatever component(s) is funded must provide a value equal or greater to the amount invested. In other words, partially funded projects that would serve little or no purpose until additional funding is available are not to be initiated with the subject funds.

A question arose about the Policy Board’s role as advisor to the Council relative to expending the subject \$22,000 that are included in MetroGIS’s 2005 budget for this purpose. Mark Vander Schaaf, representing the Council, stated that he sees merit in all three proposals as potential complimentary components to an e-government initiative currently underway at the Council but that more information is needed to determine how the components would fit together. There was a brief discussion related to the Policy Board’s authority to authorize expenditure of funds that are part of MetroGIS’s approved budget. Member Pistilli, the Metropolitan Council’s representative to the Policy Board, commented a recent shift in preferences by Council management pertaining to MetroGIS’s affairs may warrant elevating the governance-related discussion to a higher level.

Motion: Member Pistilli moved and Member Egan seconded that the Policy Board:

- 1) Conclude that all three 2005 Regional GIS Project proposals, as cited in the agenda materials, have merit that warrants preparation of detailed design, cost, and phasing options for further consideration,

with the understanding that if a project can not be fully funded that whatever component(s) is funded must provide a value equal or greater to the investment funds via MetroGIS.

- 2) Authorize use of up to \$1,700 for upgrades to DataFinder from funds previously donated¹ to MetroGIS.
- 3) Forward recommendations to the Metropolitan Council that it authorize allocation of:
 - (a) Up to \$16,000 of the budgeted \$22,000 to Proposal A: (Joint Web Application)
 - (b) Up to \$500 of the budgeted \$22,000 to Proposal B: Parcel Attributes (only 2005 component)
 - (c) The remaining portion of the budgeted \$22,000 (at least \$5,500) to DataFinder upgrades, in combination with budgeted maintenance funds (\$10,000), special grants (\$15,000), and donated funds (\$1,700).

This recommendation acknowledges that the actual funding amounts may vary somewhat from those approved here after specific solutions for each proposal are developed. Requests to spend funds for specific solutions within these recommended projects may be sent directly through the Metropolitan Council to expedite the procurement process.

Motion carried, ayes all.

b) Regional Parcel Dataset – Policy for Unlicensed, View-Only Access

The Staff Coordinator briefly summarized the reason for requesting a one-year time extension for this policy proposal, as outlined in the agenda materials.

Member Egan moved and Member Fiskness seconded that the Policy Board:

- 1) Affirm its July 2004 finding that a policy of unlicensed, view-only access to parcel data has merit for further consideration as a regional best practice.
- 2) Extend to July 2006 its sunset provision to achieve county affirmation that the subject proposal is consistent with their respective needs.

Chairperson Reinhardt commented on the importance of continuing to support the collaborative progress that has been demonstrated.

Motion carried, ayes all.

6. MAJOR PROJECT UPDATES

a) County Data Producers Workgroup

Chairperson Reinhardt encouraged the members to review the materials in the agenda packet.

b) Business Information Needs:

Randy Knippel, Coordinating Committee member and Chair of the MetroGIS Emergency Preparedness Workgroup, updated the Board on the Workgroup's activities over the past few months. The two items of most significance have been the group's efforts to: 1) bridge the gap in the 911 GIS community's understanding of resources that are available from the GIS community and to continue to strengthen ties with the Governor's Council on Geographic Information and, 2) formalize a proposal for support of data important to the 911 community that engages local government officials in ongoing maintenance to ensure accuracy, completeness, and currency consistent with local government needs. This proposal is tentatively scheduled to be considered by the Coordinating Committee in September. There were no other project updates due to lack of time. Chairperson Reinhardt encouraged the members to review the materials in the agenda packet.

¹ A program was established in 1998 through which the Council agreed to serve a custodian of a fund to manage donations to MetroGIS, the use of which to be determined by the Policy Board. Donations in excess of \$24,000 had been received through December 1999 from the sale of 1997 Council imagery and street centerline data by The Lawrence Group. No donations have been received since that time. In 2002, the Policy Board authorized an expenditure of \$21,750 toward implementation of DataFinder Café. In 2005, the Board has also authorized up to \$750 from this account for support of the proposed Strategic Directions Workshop.

c) Non-Government Perspective Forum: Preparations Underway

Member Schneider commented that an objective of this proposed forum is to identify opportunities to supplement or possibly replace reliance upon the Metropolitan Council to fund MetroGIS's collaboration function. He mentioned that he had originally proposed that MetroGIS host such a forum at the April Board meeting following several years of discussion about the funding resources for MetroGIS's efforts and that the proposed forum is needed to determine opportunities that may exist within the private sector. The focus would be on dialogue, not commitment.

Member Schneider also informed the Policy Board that Council management has asked the Staff Coordinator to postpone this forum, which is currently planned for September 29th, and the Strategic Directions Workshop until next spring 2006 to provide the Council sufficient time to digest the results of its internal evaluation of MetroGIS's efforts relative to the Council's needs. Member Schneider commented that he does not believe the Non-Government Perspective Forum should be postponed until spring, noting the information received would not lose validity. Consequently, he recommended that the Policy Board Chair should assume responsibility to set the forum date, following discussion with Council staff.

Chairperson Reinhardt asked if sufficient funds exist in MetroGIS's 2005 approved budget to support the Non-Government Perspective Forum, to which staff responded in the affirmative noting that much of the support would be provided by dedicated staff and volunteers.

Mark Vander Schaaf commented that he would not object to holding the forum earlier than next spring if the information received would not lose validity as noted by Member Schneider. Member Schneider affirmed this would be the case and that he preferred sufficient time to digest the results before the Strategic Directions Workshop.

Motion: Member Pistilli moved and Member Schneider moved to direct Policy Board Chairperson Reinhardt to set a date she believes would work best for all involved. Motion carried, ayes all.

Member Fiskness commented that after nearly ten years of operation it is important for the Policy Board to engage in strategic planning to evaluate all aspects of MetroGIS's operations, identify functions/policies that need improvement, and pursue appropriate courses of action to ensure continued effectiveness. He also concurred that the proposed Business Sector Forum should be held before the Board pursues its strategic planning exercise.

7. INFORMATION SHARING

David Arbeit, Director of the newly created state Office of Geographic and Demographic Analysis, commented on the creation of this new office as a good thing as state leadership is now recognizing that everything has a geographic component and several related offices are now consolidated into one unit. He affirmed LMIC's programs that related to geospatial collaboration were preserved so that the past relationship with MetroGIS and with the Governor's Council on Geographic Information should be able to be maintained.

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 19, 2005.

9. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Prepared by,
Randall Johnson, AICP
MetroGIS Staff Coordinator



TO: MetroGIS Policy Board

FROM: Coordinating Committee
Chairperson: Nancy Read, Metropolitan Mosquito Control District
Staff Contact: Randall Johnson (651-602-1638)

SUBJECT: GIS Technology Demonstration
Natural Resources Atlas Application – Made Possible Via Data Sharing

DATE: September 29, 2005
(For the October 19th meeting)

INTRODUCTION

The Policy Board has asked for a demonstration of GIS technology to be a regular component of each of its meetings.

For the Board's October 2005 meeting, the Coordinating Committee has selected the Natural Resources Atlas GIS Application developed by the Metropolitan Council using freeware known as ArcReader, which is distributed by ESRI, a world leader in GIS software and technology.

This application will be available without charge from the Council. It will be packed on a CD along with a host of data produced by several organizations. The open data sharing atmosphere fostered by MetroGIS makes it possible to create this application.

PREVIOUS GIS TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATION TOPICS

Refer to the listing on the next page.

RECOMMENDATION

No action requested.

