



MetroGIS Policy Board

Wednesday, October 17, 2012 Meeting Minutes

Metropolitan County Government Center, 2099 University Avenue, St Paul, MN

Members Present:

Jim Kordiak, Anoka County
Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County
Steve Elkins, Metropolitan Council
Jim Bunning (alternate), Scott County
Mjyke Nelson (alternate), Washington County
Randy Knippel (alternate), Dakota County
Peter Henschel (alternate), Carver County
David Bitner, Coordinating Committee Chairman, Metropolitan Airports Commission

Coordinating Committee Members Present:

Nancy Read, Metropolitan Mosquito Control District
Rick Gelbmann, Metropolitan Council
Adam Fisher, Minnesota Commercial Association of Real Estate

Presenters:

Adam Fisher, Minnesota Commercial Association of Real Estate
Patrick Hamilton, Cushman & Wakefield

Guests:

Mark Kotz, Metropolitan Council

Staff:

Geoff Maas, MetroGIS Coordinator

1) Call To Order

Chair (Proxy) Reinhart called the meeting to order at 6:12 PM

2) Approve Meeting Agenda

Motion: Kordiak, Second: Elkins

3) Approve July 25, 2012 Meeting Summary

Motion: Elkins, Second: Kordiak

4) GIS Technology Demonstration

GIS and Market Analytics for the Real Estate Industry

Patrick Hamilton, Cushman & Wakefield

Adam Fisher, Minnesota Commercial Association of Realtors (MNCAR)

Mr. Fisher and Mr. Hamilton provided a demonstration on the methods employed by the private real estate industry to acquire, store, link, query, display, analyze and publish data.

Fisher is the Data and Technology Manager at MNCAR. MNCAR is a non-profit association representing commercial brokers and appraisers providing networking, training and data to professionals in real estate. MNCAR also maintains a for-profit subsidiary (MNCAR Exchange) through which it endeavors to offer the best, up-to-date real estate information, via a web-accessible subscription service containing a wealth of information on commercial properties.

MNCAR presently acquires, via purchase, data from twenty four counties in Minnesota (as well as outside of Minnesota) and maintains a searchable web interface for subscribers to search and gather information on real estate.

Fisher listed the numerous benefits of maintaining a single-site source for its commercial real estate data service including:

- Quicker decision making, faster and more efficient transactions;
- Better ability to meet the demands of its diverse clients;
- Fit to requirements of buyers;
- Speed for performing parcel/land assembly for commercial real estate clients;
- Identification of underutilized properties;
- Ability to compare the Minnesota real estate market to competing markets elsewhere in the United States;
- Ability to perform value change analysis;
- Ability to recognize change in tax base;
- Ability to identify proximity to amenities (infrastructure, transit, etc) for the diverse and various needs of commercial clients;
- Identification of undervalued/overvalued properties;
- Tracking of past and current property sales;
- Ability to track trends over time
- Able to perform detailed analysis of real estate data against demographic trends, traffic counts, building histories, lease listings, available space and tax information.
- Reduction of overhead to subscribing real estate clients; all data is in one spot

Fisher indicated that this service speeds up the ability to acquire and assess properties for brokers, leading to quicker business process, quicker sales and the impact of that to our regional and state economy is important, translating to economic development.

Key questions from the group to the presenters included the following:

Do you acquire your data through MetroGIS?

Fisher: MNCAR presently purchases the data directly from the counties; having the parcel data available free or for a modest transfer fee would significantly reduce our administrative and business costs from their present level.

If some kind of relationship was established, could a county upload their data to your system and then have access to your system? Would a contributing county have to pay a subscription fee?

Fisher: We'd welcome more direct partnerships with counties, we do have a precedent for in-kind services and access to the data by contributors.

Do you get requests from academia for your data?

Fisher: Yes, we do, we foster an open book policy for them, we take pride our data, the quality and depth of it and having academic interest strengthens and supports our brand.

Do you find that local assessors desire access to your data?

Fisher: Certainly. I'd have to look at our internal tracking to see how many [assessors] have access at present and how they are using it. It is not uncommon for one agency to sign up and have multiple users from that agency accessing the data; tracking assessors specifically is not immediately available.

Would standardized attributes (as proposed by MetroGIS's parcel standard) be of use to you?

