

Meeting Summary
MetroGIS Technical Advisory Team
Minnesota Counties Insurance Trust Building, St. Paul, MN
1:00-3:00 PM, Room 205
April 17, 2008

1. CALL TO ORDER

Dave Brandt called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m.

Present: David Brandt (Washington County), Dan Falbo (ESRI), Rick Gelbmann (Metropolitan Council), Matt McGuire (Metropolitan Council), Jim Maxwell (The Lawrence Group), Curt Peterson (Ramsey County), Chad Riley (Carver County), Alison Slaats (Metropolitan Council), Kent Tupper (Dakota County) Ron Wencl (USGS).

Support Staff: Mark Kotz (Metropolitan Council), Randall Johnson (MetroGIS)

2. ACCEPT AGENDA

The agenda was accepted.

3. ACCEPT MEETING SUMMARY

The summary of the November 8, 2008 meeting was accepted with one minor typo change.

4. ITEMS REQUIRING ACTION OR DISCUSSION

a) Meeting Shared Geospatial Needs Beyond Data

Kotz began by talking about the definitions of “applications” and “web services” and how to convey the difference to policy makers. He tested an illustration that could be presented to the Policy Board. Some suggestions for enhancing the illustration were given.

- Clarify that data does not need to be downloaded or stored when using web mapping services, but that applications just use the piece of data they need when they need it.
- Use an analogy of a stock ticker like a web service.
- Stress that the same service can be used in multiple applications. Perhaps illustrate the geocoder being used by many different applications in different organizations.
- Consider showing a business application as the client and the internet, as a cloud, in the middle of the diagram.

Kotz then gave an overview of the Technical Leadership Workgroup’s efforts and the next steps and recommendations that were approved by the Coordinating Committee at its March 27th meeting. See presentation and handout for details.

Falbo asked about an apparent contradiction in the survey results, one question saying that MetroGIS’s role with development of applications and web services was ranked low and another question showing writing web-based services as a top ranking. Kotz explained that the first question asked what role MetroGIS should play, with the response being that doing the actual development work for applications and services is not a high priority for MetroGIS as an organization. The other question asked what MetroGIS should promote or facilitate. In this case, the development of web-based services by other organizations was ranked high. Thus, MetroGIS should promote and facilitate the development of services, but not be in the business of creating them itself.

Johnson suggested that with respect to next step #5, in addition to exploring methods to establish trust with web services, we will need to identify the issues involved with that trust.

b) Method for Defining and Prioritizing Shared Applications & Web Service Needs

Kotz explained that the Coordinating Committee has directed the forming of a workgroup to oversee the process of identifying and prioritizing shared application and web service needs. This effort could be somewhat similar to what was done in 1996 with information needs that lead to data priorities. Kotz asked if anyone was interested in participating on this workgroup. There were no volunteers. Slaats asked if the original information needs from 1996 would be used as a starting point. The group's consensus was that yes, this should definitely happen. The group was asked if it had any ideas or comments about the process that might be used to define and prioritize these needs. None were offered.

c) Mailing List/Discussion Group/Forum for TAT

Kotz commented that the Coordinating Committee has directed the Technical Advisory Team to test the potential for it to expand its scope as principally a knowledge sharing vehicle to oversee a "mail list or list serve" mechanism as the initial strategy to foster partnering in addition to knowledge sharing. The group discussed the potential for this. Tupper concurred that a centralized collaboration resource of some kind would be valuable. Others noted that we would need to make it something that would be easy to maintain and not require everyone to continually update what they are doing. Something that notifies subscribers of new information was considered more effective than a site people would have to check periodically to see if anything has changed. Thus an e-mail function of some kind was thought to be a useful aspect. Kotz noted that a number of free sites are available (e.g. Google and Yahoo groups), but involve advertising. It was agreed that someone would need to have the time dedicated to administer the site. It was not thought to be something that would require finding. Falbo suggested that the University might be an appropriate organization to act in the role of the manager of such a site. It was agreed that oversight of this capability should be a responsibility of the Technical Coordinator position proposed to be added to the MetroGIS staff support team. No specific next steps were decided.

d) OGC Membership

Slaats and Johnson explained that MetroGIS has been approached by the Open Geospatial Consortium and offered an opportunity to join OGC as a *voting* aggregate member at a substantial discount of the standard fee to test the value of regional collaborative organizations, such as MetroGIS, participating in OGC's processes. The OGC is an international industry consortium of 348 companies, government agencies and universities participating in a consensus process to develop publicly available interface specifications. (See <http://www.opengeospatial.org/>)

An aggregate member votes at the technical committee level and is defined as:

Aggregate Membership provides a way for a group of local, provincial, state or other subnational government agencies, not-for-profit, academic and research institutions with a common interest to collectively join the OGC as a single voting member. Together, as an OGC Aggregate Member, these "component organizations" can pool both their requirements and their resources to optimize their participation in OGC programs.