REFERENCE SECTION

- July 2005: Ramsey County GIS User Group's Internet Mapping Service (IMS) site
- Apr. 2005: How Watershed Districts Are Benefiting from MetroGIS's Efforts
- Jan. 2005: Regional Mailing Application
- Oct. 2004: Improving Operational Effectiveness with GIS - Dakota County's Experience
- Jul. 2004: City of Roseville's Combined Use of Socioeconomic Data and GIS Technology to Improve Decision Making and Service Delivery
- Apr. 2004: Metro 911 Board initiative to integrate GIS into day-to-day operations of 27 Metro Area PSAP's
- Jan. 2004: Scott County's Use of GIS technology to improve intra-department efficiencies
- Oct. 2003: GASB34 – GIS Technology's Relevance
- Jul. 2003 Minneapolis Neighborhood Information System use of GIS and data sharing activities
- Apr. 2003 Metropolitan Mosquito Control District use of GIS and benefits from MetroGIS
- Jan. 2003: Emergency Management Response applications developed by Carver and Washington Counties.
- Oct. 2002: Metropolitan Airports Commission use of GIS and benefits from MetroGIS
- Jul. 2002: MetroGIS DataFinder Café Rollout
- Mar. 2002: Presentations from each metro county regarding their respective GIS programs
- Jan. 2002: GIS's role in responding to the World Trade Center tragedy – Mapping Ground Zero (*Paul Olson, Grand Rapids Office of the Minnesota DNR - Division of Forestry*)
- Oct. 2001: TIES – Benefits to School Districts as a result of MetroGIS
- Jul. 2001: DataFinder And Functionality Sought Via Proposed Internet-Enabled Data Distribution Mechanism (*since named DataFinder Café*)
- Apr. 2001: LMIC's Metro viewer software: A Mapping Tool for the Public
- Jan. 2001: Regional Census Geography and Legislative Redistricting Software/Process
- Oct. 2000: North Metro I-35W Corridor Coalition's Socio-Demographic Database Development
- Jul. 2000: DataFinder and Council's Internet-based Existing Land Use Application
- Apr. 2000: Regional Parcel Dataset (Version 1)
- Jul. 1999: Presentation to House of Representatives Subcommittee on June 9th
- Apr. 1999: North Metro I-35W Corridor Coalition GIS Capabilities
- Nov. 1998: Orthoimagery and its Uses
- Sep. 1998: DataFinder and Dakota County's Parcel Query Application
- Jan. 1997: Benefits from GIS in general and uses being made by all classes of stakeholders represented on the Policy Board



TO: Policy Board

FROM: Coordinating Committee
Chairperson: Nancy Read, Metropolitan Mosquito Control District
and
Emergency Preparedness Information Needs Workgroup
Chairperson: Randy Knippel, Dakota County (952-891-7080)

SUBJECT: Emergency Preparedness Information Needs – Interim Regional Solution Report

DATE: October 5, 2005
(For the Oct. 19th Meeting)

INTRODUCTION

The Coordinating Committee respectfully requests suggestions from a policy maker perspective regarding the proposed regional Emergency Preparedness (EP) spatial data support procedures prior to initiating the next phase of testing. The attached MetroGIS EP Workgroup Report, dated September 1, 2005, provides details of proposed organizational roles and responsibilities developed by the Workgroup over the past year in conjunction with representatives of the EP community.

The principal purpose of the proposed regional process is to clearly communicate priorities and custodian roles for development and maintenance of geographic data needed to carry out emergency management business functions. Officials from each of the seven counties have been actively involved in the development of this proposal, along with officials from other affected parties. If the process is successful, it will allow production of the needed data with less time and effort than it would take for each county to do on their own to support their respective internal needs.

The proposed solution is labeled as “interim” until testing is completed, at which time it can be brought to the Policy Board for endorsement as a formal regional solution. An overview schematic of the proposed data refinement process is provided on page 3 of this report.

Several statements of support have been received from other non-county members of the EP community (refer to the Reference Section).

COORDINATING COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

On September 21, 2005, the Coordinating Committee unanimously endorsed the proposed interim regional Emergency Preparedness solution, as described in the Workgroup’s Project Report dated September 15, 2005, as an interim solution to emergency preparedness information needs, including the Workgroup assuming the role of regional custodian, and agreed to forward this proposal to the Policy Board for consideration, 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,
- d) Communicating to the Board that organizations other than counties are involved,
- e) Providing a few examples to assist the Policy Board members in understanding the type of benefit expected to be realized by the emergency community from participating in the proposed solution, and
- f) Providing the Coordinating Committee with periodic updates as the interim solution is tested and refined.

PROJECT OVERVIEW - EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT INFORMATION NEED

The purpose of the proposed regional solution is to enable emergency managers to quickly secure the best available geographic information needed to respond to emergencies. Emergency managers include managers of police, fire, medical, public health, medical services, public works, homeland security and other responders to emergencies and disasters.

Making these best available data quickly accessible presents several challenges:

1. Determining which data are needed.
2. Acquiring and organizing the data so it meets emergency managers' information needs.
3. Prepare GIS professionals to efficiently respond to emergency managers' needs.

Refer to the Reference Section for an overview of the composition of the Workgroup that developed the subject proposal, chronology of its activities, and endorsements received from the Emergency Management community for the workgroup's efforts. The Workgroup's Project Report (Attachment A) also provides a detailed explanation of:

1. Guidelines used by the Workgroup to formulate its recommendations,
2. An overview of each of the three Emergency Preparedness Subcommittees that compose the Workgroup,
3. Description of the proposed Emergency Preparedness Application website, and
4. Proposed custodial roles and responsibilities for data acquisition and refinement.

OVERVIEW OF KEY STRATEGY COMPONENTS

The proposed interim strategy is composed of the following four key components. (See Attachment A for a detailed explanation of each. A schematic of the processes to achieve Items 1 and 2 is shown on page 3.)

- 1) **Secure buy-in for the emergency management data refinement process by the leadership of all seven counties** so counties and other participants know what they are responsible for and can efficiently complete coordinated data collection and maintenance tasks.
- 2) **Assemble emergency management-related data into regional datasets** so accurate and current data are available quickly for use in emergencies and for demonstrations to emergency managers.
- 3) **Continue outreach efforts to the emergency management community** so emergency managers understand and embrace GIS as a tool in their work.
- 4) **Engage the emergency managers in evaluating GIS technology and data** to ensure that the best GIS emergency management information is available across the region.

DISCUSSION

The following policy matters are recognized by the proposed strategy:

- 1) Counties Proposed To Share Data Responsibilities Across Boundaries: No single organization has a business need to manage the emergency management data across the region. While everyone in the region benefits, counties and cities, due to their governmental responsibilities, have the greatest business need for emergency management data. To organize data collection and maintenance costs effectively, each of the seven counties would accept region-wide coordination duties for specific data themes. This organizational structure will efficiently distribute responsibilities across the region but does call for each county to work beyond their normal jurisdiction.
- 2) Workgroup to Serve as Regional Custodian: Since no existing organization has been identified with a business need to serve as the regional custodian, it is recommended that the Workgroup serve in this capacity. This proposal raises the need to evaluate the organizational impacts of establishing another standing committee. During the testing of the proposed interim solution, the Workgroup will serve in the role of EP regional custodian. The Workgroup would be expected to manage all aspects of the regional solutions and communicate with the Coordinating Committee on a regular basis, as other regional custodians do.
- 3) Focus on Data Refinement: Refinement of existing data that are identified by the Workgroup to be of regional important would be the initial focus of the Workgroup. Until the Workgroup understands clearly the data refinement priorities from the perspective of the emergency managers, little new data development is proposed. Development of new data would be considered on a case-by-case basis but only if it required little in terms of resources to accomplish. Any efforts involving extensive data development will be proposed to the Coordinating Committee before they are initiated.

- 4) Open Communication Channels with Emergency Managers: GIS has proven its value to emergency planning, response and recovery in situations such as:
- Completing FEMA Required All Hazard Mitigation Planning,
 - Response and recovery from the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and
 - Assessing the 2001 St Croix River flood property damage.