Fisher: Yes, standardized parcel data makes our work much easier, there is a wide variation in how counties store and retain their data both within and outside of Minnesota. The metro counties are easier to work with.

Are you actively approaching other counties for data?

Fisher: Yes, we have staff with portable scanners visiting county courthouses to acquire public data via the normal channels. We would like to more actively collaborate to acquire the data, making our process and work easier and potentially helping the county as well; we want to enhance our data holdings and to collaborate as much as is possible.

Would MNCAR welcome direct contact with counties to identify and overcome obstacles to sharing and linking data directly? Would you be willing to work with us?

Fisher: Absolutely. We recognize that counties are developing, storing and working with the data to meet their internal needs. We'd welcome the chance to work out better methods with the counties to facilitate map services for external clients.

There may be potential to develop a metropolitan or ideally a statewide standard for backend structuring to facilitate uses like yours [MNCAR's]

Fisher: Yes, we'd welcome that.

Is there a specific ask from your group of us, the MetroGIS Policy Board?

Fisher: There has been some discussion about forming a private-sector version equivalent of MetroGIS's Coordinating Committee to discuss the priorities of the private sector. If MetroGIS can continue to guide the conversation in that direction and interact with that group as it begins, that would be desirable.

5) Project and Activity Updates

5a) MetroGIS Project Manager Hiring Update

Metropolitan Council GIS Manager Rick Gelbmann indicated that an offer had been made and accepted by a qualified candidate for Project Manager, he is expected to begin work in November 2012. The Project Manager will work ¼ time on MetroGIS initiatives and ¾ time on Metropolitan Council Information Services initiatives.

5b) Report Back on Meetings with Metro County GIS Managers

Metropolitan Council Senior Database Administrator Mark Kotz and Coordinator Maas meet with each GIS manager of the seven metro counties in August and September. The purposes of the meetings were two-fold, to attend to the annual payments to counties for updating and support of the Regional Parcel Dataset and to address areas of existing need and future activity for MetroGIS.

County managers identified the follow activities as having significant value for MetroGIS to address or continue to work on:

- Remain active as the regional aggregator of data
- Continued forum for the development of data standards
- Serve in a role for project coordination for long-term projects
- Maintain meetings and forums for networking, collaboration and information exchange
- Continued maintenance of the DataFinder.org site as a resource to the geospatial community

Activities also indicated as important for MetroGIS to remain engaged in:

- Develop, deploy and maintain the Address Points Dataset and Address Point Editor
- Continue work with the Street Centerlines Initiative (partnering with MnDOT and MnGeo)
- Improved ability to work with counties outside the Metro area
- Enhance ability for 'virtual' participation in MetroGIS
- Continued movement toward a Knowledge Center/Collaboration Hub
- Coordination for aerial imagery (MnGeo as senior partner/lead agency)
- Potential for application hosting (MnGeo as senior partner/lead agency)
- Exploring better telecom/fiber connectivity between counties and agencies
- Impervious surface dataset development potential
- Metro landmarks dataset development potential

Assist in policy position for the removal of liability to counties to make the parcel data available

The items advanced by the county GIS Managers will play a role in the next iteration of the MetroGIS Work Plan.

5c) Address Point Project Update

Metropolitan Council Senior Database Administrator Mark Kotz provided an update on the progress of the Address Point Project. A beta-version of Address Point editor interface is expected to be completed and available in November 2012

5d) Centerline Initiative

Coordinator Maas provided an update on the progress of the Centerline Initiative including updates from the recent Centerline Steering Committee and details to be covered at the forthcoming October 24-25 two-day workshop co-sponsored by MetroGIS, MnGEO, MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council.

5e) MetroGIS Work Plan Update

Coordinator Maas provided an update on the status of development of the forthcoming MetroGIS Wok Plan. The new plan is to cover 2013 through 2016; will include numerous existing initiatives as well as new initiatives identified by the stakeholder group. The new plan will be a flexible and 'living' document, enabling MetroGIS to respond to changes in priorities, technology and available financial and human resources.

5f) MetroGIS Communications Update

Coordinator Maas provided an update on the progress of MetroGIS's website redesign and state the goal of having a vendor under contract by December 30, 2012 to begin work on the new site. An update was also provided on the new MetroGIS logo development and that MetroGIS's Communications Plan remains in a proto-draft form pending the approval of the forthcoming Work Plan.