The group was asked if anyone would be interested in participating in this aggregate membership. Annual membership would cost an estimated \$250. The OGC representative estimated that participation might involve 10% to 20% of ones time to participate effectively.

Gelbmann commented that he would like to have more information about the potential benefits that would be likely for a participant and their organization, noting that a 10 percent-plus time commitment will be difficult to justify given the complexity of the several of the projects proposed for MetroGIS during 2008-2009.

Falbo mentioned that OGC has recognized the importance of more effectively working with the consumers to meet their needs. They are doing a good job of creating test beds for potential standards.

He suggested that perhaps the TAT should ask the Coordinating Committee to see if they consider the opportunity to be valuable.

Brandt said that this is an intriguing idea, but probably too cutting edge for a government organization to spare the 10 to 20 percent time resources.

(Editor's note: Following the meeting, Chairperson Brandt forwarded this proposal to all of the members of the TAT to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to offer their comment before a decision is made.)

e) The National Grid Dataset on DataFinder

McGuire gave an overview of the National Grid standard, noting that it is not specifically a data standard, but a standard for cartographic display of the grid. He said that the Metropolitan Council was proposing to add it to DataFinder. Two shape files, 1000 meter and 100 meter grid cells, are suggested. McGuire asked for comments about this proposal and if anyone in the group is actively using the National Grid.

Tupper said that Dakota County is investigating use of the national grid for emergency preparedness. Wencil said that using it could be a big benefit when working across boundaries, particularly the state boundary into Wisconsin where they use a different coordinate system. Kotz gave an overview of the value of the grid for field work with recovery situations and creates a standard grid that can be used in different areas. Gelbmann mentioned that it might also be used for other purposes as a standard grid for aggregation things like crime or demographic data for modeling purposes. Brandt said that there may be use of the grid at Washington County in the future and, if so, it would be good to have the cartographic templates setup ahead of time.

The group agreed that both line and polygon data should be available on DataFinder. Peterson asked if it would be possible to obtain a point coordinate from a given National Grid location. The group agreed that this capability would be valuable and should be pursued.

5. PROJECT AND WORKGROUP REPORTS

a) Address Workgroup Update

Kotz reported that the workgroup has not met since the last TAT meeting, awaiting the results of the "data synchronization" pilot project that Carver County has agreed to conduct. The pilot is tentatively scheduled to begin around May 1.

Kotz also commented that he had attended the URISA/NENA Addressing Conference in Portland the week of April 7. He noted that the vision promoted in the MetroGIS model of relying upon local addressing authorities to maintain address points data and compiling these data to the county and state level was promoted by both keynote speakers and by other presenters. Kotz spoke with the members of the national address data standard workgroup about the progress of the standard. They are hoping to forward it to the FGDC within a few months. They said that they have modified the street pretype attribute to make it more flexible in accordance with previous comments from the MetroGIS Address Workgroup.

b) MetroGIS Geocoder Update

Member Read, the project manager, was unable to attend the meeting.

6. TECHNICAL PRESENTATIONS & DEMONSTRATIONS

No technical presentations or demonstrations were scheduled for this meeting.

7. INFORMATION SHARING

a) Round Table Information Sharing

Brandt noted that he shared both MetroGIS parcel data standards and draft address points standards with MCCC (Minnesota County Computer Consortium). They are in the process of revising their taxing system.

Peterson asked if any counties were getting their address data directly from cities. Riley noted that Carver County is working with Chaska to get address data updated and validated by the city.

Peterson also asked if there is any effort to develop a geocoding standard that leverages the national address data standard. Kotz responded that the national standard is still in draft form, but expected this would happen once the standard is approved.

Jim Maxwell asked if anyone was aware of a state wide database/table containing the new and old GNIS codes for cities. MetroGIS has such a table, but only for the metro area. Kotz mentioned that one can download a GNIS table that has FIPS codes that could be used to convert to the new code.

Wendt reported that the Imagery for the Nation (IFTN) program will be flying 1 meter imagery in 2010 and will be looking to partner with state and local government to buy up to higher resolutions. He noted that for example a county could buy up to 6 inch resolution and keep the 6 inch photos and sell them and the feds would still only distribute the 1 meter data. Gelbmann said that the Council will likely be participating and encouraged others to consider it. Brandt and Peterson said that their counties are looking to get imagery in 2009. Johnson commented that the IFTN will be a discussion topic at the June 4 National Geospatial Advisory Committee and encouraged members to offer suggestions to him as to how to improve the program.

Brandt asked if anyone was working on providing online, real time election results. No one was.

8. ADJOURN

Brandt adjourned the meeting at 3:12 p.m.

Prepared by,
Randall Johnson and Mark Kotz