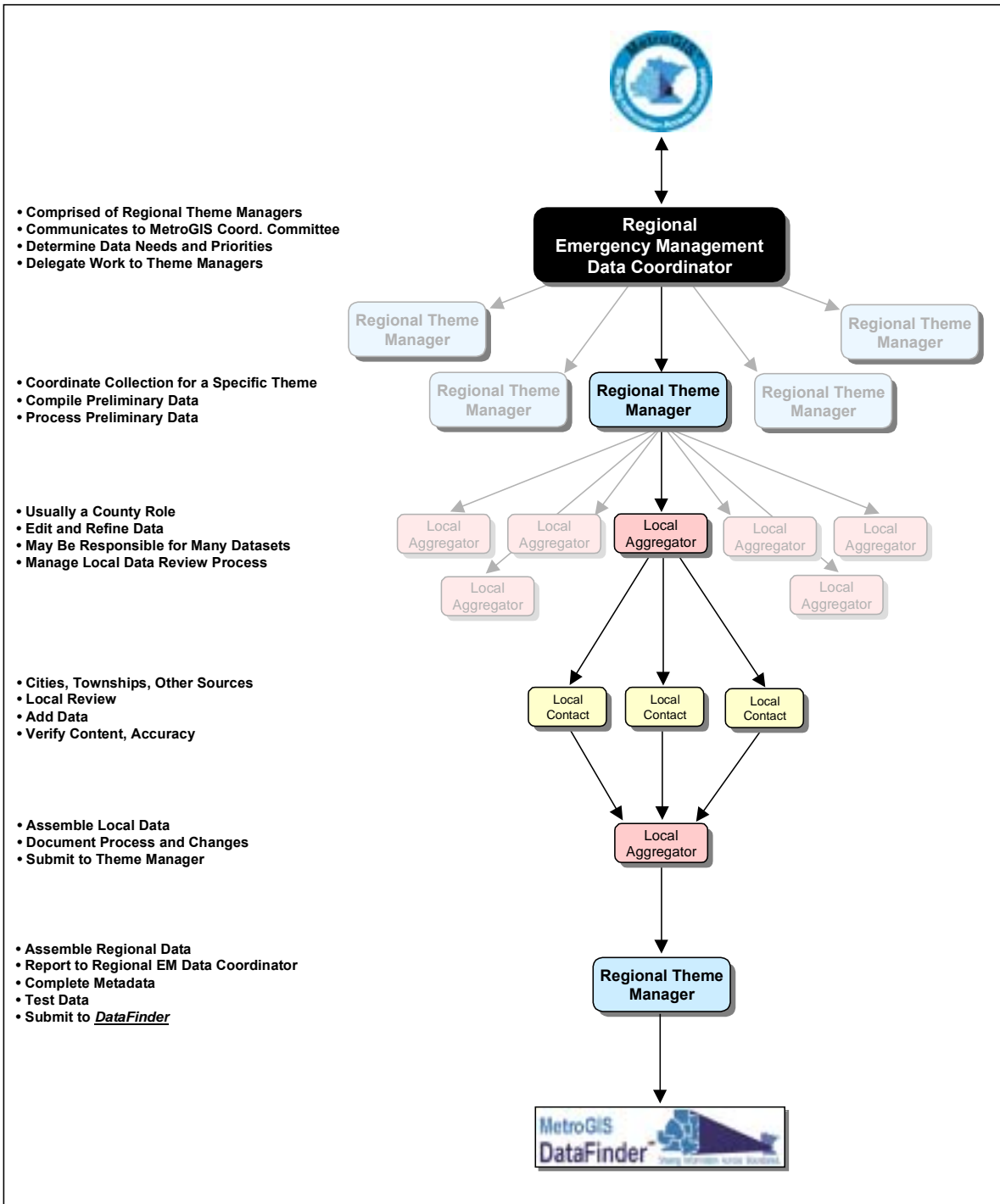
Many emergency managers have not adopted GIS technology in their work because they may not be aware of its value; they may not know whom to contact or may be hesitant to adopt unfamiliar technology. That leaves those charged with supporting emergency managers without a communication channel to understand emergency management information needs in detail in order to prepare an adequate response. Communicating with emergency managers is key to the widespread adoption of GIS as a tool in responding to emergencies. This requires a coordinated outreach effort to emergency managers by GIS professionals throughout the region - something that has not been part of past MetroGIS information needs processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Policy Board and, in particular, each county representative:

- 1) Advocate among the leadership of respective their organization for the next phase of testing and further refinement.
- 2) Offer suggestions for how the proposed roles and responsibilities might work better in their respective organization.
- 3) Authorize Chairperson Reinhardt to sign a letter inviting members of the EP community to attend an outreach event(s) at which the subject interim strategy will be explained and next steps discussed.

Emergency Management Data Custodian Roles



REFERENCE SECTION

SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMUNITY

The following members of the Emergency Management community that serve the seven county Minneapolis St. Paul Metropolitan Area have agreed to submit statements in support of the collaborative efforts between the EM and GIS communities and the Emergency Preparedness regional data solution goals that are in process of being endorsed by MetroGIS. Several of their written statements are presented in Attachment B.

1. Rick Larkin, retired Emergency Preparedness Director, City of Burnsville and Past President of Metropolitan Emergency Managers Association (MEMA)
2. Mary Skube, Public Health Nurse, Hennepin County Human Services & Public Health Department
3. Judd Freed, Director of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, Ramsey County:
4. Stephen Swazee, former Department of Defense Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer
5. Jo Monson, Public Health Nurse, Hennepin County Public Health
6. Debra Ehret, Public Health Preparedness Consultant, Minnesota Department of Health

WORKGROUP CHRONOLOGY AND MEMBERS

1. In 2002, following the events of September 11, 2001, several members of the Coordinating Committee and the Governor's Council on Geographic Information (GCGI) began discussing the role of the GIS community in supporting the Emergency Management community. A standing committee of the GCGI was created and the MetroGIS Coordinating Committee accepted a suggestion from Members Knippel and Gelbmann to explore a role for MetroGIS.
2. The Workgroup organized itself around three subcommittees and a steering committee in Fall 2003 and sought formal recognition by the Coordinating Committee.
3. In December 2003, the Coordinating Committee formally created the Emergency Preparedness Workgroup and in January 2004 the Policy Board approved the 2004 MetroGIS workplan, which, in effect, ratified the Workgroup's creation.
4. The members of three subcommittees of the Emergency Preparedness Workgroup (*Data Development And Deployment, Building Relationships With The Emergency Management Community, and Organizing GIS Resources*) who participated in the development of the proposed interim solution and of the Workgroup's Steering Committee are listed in Appendix A (page 13) of the attached Workgroup Project Report. The *Steering Committee*, which is comprised of the chairs of each subcommittee, the Workgroup Chair and representatives from the Metropolitan Emergency Services Board and Metropolitan Council, provided oversight and direction to the effort as a whole.

Attachment A (Separate Document)

**Project Report of the
Emergency Preparedness Workgroup
(September 1, 2005)**

Attachment B

Statements of Support

1001 East Cliff Road
Burnsville, MN 55337

MetroGIS Policy Board
c/o Randall Johnson
Metropolitan Council - Mears Park Centre
230 East Fifth Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

10 October 2005

Dear Members of the MetroGIS Policy Board,

I am writing in support of the Emergency Preparedness Workgroup's efforts to increase GIS support and awareness in the Minnesota emergency management community. From the perspective of a former Department of Defense Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer (EPLO) to Minnesota, I simply can not overstate the importance of their endeavors.

During a major disaster, access to accurate, detailed, and appropriate GIS data will be absolutely essential if outside agencies are going to respond effectively inside Minnesota. Quality GIS availability will not happen, however, without an ongoing collaborative effort between the state's emergency managers and GIS professionals to collect, standardize, and incorporate GIS data in a way that is vertically and horizontally usable by governmental entities tasked with response. And, importantly, there is only one place where this core data can, and should, be collected: local government.

Unfortunately, my experience suggests that in many instances, the importance of developing standardized robust GIS data for emergency response is not fully appreciated by government leaders. Rather than seeing GIS platforms and associated data sets as a revolutionary way to model, analyze, and anticipate response and recovery options in near real time, decision makers generally see these systems as a way to electronically produce static maps. To that end, utility is framed in the context of an administrative tool detached from emergency response, useful only for its workload reduction capabilities. ***This paradigm must be broken with as much speed as possible.*** Consequently, I strongly encourage the Policy Board to adopt, formalize and reinforce the initiative brought forward by the Emergency Preparedness Workgroup. As a solid first step, I believe their plan of action will:

- Highlight the value GIS provides emergency managers to support training, preparedness, response, and recovery,
- Stress the importance of increasing collaboration between GIS professionals and emergency managers,
- Facilitate the collection of standardized metro-wide GIS data for use in emergency response, and
- Capture detailed local knowledge about communities through GIS data.

As a final point of reflection, and against the backdrop of the twin hurricane disasters along the Gulf Coast, I would ask the Board to consider a scenario certain to bring massive outside aid into the state, a Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) event. As we have seen from the events down South, time is of the essence when responding to a major disaster. This is particularly true with regard to a WMD event. In September of 2004, the Minnesota EPLO team hosted a two-day visit to the Twin Cities by a senior

delegation from Joint Task Force Civil Support, the lead WMD response arm of the Department of Defense. Their number one coordination request: ongoing access to uniform, thorough GIS data sets for the Metro area.

I hope my comments have been helpful to your deliberations and regret I will be unable to appear in person due to prior commitments. Please know I consider the efforts of the Emergency Preparedness Workgroup and MetroGIS as crucial to Minnesota disaster preparations.

Sincerely,

Stephen D. Swazee, Sr.
CAPT USNR
Navy EPLO-MN, 2001-2004

October 10, 2005

MetroGIS Emergency Preparedness Workgroup
C/o Randy Knippel:

I would like to express my appreciation and support for the work done by the MetroGIS Emergency Preparedness Workgroup in the Metro for mass dispensing planning. We have asked for, and received a number of maps which provided valuable guidance for the planning we have been engaged in during the past two or three years.

Our planning has involved identifying and evaluating sites in Hennepin County that might be used for dispensing to large numbers of people. The maps provided to us have been invaluable in making the decisions that allowed us to choose the 9 sites in the County out of the many that were available.