6) Action and Discussion Items

6a) Changing and Emerging Role of the MetroGIS Policy Board

Recent discussions at both the Policy Board and Coordinating Committee level have indicated a need to revisit the MetroGIS governance model.

Kordiak: The Policy Board has expressed an interest in recreating itself, this is still not formalized.

Bitner: We want MetroGIS's leadership in the discussion. We, the participants and Coordinating Committee of the greater MetroGIS stakeholder group don't feel empowered to push these issues. [Chairman] Terry [Schneider] gave us a challenge on our work plans for next two years to look this material. I think we can say that we're all in agreement to change the Policy Board in some way, but we still need to be engaged with elected officials, we can't lose that engagement entirely.

Kordiak: 12 to 13 years ago when we we're still getting started, we weren't ready to engage the private sector, but I see us as actually being able to make this some of these things happen now.

Reinhardt: We are now in a position for this to move forward as MetroGIS has matured. We've evolved to the point to better engage with the real estate industry and other industries like MNCAR. One of the reasons we had elected officials to begin with was that we needed the buy in at the policy level. We do not want to lose that buy in, but our organization has changed, we want to be able to perform activities and make things happen at a policy level when you need them. Last couple of years, we've been losing attendance and we need to reshape ourselves. From our meeting on August 16, we uncovered three initial options and we should be willing to kick those around and entertain more options. There needs to be change and or growth, make sure that we've got a good plan in place.

Kordiak: Lets go through the options again.

<Brief review of options collected from the August 16 Executive Committee session with pro and cons of each>

Group discussion of what MetroGIS has done well:

What have we accomplished and done well?

Government-to-government and government-to-academia are both areas we excel in.

One of our major next steps is the question of the public availability of parcel data.

Kordiak: Protecting the public's money remains important; we [elected officials] guide the distribution of those dollars. The only money we spend as MetroGIS are the Metropolitan Council's dollars.

Group Discussion of Value:

Value the counties brought was the data, the value the council brought was money

Mutual value

Value of the work that MetroGIS performs is not always in raw dollars

In every study of MetroGIS, the one big thing is human resources from actual work to making sure there are opportunities for collaboration and shared value to emerge.

Kordiak: We can magnify that value by having real estate, utilities and other private sector players potentially sponsor and fund MetroGIS they could they provide money to this organization

Bitner: We may then need to be an actual organization, MetroGIS cannot take in money only through MetroGIS, ti is dependent upon the Metropolitan Council for handling its financial dealings.

Kordiak: So then how do we grow what we have?

Knippel: This goes way beyond just the parcel data, the parcels just one obvious avenue to pursue, we have more to talk about, one example, as David [Bitner] said one of the key benefits are the involvement of the stakeholders, creating the forum and the relationships; there may be more stakeholders beyond just the metro area as well. Independent efforts are a huge waste of tax dollars, for agencies to go it alone, we can pool resources to create policies and standards that we all benefit from, lower the cost of doing the work; it's larger than just the parcels.

Reinhardt: 16 years ago, the main reason for involving elected officials was the desire to remove the ‘mystique’ of GIS, when I served as the chair, there was no county where I didn’t have to convince them to participate; there was mistrust of the Metropolitan Council as well to overcome. Now, most elected officials know what GIS is, know some of its value and how its being used in their counties.

Discussion of Policy Board Reformation Options:

Reinhardt: Would it be possible to fold the Policy Board into the Coordinating Committee and create a ‘Policy and Coordination Board’ that can retain a smaller more focused group for specific policy action?

Elkins: We could potentially fold it into an existing advisory committee at the Metropolitan Council there are active people there very much interested in the work that MetroGIS is doing.

Bitner: We have difficulty explaining how MetroGIS is separate from the Metropolitan Council as the Council is the primary funding entity. There is an on-going perception issue about what MetroGIS is.

‘Entity’ Discussion.

MetroGIS’s status as an ‘entity’ without any legal standing or formal definition remains an issue. Counties and cities can engage in joint powers agreements with one another, however, different levels of government interact with one another in a variety of ways (Memorandums of Understanding, formal agreements, legal agreements, sharing staff on project or program basis, etc). With cities, counties school districts, watershed districts all around the table here [at MetroGIS], the ‘formal’ aspect of the work becomes difficult with MetroGIS. One of the benefits of not having a formal legal status or structure is we can form things more quickly and then boost them to an official level later on.