Since we work closely with public health staff from all the other metro counties, the maps have been very useful to help guide us when locating sites that were not redundant with other county's sites.

Also, transportation issues are a big concern for mass dispensing, and MetroGIS Emergency Preparedness Workgroup have again provided us with clear direction and assistance for working on this very complex issue.

Thanks,

Jo Monson, PHN
Immunization Services
Hennepin County Public Health
525 Portland Ave S MCL 963
Minneapolis MN 55415
612 348 7381

October 10, 2005

MetroGIS Emergency Preparedness Workgroup
C/o Randy Knippel:

As a representative of the Minnesota Department of Health, I am pleased to share my perspective on the important contributions made by my colleagues in MetroGIS to the work of public health preparedness. Through them, the Twin Cities and the state have not only identified important threats and hazards, but also developed concrete response plans based upon spatial analyses.

In particular, with the help of GIS and knowledgeable practitioners, we have identified geographic distribution points for mass prophylaxis of the general population, outreach to special populations in an event, interfaces with hospital and clinic resources, and coordination points for the movement of critical response assets and personnel. When faced with very real and challenging duties, public health has turned to MetroGIS to assist in planning a response that is effective in terms of scalability, efficient to meet the crucial timelines for protecting the public's health, and fair in distributing responsibility and opportunity among the agencies and population of the region.

It is especially noteworthy that the data we've been provided have been accurate, timely, and easily accessible across the region. In public health response, particularly with infectious diseases, political boundaries can become meaningless. It is imperative that good information flows smoothly from one jurisdiction to another and that the personnel involved in GIS are familiar with one another and with the response entities that they support. I am pleased that I have been invited to a number of multi-jurisdictional meetings where I have had the opportunity to address the GIS community broadly and to know that they are collaborative in their work.

My own interaction with MetroGIS has proven to be time well spent and I appreciate their professionalism, competence, and willingness to collaborate. I support them fully in their endeavors.

Sincerely,

Debra Ehret, M.P.H.
Public Health Preparedness Consultant-Metro Region
Minnesota Department of Health
PO Box 64882
St. Paul, MN 55164-0882
651-296-8299



To: MetroGIS Policy Board

From: Policy Board Chairperson Reinhardt
Staff Contact: Randall Johnson (651-602-1638)

Subject: Strategic Directions Workshop and the MetroGIS 2006 Work Plan

Date: October 6, 2005
(For Oct 19th Meeting)

INTRODUCTION

This agenda item was added to the agenda at my request so that I could share information with the Policy Board about a strategy for the MetroGIS Strategic Directions Workshop and implications for the 2006 MetroGIS work plan.

STATEMENT OF CURRENT SITUATION- CHAIRPERSON REINHARDT

Through MetroGIS's efforts, several effective regional solutions to common geospatial needs have been realized. Efforts are also in progress to address several additional common needs. The current MetroGIS core functions are working. We need to ensure, however, that the community concurs on future directions and the manner in which MetroGIS conducts its business. To achieve this goal, a Strategic Directions Workshop is planned for February 2006.

MetroGIS has conducted business planning twice in the past, which resulted in Business Plans for 2000-2003 and for 2003-2005. As in the past, additional opportunities likely exist to continue to leverage resources and address common geospatial needs. In establishing the Work Plan, ideas received from the private and non-profit sectors, as a result of the November 15th Non-Government Perspective Forum and from the Metropolitan Council's preferences identified in its internal evaluation of MetroGIS's operations, along with the preferences of other core stakeholders, will be incorporated and are anticipated to offer substantive new collaborative opportunities to take MetroGIS to other levels.

SUGGESTED STRATEGY

1. Set a target of mid to late February 2006 to host the Strategic Directions Workshop to enable the Coordinating Committee to review the initial results at its March 2006 meeting and the Policy Board at its April 2006 meeting.
2. Continue the work in progress for 2006, place on hold initiatives that are planned but not yet commenced, and include initiatives that are identified at the Strategic Directions Workshop as part of the Business Plan Update project.

REFERENCE SECTION

PAST ACTION

April 20, 2005: The Policy Board concurred that MetroGIS should host a forum to seek input from the non-government community about possible collaborative opportunities with public sector interests prior to hosting its Strategic Directions Workshop.

July 27, 2005: The Policy Board authorized the Chair to set a date for the Non-Government Prospective Forum and it was agreed to delay the Strategic Directions Workshop until the Council had completed its internal evaluation in preparation for the Workshop. (The Chair subsequently set November 15th as the date for the Non-Government Prospective Forum.)

STATUS - 2005 MAJOR PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Adopt an updated MetroGIS Business Plan (process to include a retreat of MetroGIS leadership with a theme of “Are We Done?” (*Maintain What has been Built or Pursue New Initiatives?*)) and obtain endorsement by key stakeholder interests. (*The remainder of the proposed objectives assume that MetroGIS’s current core functions¹ will not change substantively.*) (POSTPONED FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING)
- Implement modifications to the Regional Parcel Dataset, which were endorsed by the Policy Board in July 2004, (DONE) and establish a common access policy concerning non-profits/community groups, whose functions complement government functions. (PILOT PROJECT IN PROGRESS WITH HENNEPIN COUNTY)
- Achieve Policy Board endorsement, at minimum, of a Phase I regional solution that effectively addresses each of the following common priority information needs:
 - 1) Addresses (of occupiable units) (VISION ADOPTED 4/05 - IN PROGRESS)
 - 2) Emergency Preparedness (OCT 2005 RECOMMENDATION TO BOARD)
 - 3) Existing Land Use (POSTPONED FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING)
 - 4) Highway and Road Networks (SEE NEXT BULLET)
 - 5) Jurisdictional Boundaries – School Districts (NO PROGRESS – LMIC REORGANIZED)
 - 6) Jurisdictional Boundaries – Watershed Districts (*pilot in Washington Co. nearing completion*)
 - 7) Lakes and Wetlands (IN PROGRESS)

Peer Review forums for Exiting Land Use, Land Cover, and Socioeconomic Website POSTPONED for Strategic Planning effort.

- Achieve Policy Board endorsement of strategies to effectively achieve a solution to address-related limitations of the endorsed Regional Street Centerline dataset for geocoding concerning: a) satisfying needs of the E911 community and b) incorporating locally-produced data into the U.S. Census Bureau’s TIGER data. (VISION ADOPTED 4/05 – AND AGREEMENT REACHED WITH CENSUS BUREAU - IN PROGRESS)
- Implement a strategy (currently referred to as ApplicationFinder) to help data users efficiently share existing geospatial applications and leverage those existing investments. (POSTPONED FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING)
- Continue efforts to identify commonly needed geospatial applications appropriate for regional solutions and MetroGIS’s resources. (POSTPONED FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING)
- Continue to realize increased use of DataFinder as a tool used both by data users to search for and access data they need, and by data producers to distribute data important to others in the MetroGIS community.
- Continue to realize increased awareness of MetroGIS’s endorsed strategies, resources, and opportunities among MetroGIS stakeholders and officials involved in related efforts beyond the Metro Area.
- Continue to effectively support MetroGIS’s general information website (www.metrogis.org).
- Continue to effectively support MetroGIS’s DataFinder website (www.datafinder.org).
- Continue to perform activities defined in the Performance Measures Plan to monitor effectiveness of MetroGIS’s efforts – user satisfaction with data solutions and custodian conformance with expectations; document the benefits of MetroGIS’s efforts; and modify activities and policies, as appropriate.

¹ The current core functions are: implement regional solutions for priority common information needs (e.g., data, web services and applications), support an Internet-based geospatial data discovery and retrieval tool (DataFinder), and support a forum for knowledge sharing.



To: MetroGIS Policy Board

From: MetroGIS Staff
Contact: Randall Johnson (651-602-1638)

Subject: 2006 Meeting Schedule - MetroGIS Policy Board

Date: September 29, 2005
(For Oct 19th Meeting)

INTRODUCTION

A suggested meeting schedule for 2006 is presented below for the Board's consideration.

BACKGROUND

No Board meetings have been scheduled beyond October 19, 2005. The meetings would continue to be held quarterly at the Metropolitan Council's Mears Park Centre offices in downtown St. Paul, beginning at 6:30 p.m. *Please note that the Council's offices will be moving, beginning in February and over a 2-3 month period, from the present Mears Park building to the former DEED State Office Building at 390 N. Robert (6th and Robert), which is being renovated to house the Council's new central office.*

During this past year, the Board met on a mixture of the 3rd and 4th Wednesday to avoid known conflicts. Even so, staff is aware of two members who had conflicts during the past year regarding the 4th Wednesday of the month. As such, meeting on the 3rd Wednesday is proposed for all four 2006 meetings. The Policy Board has generally met on the third or fourth Wednesdays of the month since formed in 1997.

SUGGESTED 2006 MEETING SCHEDULE

<u>Suggested Meeting Date</u> (2006)	<u>Anticipated Major Topics***</u>	<u>Possible GIS Demonstration</u>
Jan 18 th 3 rd Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategy for Strategic Directions Workshop• View-Only Data Policy (Internet Access)• 2006 Regional GIS Project Program	Pictrometry?
Apr 19 th 3 rd Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Election of Officers• Regional Street Centerline Solution – Version 2• Solutions for Watershed District Jurisdictional Boundary Information Needs	M3D Application? DataFinder Café Upgrade?
Jul 19 th 3 rd Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solutions for School Jurisdictional Boundary Information Needs• Solution for Hydrology Information Need• Solution for Highway and Road Network Information Need	
Oct 18 th 3 rd Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business Plan Update Item(s)• Solution for Existing Land Use Information Need• 2007 Workplan Objectives	

*** Assumes that outcome of pending Strategic Directions Workshop will acknowledge previously established priorities and work in process

RECOMMENDATION

The MetroGIS Policy Board is respectfully requested to set its 2006 meeting schedule.



TO: Policy Board

FROM: MetroGIS Staff Support Team
Contact: Steve Fester (651-602-1363) and Randall Johnson (651-602-1638)

SUBJECT: Project Updates

DATE: October 7, 2005
(For the Oct. 19th meeting)

Information provided by persons other than the Staff Coordinator is noted.

A) REGIONAL GIS PROJECT PROPOSALS

On September 21, the Coordinating Committee received updates regarding each of the following projects. A summary of each update and direction provided the Committee to the project managers follows. For the complete minutes, go to Item 5b at http://www.metrogis.org/teams/cc/meetings/05_0921/min.pdf.

(1) MetroGIS DataFinder Café – Upgrade Proposal

Functional priorities were accepted, as proposed by the Workgroup. Technical options to achieve desired functionality were explained and the Committee concurred that the Workgroup's recommendation to pursue design options that rely upon leveraging the Council's existing investment in ArcIMS software, assuming the Council would continue to serve as the custodian for DataFinder. As of this writing, as requested by the Committee, an evaluation of the pros and cons of using a federal grant award to purchase a software product called Geocortex is in process. Using Geocortex in combination with ArcIMS appears to be able to provide solutions for several desired functions not possible using ArcIMS on its own. The Committee concurred that final design decisions are to remain the domain of the Council, acting in its capacity as custodian of DataFinder.

(2) Common Application Design for Web-based Data Queries

After a good deal of discussion the Committee concurred that bids should be sought for the technical specifications proposed by the Workgroup and that a separate workgroup should be established to address policy needs related to view-only, web-based access to parcel data. As of this writing, the design specifications for bids are being finalized to be shared with the Coordinating Committee at the December meeting. A separate workgroup, comprised of the Coordinating Committee Chair and Staff Coordinator, has initiated a conversation with Hennepin County in hopes of reaching an agreement in principle regarding a view-only parcel data access policy that can be shared for discussion with the other counties.

(3) Fill in incomplete attribute fields in Regional Parcel Dataset

The updated project strategy no longer calls for a discovery forum in 2005 and, as such, the project manager will not be requesting the \$500 in funding that had been preliminarily approved for 2005. Instead, staff intends to conduct interviews one on one with county staff responsible for managing parcel data, specifically data associated with fields that are not fully populated.

B) PRIORITY BUSINESS INFORMATION NEEDS SOLUTIONS (See <http://www.metrogis.org/data/index.shtml> for complete information about the status of solutions for each of MetroGIS's common information needs.)

(1) Address (Occupiable Units) Workgroup

(Nancy Read, Metropolitan Mosquito Control District, Workgroup Chair)

The Workgroup prepared a white paper to describe the major components of the regional vision endorsed by the Policy Board last April (e.g., rationale, need for local government involvement,

database design and proposed web-based application to facilitate capture of occupiable units points) and presented it and its efforts to define an implementation strategy for comment at the Minnesota State GIS/LIS Conference October 3-5. The white paper can be viewed at http://www.metrogis.org/data/info_needs/street_addresses/Occupiable_Units_Dataset_Vision.pdf.

Gordon Chinander, GIS Coordinator for the Metropolitan Emergency Services Board [MESB; formerly Metropolitan 911 Board] and member of the Coordinating Committee, anticipates sharing the MetroGIS-endorsed vision for this regional solution with the MESB once they complete their current evaluation of a data maintenance solution. As with the regional street centerline data, the MESB is anticipated to play a substantive role in the management of the occupiable units dataset. MESB unanimously endorsed the vision for the regional street centerline dataset (Item C4, below) earlier this summer.

(2) Existing Land Use

Preparations for a user satisfaction forum are on hold until a date is set for the Strategic Directions Workshop. See Item C (below) for more information about this Workshop. The Coordinating Committee decided at its March 2005 meeting that the existing land use forum should follow the Workshop, as topics discussed at the Workshop could influence the topics discussed at the land use forum.

(3) Emergency Preparedness Workgroup

A summary of the Workgroup's activities follows. (*Submitted by Randy Knippel, Dakota County, Workgroup Chair*)

a) Data Development and Standards

See Agenda Item 5a. On September 21, the Coordinating Committee accepted the Workgroup's proposed strategy and agreed to forward it to the Policy Board for consideration. It focuses on a data workflow process and associated collaborative procedures for assembly of several regional datasets needed to support Emergency Management needs and to provide ongoing updating. A flowchart describing the process was developed as a vehicle to obtain buy-in from each of the seven counties for support the proposed multi-county enterprise framework. The recommendation includes support of an Internet-based, ArcIMS application for use as an outreach tool.

b) Public Health - SNS/BT

The Minnesota Department of Health is coming to closure on their bio-terrorism and mass dispensing site project. This project is driven by the County Health Departments. The makeup of this team is very similar to the makeup of the Emergency Preparedness data group. They require base map templates for consistent output from county to county. This will be an ongoing process for the next 3-4 months.

c) Organizing GIS Resources

A detailed GIS contact list covering 70 cities over 7 counties was compiled for a mailing to encourage GIS people to register on the Contact Database at the Governors Council GIS page. This is the beginning of getting a network of GIS users working in EM across the region.

d) Outreach to Emergency Management Community

A representative from the Workgroup is scheduled to attend and present at the Association of Minnesota Emergency Managers (AMEM) annual conference in partnership with the Governor's Council on Geographic Information Emergency Preparedness Committee.

e) Governor's Council on Geographic Information – Coordination

The GIS EP Contact website is operational (http://gis.metec.state.mn.us/ep_status_map/) and available to promote. Others at the GCGI EP committee are working on a series of slide shows to convey the EM message.

(4) **Highway and Road Networks** (*Gordon Chinander, Metropolitan Emergency Services Board [formerly Metropolitan 911 Board], Workgroup Chair*)

- a) The “**E911 Address and Street Centerline Workgroup**” has been actively working on a regional addressable street centerline solution. Initially, workgroup representatives from the Metropolitan Emergency Services Board, LOGIS, and the Metropolitan Council plan to work with Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in the region to define their needs for data and business rules, and identify local address authorities. They will use that information to define a new standardized centerline product and business rules that will meet the needs of the E911 community as well as the broader needs of MetroGIS members.

Following the needs assessment phase described above, a proposed standard will be crafted by the full workgroup in conjunction with the region’s public providers of street centerline data. Public data providers who determine they can meet the standard may then volunteer to participate in a one-time conversion/enhancement process to create a pilot product for the entire community. Currently, the plan is to issue an RFP under the auspices of the Metropolitan Emergency Services Board this fall and soon thereafter initiate this regional pilot product by combining the public data sources with private data sources. More information on this workgroup’s efforts can be found at http://www.metrogis.org/teams/workgroups/e911_streets/index.shtml. In a related effort, the MESB is expected to select a vendor for its GIS-based data management system by November. This system will serve as a foundation for metropolitan 911 response efforts and in particular serve as a means to efficiently maintain interoperable street centerline data for the entire region. (See Agenda Item 7c(2) for more information.)

The workgroup is also charged with defining a set of business rules, roles and responsibilities for maintaining the street centerline product. The goal is to have one set of geometry for all users, but the attributes used by the E911 community may be in a separate, linked database to avoid confusion. Details of these rules and processes have not been finalized.