Kordiak: Fear that if we fold the Policy Board into the Coordinating Committee, we will wash out the elected officials, they/we will lose the motivation to continue to participate. I continue to attend because I have been assigned by my county board to participate assigned by my county board and I have a personal interest in what we’re doing here. My question remains: Does the Coordinating Committee really need us?

Bitner: We need maintain our access to you (the elected officials); we have discussed taking the message out to the counties with presentations to each county board, options like that are better, still gets the info to the elected officials and maintains the relationships and cultivates awareness of what we’re doing.

Kordiak: Most county boards have no clue that this [MetroGIS] even exists; it would be helpful to interact with county boards in a meaningful way.

Knippel: I’m afraid if we dilute this further, we’ll have questions from our upper management as to why we continue to participate. Having a formal endorsement or agreements might be in order to keep this viable. An example is the Memorandum of Understanding between the 8 counties (metro + Olmsted) driven by county administrators for IT collaboration; GIS is one of those initiatives.

Gelbmann: One of the things that this Policy Board provides is a common understanding of why GIS is important. Take the presentation just given to us from MNCAR; having a body like this understanding the value of that information means being able to communicate that value to other people and

maintaining holistic thinking about the issues. I don't know what form that the new Policy Board needs to take, but I'd feel a great loss.

Reinhardt: Perhaps if we folded the two bodies [*Policy Board and Coordinating Committee*] together *upward* [Coordinating Committee folded upward into the Policy Board] instead of down; similar to the Metro Cities model, perhaps we need more representatives from other areas of MetroGIS to be better represented at the Policy Level.

Group Discussion of defining Representatives and Commissioners:

Discussion of what a representative is and what an elected official (commissioner) is; what their roles are and what they can and cannot do in their given role/office; equal in weight when at the MetroGIS table, but perhaps not so when back in their agency or organization (different levels of influence on funding or policy)

MetroGIS may need to more closely marry the policy makers with the technical staff to say how do we make this work better; instead of keeping them separate; a more balanced body of both policy and technical people working together.

Nelson: The Association of Minnesota Counties leadership example might be a useful model.

Bitner: To take the 'devil's advocate position' for a moment; targeted level of discussion; would be level of discourse 'down into the weeds' with technical issues someone who is not in the swim;

Kordiak: I feel the technical discussion would be above the heads of elected officials, while interesting, it might not be the best use of our time.

Kordiak: My question remains, why isn't Xcel here participating? Why isn't the Real estate industry here as part of our on-going discussion?

Bitner: These industries are represented on the Coordinating Committee, but not the Policy Board at present.

Reinhardt: First, we really need to deal with our governance structure, changing our governance structure will not address the issues on how we move with the real estate or other industries in the private sector; we need to do this in a coordinated fashion.

Group discussion: Forming a subgroup on MNCAR's work and working on data sharing with the private sector. The Coordinating Committee has a mandate to do this, discuss and form at our next meeting.

Need to make a determination on what kinds of policy decisions the Coordinating Committee needs to have the Policy Board work on; clarity of what is expected from a policy body; if we have policy makers nearby, but not formally organized, that might be acceptable as an interim solution.

Blending the Policy Board and the Coordinating Committee as one body, but being clear about when we need specific policy decisions or support to be made.

Coordinating Committee can likely get most of its work done without having to bother elected officials in the near term.

Bitner: We will continue to work on these issues, until then, the Coordinating Committee should be able to count on having access to the Policy Board.

Elkins: Perhaps we can meet annually in a formal setting, but can be called upon to convene if you need us.

Reed: Our main policy concerns now are the Licensing agreements, legal issues concerning data and liability for releasing data,.

Elkins: I'd be interested to see us bring more technology to the meetings, making virtual meeting participation or video conferencing available.

<Brief group wrap up discussion; Coordinator Maas thanked the group for staying late and remaining engaged throughout>

7) Next Meeting

Scheduled for Wednesday, January 23, 2013

8) Adjourn

Chair (proxy) Reinhardt adjourned the meeting at 8:20 pm