- b) The **MetroGIS Roads & Highways Technical Workgroup** has been inactive for several months. A proposal for the goals and procedures of a pilot project to integrate local datasets with Mn/DOT’s LDM was written by staff and issued to the group on January 19th, 2005. To date, no comments or questions have been returned on this proposal. Information about agreed upon goals, expectations, and participant roles can be viewed at http://www.metrogis.org/data/info_needs/highway_roads/index.shtml.
- c) There are currently 165 **licenses** issued to access and use The Lawrence Group’s (TLG) Street Centerline Dataset, MetroGIS’s currently endorsed regional solution for address matching. As of October 12, the types of organizations licensed were as follows:
- Local gov’t: **88**
 - Regional gov’t: **11**
 - State/Federal gov’t: **22**
 - Academic: **44**

(5) **Lakes, Wetlands, etc.** (*Robert Maki, MN DNR, Coordinating Committee Liaison*)

A White Paper is in progress towards analyzing gaps between 1997 needs and current developed (or developing) data. A 2006 forum is proposed to affirm needs and to discuss gap analysis in terms of defining a Regional solution. A pilot project, to work through partnerships and organizational roles needed to help facilitate the updating of the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) for the Twin Cities metropolitan area, is on hold until the new 2005 infrared imagery is acquired and processed (est. beginning of 2006). The pilot is viewed as a component of a broader Metro Area hydrologic solution that is anticipated once the statewide strategic planning effort is complete.

The initial components of the pilot can be viewed at <http://www.metrogis.org/teams/workgroups/index.shtml> under the Lakes & Wetlands Workgroup. The pilot project partners include the Metropolitan Council, Metropolitan Mosquito Control District (MMCD), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Ramsey Co. Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

(6) Land Cover Dataset Enhancements (*Bart Richardson, MN DNR, Regional Custodian*)

The extent of coverage is now up to 71 percent of the seven-county region, with Anoka and Dakota counties completely done. Work is currently in progress to extend the coverage another 5 percent. In the past year, in response to user feedback, major revisions to the system have been implemented: changed the method for storing attributes, re-worked the manual, improved the ArcView tool, and migrated the final product into a tiled and composite Geodatabase dataset. DNR, the regional custodian, is tentatively planning on hosting a user forum in the first half of 2006 to identify other desired improvements.

(7) Parcels (*Mark Kotz, Metropolitan Council, Regional Custodian*)

There are currently 62 licenses issued to access and use the Regional Parcel Dataset. Staff would also like to note that the U.S. Census Bureau is now a licensed user of the dataset. As of October 12, the types of organizations licensed were as follows:

- Local gov't: **30** (8 added 3rd Party licenses)
- Regional gov't: **4** (1 added 3rd Party licenses)
- State/Federal gov't: **11** (1 added 3rd Party licenses)
- Academic: **17** (2 added 3rd Party licenses)

(8) Socioeconomic Characteristics of Areas (*Amy West, U of M Population Center, Regional Custodian*)

- a) The University of Minnesota Population Center staff, aided by Will Craig (CURA), oversees management of the content of the Socioeconomic Resources Page (www.datafinder.org/mg/socioeconomic_resources/index.asp), fix broken links, and coordinate efforts to add new data sources.
- b) In accordance with a MetroGIS Policy Board request, the Metro Public Health GIS Users Group (Tim Zimmerman, Hennepin County, Chair) has secured agreement from the metro area counties for new ways to publish vital statistics (birth and death data) that present more small area information in formats compatible with GIS, while preserving confidentiality of individuals. Such information (the attributes associated with births and deaths, such as the number of low birth-weight births, births to teenage mothers, etc.) can serve as useful indicators of community well-being. Their proposal has not yet been officially sanctioned by the MN Department of Health, but was expected to be taken forward to the Department in the near future. For more information contact Tim Zimmerman at tim.zimmerman@co.hennepin.mn.us or 612-348-0307.

C) NON-GOVERNMENT PROSPECTIVE FORUM AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION WORKSHOP

Invitations signed by Policy Board Chairperson Reinhardt were sent on October 7th to 90 individuals, representing 17 categories of private and non-profit interests, encouraging them to attend MetroGIS's November 15th forum entitled "Beyond Government Users: Future Directions for MetroGIS". As of this writing, 9 RSVPs had been received. A follow-up message will be sent on October 24th to those who have not responded by that time. See Agenda Item 5b regarding setting of a date for the subsequent Strategic Directions Workshop.

D) MODIFICATION TO OPERATING GUIDELINES

At its September meeting the Coordinating Committee directed staff the Committee Chair to draft language for consideration at the December meeting to establish guidelines for decision-making between meetings when a situation arises that needs immediate attention.

E) COUNTY DATA PRODUCER WORKGROUP ACTIVITIES *(Submitted by Dave Drealan, Carver County, Workgroup Chair)*

- **Regional Parcel Dataset Policy- Access by Non-Profit Interests: Hennepin County Pilot**
Hennepin County has instituted a policy permitting qualified non-profit interests to access its parcel data free of charge, subject to licensure that prohibits redistribution. This policy was enacted in cooperation with the M3D project. The results of this access trial are intended to serve as a pilot for possible consideration of a regional policy. M3D is a dynamic GIS-based Internet application that brings together labor market, housing and development information and analysis for the Twin Cities metro area into a single tool for economic and community developers. Neighborhood organization and non-profit interests are playing a central role in the M3D project. This Hennepin County access policy requires non-profits to be legally constituted, community-based, and working on a mission that benefits the public including: promoting jobs, economic development, affordable housing, environmental improvements, or community development in order to qualify for free access. Licensed data also must be secure and password-protected. Hennepin County retains the right to evaluate requests and approve or deny them on a case-by-case basis.

F) VIEW-ONLY, WEB-BASED ACCESS POLICY INVESTIGATED FOR PARCEL DATA

At its July 27th meeting, the Policy Board extended its sunset provision on deliberations needed to establish a regional policy authorizing free, unlicensed access to parcel data when in a view-only, web-based environment. Subsequently, the Coordinating Committee directed its chair and staff to investigate options and offer a recommendation. On September 30, a meeting was held with Hennepin County officials to explore options acceptable to them. Once an agreement in principle is reached with Hennepin County, the plan is to work through the County Data Producers Workgroup to negotiate a recommendation with which each of the counties is comfortable.



Cooperation, Coordination, Sharing Geographic Data

TO: Policy Board

FROM: MetroGIS Staff Support Team
Contact: Steve Fester (651-602-1363) and Randall Johnson (651-602-1638)

SUBJECT: Information Sharing

DATE: October 5, 2005
(For the Oct. 19th meeting)

Announcements and information provided by persons other than the Staff Coordinator are so noted.

A) NON-PROFIT MEMBER RESIGNS FROM COMMITTEE

Jeff Corn resigned his position with the Longfellow Community Council effective August 12 to take a new job. A request has been made to M3D project leadership to suggest a replacement. The M3D project leaders are in touch with members of the non-profit community in the Twin Cities who have an interest in using geospatial technology.

B) PRESENTATIONS / OUTREACH / STUDIES (not mentioned elsewhere)

1. Submitted Articles for Fall 2005 Issue of GIS/LIS Newsletter

One article was submitted for the Fall 2005 issue. It describes the upcoming November 15th forum for private and non-profit interests entitled "Beyond Government Users: New Directions for MetroGIS". This article can be viewed at <http://www.mngisli.org/newsletter/issue42/issue42toc.htm>.

2. Presentation at State GIS/LIS Conference

Mark Kotz, lead staff for MetroGIS's Addresses for Occupiable Units Workgroup, made a presentation about the vision for this regional dataset as adopted by MetroGIS last April. Over 50 persons attended and over 40 copies of the session whitepaper were distributed. The whitepaper explains the vision, as well as the research conducted to define the vision and can be viewed at [www.metrogis.org/data/info_needs/street_addresses/Occupiable Units Dataset Vision.pdf](http://www.metrogis.org/data/info_needs/street_addresses/Occupiable_Units_Dataset_Vision.pdf).

C) RELATED METRO AND STATE GEOSPATIAL INITIATIVES UPDATE

1. Key MetroGIS Staffer Takes Position at the Department of Agriculture

Mike Dolbow, GIS Specialist with the Metropolitan Council and lead staff for several important MetroGIS initiatives, will be leaving the Council and MetroGIS at the end of October to serve as the new GIS Coordinator for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. In his five years at the Council, Mike has played a key role in defining regional strategies for street-related data and in furthering partnerships with The Lawrence Group, the Metropolitan Emergency Services Board (formerly 911 Board), Mn/DOT and, most recently, the U.S. Census Bureau (see Item D2). The MetroGIS community wishes the best of luck to Mike in his new position.

2. Metropolitan Emergency Services Board: Moving to GIS-Centric 911 Location System

The Metropolitan Emergency Services Board (MESB; formerly the Metropolitan 911 Board) could select a proposal in the next week to establish GIS-based data management systems as the foundation for metropolitan 911 response efforts. Based on technical capabilities, the vendors, microData GIS (VT) and Contact One (TX) were the top two finalists for a GIS Data Management RFP issued by MESB this spring. MESB staff plan to recommend one of the proposals to MESB's Technical Operations Committee by October and to the full Board by November. If approved, implementation would begin immediately.

MESB's recognition of the need to move to a GIS-based solution could present a watershed opportunity for the broader MetroGIS community. The data management systems under consideration would allow for the various data creators across the metropolitan area to update and share information in a real-time environment, ensuring that the datasets are accurate and available for governmental uses beyond 911 and emergency response needs, whenever they are needed. The proposed systems could provide a gateway to achieving the two regional solution visions adopted by the Policy Board in April for E911-compliant street centerlines and occupiable units.

Based on the MetroGIS staff evaluations, both vendor solutions comprise most (if not all) of the technology to build and maintain these datasets within the context of their respective visions. The organizational structures of the MESB and MetroGIS also provide the capacity to manage the many participant roles and establish shared funding as a single enterprise. In effect, the MESB could become the regional custodian of the regional street centerline and occupiable unit data solutions - or at least play a principal role in the dataset management. The Metropolitan Council currently serves as the regional custodian for the regional street centerlines, but the data is maintained by The Lawrence Group. MetroGIS staff feels this could be the most wide-reaching opportunity to capture inter-organizational efficiencies through the use of GIS technology in the Twin Cities since the creation of MetroGIS itself. *(Submitted by Gordon Chinander and Nancy Pollock, Metropolitan Emergency Services Board)*

3. Minnesota's Open Source Internet MapServer to Receive Governor's Commendation

Minnesota has developed an outstanding tool for serving maps on the Internet. MapServer is used by hundreds of organizations around the world, perhaps thousands, although it is hard to know because the software is free and available to anyone. Originally developed by Tom Burk and Steve Lime at the University of Minnesota, it is being constantly updated and enhanced by its users. They can do this because all the source code is public. Quoting from one user, "MapServer was seen to outperform ArcIMS [the major commercial package] for rendering the types of images the DataPlace requires, and was chosen as the DataPlace map image rendering engine." The Governor's Commendation award is sponsored by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Geographic Information. It is given at the annual GIS/LIS Conference to outstanding GIS projects that provide benefits to many organizations, not just the sponsoring agency. The Commendation is awarded irregularly, only when an outstanding project is identified. *(Submitted by Will Craig, U of M CURA)*

4. E-Government Needs Assessment Conducted by Metropolitan Council

The E-Government Roadmap will be a strategic plan for the development of the Metropolitan Council's website functionality and online services. During the first phase ("visioning") of the project, information and ideas were gathered through fact-finding discussions with 53 people, both internal staff and external stakeholders. Another 101 people provided input through a survey that asked: Can Metropolitan Council services or information be improved with new web features, interfaces, or online services?

The complete scan identified over 80 opportunities, potential web tools, and solutions to Metropolitan Council service needs. These opportunities and solutions were roughly prioritized to cull out a Top 10 list of e-government opportunities that the Council could pursue over the next few years. A phase 1 report covering service needs, opportunities identified, decision factors for prioritization, and foundational requirements was reviewed and approved on June 1 by the Project Review Team.

The project is now proceeding with phases 2 and 3. These phases involve analysis of technical architecture and foundational prerequisites to e-government; analysis of management process, resources and standards; recommendations; and "conceptual architecture" profiles of three of the

Top 10 opportunities carried over from phase 1. The three opportunities selected for “conceptual architecture” profiles are: (1) an enterprise-wide content management system; (2) interactive GIS functionality built into pages and portals, starting with the Metro Transit Trip Planner as a pilot; (3) an Online Regional Planning WebBook. *(Submitted by Todd Graham, Metropolitan Council Research Manager)*

5. Minnesota 3D Project – Needs Assessment Underway

Eighteen M3D consortium partners, including neighborhood and community organizations serving Minneapolis and several Twin Cities suburban municipalities, have been asked to respond to a community development/GIS-related needs assessment. The results will be used to help the M3D project team design a proposed Internet-based application. These results will also likely be valuable to MetroGIS as investigations proceed into development of commonly needed geospatial-based applications.

M3D community partners have identified community development applications for current work, including data, reporting and presentation needs. These projects, to be completed over the next several months, will influence the online mapping application that the Labor Market Information Office at DEED is developing for M3D. An alpha version will be created by September 2005 and a beta site for testing should be ready by February 2006.

An excerpt from the M3D Project Application’s Executive Summary states: “Building on the existing GIS infrastructure, M3D is 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.....By combining new statewide data on employment and demographics through an agreement with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Social Security Administration, and the Census Bureau with the existing region-wide parcel level housing data, Minnesota 3-D will be a “first-of-its-kind” system.....M3D is a scalable, standards-based system that can accommodate expanded data layers and geographic coverage.” “The centerpiece of this approach is the creation of an online mapping application. With emerging Internet-based mapping technologies, this is the most cost-effective way to maximize access, analytical capacity, and user-to-user information sharing.” *(Submitted by Will Craig, U of M CURA)*

6. Refinement of Minnesota’s Municipal Boundary Adjustment Procedures

The Minnesota Land Management Information Center proposes to refine the state's municipal boundary annexation authorization and documentation procedures in a way that integrates 1) emerging Framework content standards, 2) the Web Feature Services capabilities of Minnesota MapServer software, and 3) the state's GIS coordinating council recommendations for an integrated enterprise solution that serves local, state and federal government needs from a single authoritative source.

Minnesota's municipal boundary changes are managed under the direction of the Office of Administrative Hearings Municipal Boundaries Adjustment Unit. The MBAU originated in 1959 as the Municipal Boundary Commission, the nation's first body of its kind designed to facilitate local incorporation and boundary adjustment questions. MBAU annually processes more than 400 municipal boundary changes. Up-to-date municipal boundary change information is critical to the business needs of all levels of government in every corner of the state. In addition to the legal and orderly transfer of jurisdictional authority among the counties and municipalities affected, annexation transactions affect statutorily required programs in the Departments of Transportation (base map update and federal state aid calculation), Revenue (municipal tax authority domains), and Natural Resources (water permitting), the State Demographer (population

estimates), Secretary of State (voting district/precinct changes, polling place locations), State Legislature (redistricting), and Bureau of the Census (TIGER updates).

While the MBAU process effectively satisfies the legal codification of annexation decisions, the process falls short of providing adequate geospatial information to satisfy many of those business requirements. The process deals with legal descriptions of boundary changes, not mapped data. Agencies often duplicate work to convert those legal descriptions to mappable data in both analog and digital form. However, no single organization integrates digital geospatial boundary data for Minnesota and, therefore, no trustworthy source for this important enterprise framework layer is formally recognized.

LMIC is working to address this need in a strategy laid out by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Geographic Information, the state's GIS coordinating body. In its 2004 strategic plan, "A Foundation for Coordinated GIS: Minnesota's Spatial Data Infrastructure", the Council recommends a plan that better coordinates the collection, management and distribution of Governmental Unit Boundary data. LMIC is working with the MBAU and the Department of Transportation to introduce rigorous coordinate geometry conversion methodologies to convert legal descriptions of proposed boundary changes to reliable digital geospatial renditions, and then incorporate those spatial data into a statewide framework. The process has been successfully prototyped to provide the Secretary of State with data for the 2004 elections. Partial updates are routinely prepared for the Department of Revenue, but a routinely updated, sustainable municipal boundary database remains an elusive target.

As the ANSI/INCITS Government Boundary Units Framework standards stabilize this year, we propose applying them to the emerging statewide annexation database. Procedures for COGO translations of legal annexation descriptions, currently being tested, will be finalized. LMIC's project team will work with MapServer development staff at the DNR to refine GML creation through MapServer's WFS connector to adhere to all formal standards. Those refinements will be shared with DM Solutions Group; a Canadian firm developing value-added products and services based on open source technologies, most notably, MapServer. LMIC will support current efforts at DNR to document the process of setting up a successful WFS installation. LMIC will work with the Department of Transportation and a growth edge county government to test the interoperability of that GML expression. The result of this effort will be a WFS-compliant offering of statewide, current and well-documented municipal boundary data. This proposal will leverage work underway at the DNR as part of a 2004 CAP project to refine GML generated from the WFS connector currently provided through Minnesota MapServer and to provide detailed instructions to assist in the transfer of WFS technology. *(Submitted by David Arbeit, Director, Office of Geographic and Demographic Analysis, MN Department of Administration)*

7. Coordinating Committee Members to Receive Polaris Mid-Career Awards

Rick Gelbmann and Randy Knippel of the MetroGIS Coordinating Committee were honored by the Minnesota GIS/LIS Consortium at its annual conference in St. Cloud on October 4. The Polaris Mid-Career Award is given to three outstanding leaders each year. Polaris, a triple star, provides direction to travelers and provides our state with its motto. Along with Annette Theroux of Walker, Minnesota, Gelbmann and Knippel have provided the State with direction and leadership. Gelbmann manages GIS activities for the Metropolitan Council, serves as vice chair of the Governor's Council on Geographic Information, and was a key force in starting MetroGIS. Knippel manages GIS activities for Dakota County, serves as vice chair of the MetroGIS Coordinating Committee, and is leading the Emergency Preparedness Committee for MetroGIS. In addition, Ken Pakarek of LMIC received a Lifetime Achievement Award. *(Submitted by Will Craig, U of M CURA)*

D) RELATED FEDERAL/NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL INITIATIVES UPDATE

1. Draft National Street Address Data Standard Moves to Next Phase

MetroGIS's Address Workgroup's efforts to define workable address standards for a regional Occupiable Units Address Dataset played a substantive role in the recently released draft national standards that are being developed through the URISA/FGDC Street Address Data Standard Initiative. The comment period ended October 3rd. Mark Kotz, staff to the MetroGIS Workgroup, monitored the national discussion and all changes to the language initially submitted by MetroGIS. None of the changes had a substantive effect on the needs of the MetroGIS community. A second draft will be posted for comment after the URISA annual conference (October 9-12). The goal is to finalize the standard by the end of the year.

The objective of this effort is to create single street address data standard that consists of four parts: content, classification, quality, and transfer. URISA submitted a formal proposal to the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) to facilitate this effort, which the FGDC accepted. The resulting recommended standard is intended to provide a statement of best practices for defining street address data content and classes, setting standards and tests of street address data quality, and facilitating exchange of street address data files.

The results of this collaborative process will be submitted through the FGDC's formal standards approval process. If they are accepted, the Census Bureau will maintain the standards under the auspices of its duties as theme lead for the Federal Subcommittee on Cultural, Society, and Demographics. According to Mark Kotz, lead staff to the MetroGIS Address Workgroup, the national standard development process has been exceptionally well done thus far.

2. Agreement Reached with US Census Bureau to Use Regional Dataset

MetroGIS staff have successfully brokered an agreement between the U.S. Census Bureau and The Lawrence Group (TLG) to incorporate the TLG regional street centerline dataset into the 2010 Census geography. This agreement has been sought for several years, as it is expected to result in substantial time and cost savings for local governments. Municipalities and counties will be able to "redistrict" new Census boundaries using centerline data that aligns very closely with their own. Similarly, the Metropolitan Council will not have to realign the final products with accurate geospatial data, a project that cost over \$72,000 for the 1990 and 2000 Census boundaries.

Mike Dolbow and Rick Gelbmann of the Metropolitan Council's GIS Unit and Randall Johnson, MetroGIS Staff Coordinator, were instrumental in achieving this long-desired partnership.

3. Staff Coordinator Invited to Attend Innovations in Governance Forum at Harvard

The Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University offers a one-week program each year, entitled Innovations in Governance. The program's purpose is to explore innovations in governance, in particular, for collaborative efforts designed to address important public problems through a case study format. The MetroGIS Staff Coordinator accepted an invitation to apply for the competitive admission process and has been accepted.

This program presents a valuable opportunity to share MetroGIS's experience as a case study for constructive criticism. This is timely opportunity given issues that have arisen over the past year and the pending Strategic Directions Workshop. Specific goals for pursuing this week-long opportunity to immersion oneself in relevant literature and participate in-depth discussions, led by leaders in their field, include:

- 1) Obtaining constructive criticism regarding MetroGIS's current organizational structure and identification of refinement options.
- 2) Discovering ideas for equitably accounting for the value of custodian contributions made to support roles and responsibilities for endorsed regional solutions, including the sponsor role

that provides funding to facilitate implementing regional solutions, outreach, and monitoring satisfaction with implemented solutions.

- 3) Discovering ideas for measuring the value of the broad benefit received by an individual stakeholder organization relative to its expense to support a particular regional solution(s).
- 4) Discovering possible ideas for revenue augmentation from net beneficiaries that do not negatively impact the open data sharing/collaborative environment that has been created.

4. FY 2006 National Geospatial Programs Office (NGPO) Plan of Action Released

Recently, the NGPO released guidelines for an ambitious, integrated three-part program to substantively move the nation closer to realizing the NSDI vision by June 30, 2006. (The NGPO was created in August 2004 to coordinate, under one director, FGDC, Geospatial One Stop, and The National Map programs.) A summary of the NGPO's plan published in the June 2005 edition of GeoWorld can be viewed at <http://geoplance.com/uploads/FeatureArticle/0506gc.asp>. The complete plan can be viewed at http://www.metrogis.org/teams/cc/meetings/05_0629/index.shtml.

In short, this ambitious Plan sets forth detailed strategies for: 1) moving toward a national GIS, 2) focusing on "matters and places of national importance" and, 3) concentrating on "management excellence". The Staff Coordinator has asked Ron Wencl, USGS Regional Liaison and member of the Coordinating Committee, to meet with MetroGIS leadership to talk about partnership opportunities that may be appropriate for the MetroGIS community in accordance with this Plan of Action. (*Submitted by Ron Wencl, USGS*)

5. MetroGIS Cited in New Book - Only United States Example

A new book by Dr. Ian Masser, "*GIS Worlds – Creating Spatial Data Infrastructures*", was recently published by ESRI Press. In the Foreword, Jack Dangermond, President of ESRI, states "Dr. Ian Masser's lifelong dedication to geography and his experience in the development of spatial data infrastructure (SDI) is unmatched..." The objective sought by Dr. Ian Masser, through the writing this book, is to provide an "overview of the development of SDI over the past 10-15 years ... (and) focus on new policy options and institutional structures associated with the formulation and implementation of successful SDI initiatives. The overall scope (of the book) is worldwide, although particular attention is given to developments in the four countries regarded as among the leaders in the field: Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States."

MetroGIS is the only example highlighted for the United States. Dr. Masser calls attention to several of MetroGIS's core principles: a) reliance upon a consensus decision-making process for all matters fundamental to long-term success, b) powers and resources to develop and sustain MetroGIS are secured through a voluntary, collaborative and cooperative process, and c) active involvement of elected officials representing core stakeholders. He also calls attention to the importance of the Metropolitan's Council's role as primary sponsor, as is the critical role played by each of the volunteer data custodians. Permission has been requested to copy the excerpt about MetroGIS for viewing by MetroGIS participants.

6. MetroGIS Participants Cited in Article about "White Knights"

Five MetroGIS participants were highlighted in a recent article in the URISA Journal. URISA is an international association of professionals using GIS and other information technologies in state and local government. Its journal is refereed and is considered the best in the field.

The article, "White Knights of the Spatial Data Infrastructure," by William J. Craig is about people who are pushing hard to share data across organizations – beyond what is expected. It is based on interviews with exceptional people in Minnesota. It asks them what they did and why they did it. Each of their answers is detailed, but the answers can be summarized too. There are three common motivating factors for these white knights:

- **Idealism:** They think better data makes better decisions.
- **Enlightened self-interest:** Making their data available helps them and their organizations.
- **Peer support:** They live in a professional environment that honors data sharing.

Among those interviewed were: Randall (Randy) Johnson, MetroGIS Staff Coordinator; David Arbeit, former chair of the Coordinating Committee, and Larry Charboneau, Les Maki and Gary Stevenson, former members of the Coordinating Committee. The author of the article, Will Craig, is a former chair of the Coordinating Committee. To access the full article, see <http://www.urisa.org/Journal/Vol16No2/Craig.pdf>. or <http://www.cura.umn.edu/reporter/05-Summ/Craig.pdf> (*Submitted by Will Craig, U of M CURA*)

7. Public Participation GIS Conference held in Cleveland

Non-profits and community-based organizations are increasingly using GIS to support their activities. Each year an international conference provides an opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other. The fourth annual conference was held in Cleveland, OH from July 31 to August 2. Will Craig, U of M CURA and MetroGIS Coordinating Committee, was on the conference committee and attended along with Jeff Matson, from the M3D project at the U of M. New breakthroughs are providing better access to data and maps over the Internet. One noteworthy story highlighted a Camden, NJ organization that is training high school kids from an area with high dropout rates to run a GIS and Internet service bureau; the organization is delivering quality products to clients and has moved 30 of its students into college. Conference proceedings will be available on CD soon. (*Submitted by Will Craig, U of M CURA*)