

NYS GIS Strategic Planning Project

Central/Western New York Stakeholder Meeting

Greece, NY

Meeting Date: October 24, 2007

A representative cross-section of different levels of government and the private sector was in attendance (see registration list for names of attendees). The following presents “synthesized highlights” of the discussion that took place at the meeting as recorded by Michael Turner from Applied Geographics, Inc.

Participants express interest in CSCIC web services

Several participants expressed a strong interest in CSCIC expanding their use of web services to provide access to geospatial data. Several in the audience indicated that they had used the existing orthophoto web service and were pleased with the results. Users did acknowledge that the services performed “a bit slowly”, but that they were faster than having to download and process the data locally.

It was also noted that many localities struggle with gaining adequate disk resources to store ever larger quantities of spatial data and imagery. It was noted that web services are a means of addressing this. Further, several counties described how they host data and applications on behalf of their municipalities and that delivering these kinds of services can help smaller jurisdictions with their data storage challenges.

Supporting Local GIS Education Efforts

Several users described the challenges of educating local constituencies about the importance and relevance of geospatial technology. While there was a general understanding of how to express the value of GIS, there were challenges and knowledge gaps in using appropriate examples and having good representative graphic images. Examples included:

- **Public Safety:** Given that public safety officials have access to homeland security funding there is need to help educate these officials both about how GIS is applicable to their work and how geospatial activity is an eligible use of many grant funding sources. It would be helpful to have the state support these education efforts by assembling representative use cases (particularly regarding actual emergencies where GIS was deployed) that can be accessed by local GIS personnel and also to support GIS presentations at public safety oriented conferences (e.g. NY Sheriff’s Association). It was suggested that public safety personnel are cognizant of and appreciate oblique imagery and that this could be leveraged into a broader understanding of GIS opportunities.
- **Elevation Data:** Many local officials have a difficult time understanding the applicability of high-quality elevation data to pressing local issues. Again, a catalog of use cases and representative projects and benefits from elevation data (e.g. floodplain mapping; use of 2 foot topography for local engineering “preliminary designs”, etc.) would be useful to the GIS community. In turn, the GIS community would use these materials to actively engage local decision

makers and funders to make local investments in these data (potentially through the “buy-ups” available as part of the statewide orthophoto contract).

- **Local GIS Success Stories and Best Practices:** In spite of many successful local GIS operations, there are many counties and communities that are continuing to work at institutionalizing the support for GIS (sometimes as a followup to start-up funding received from SARA). Again, local decision makers can be less aware of the value of local GIS and one workshop participant described how one of his county commissioners stated “why do we need to do this; it’s all in Google anyway”. Again, it would be valuable if CSCIC could provide material that could help locals in identifying good strategies for differentiating local GIS from the commercial mapping engines. Similarly, there are many innovative projects and best practices emerging at the local level and CSCIC could play a valuable role as a clearinghouse for these ideas and for disseminating information on effective local GIS governance models.

Participants express difficulty finding data on CSCIC website

Once again, one of the workshop participants described a situation where they were looking for a data resource on the CSCIC web-site but could not find it (in spite of it being present). These examples continue to imply that improvements in the CSCIC web-site are desirable. Specifically, the search capabilities should be enhanced and the site should be tuned so that minimum “GIS literacy” is necessary to navigate it.

Interest in Oblique Imagery

As with other workshops, participants indicated an increased interest in oblique imagery and increased awareness that this type of imagery is consistent with other GIS data sets.

Orthophoto Imagery – Interest in LIDAR products, need for color IR imagery, need to archive historic orthophotography for temporal analyses

After learning about the forthcoming “LIDAR buy-up” that will be available as part of the new 2008 statewide orthophoto imagery contract participants asked whether LIDAR products on the elevation of manmade structures would be available. While this is **not** in the current contract, adding it at a later time would be desirable.

The Nature Conservancy expressed strong support for color IR imagery to assist in numerous natural resource management activities.

Cornell University expressed a strong interest in ensuring that as more and more recent orthophoto imagery comes into being that historic orthophotos remain readily available to support temporal analyses. Cornell also expressed a strong interest in the state pursuing a derivative land cover data set from the new, raw, 4-band digital imagery.

Interest in access to enhanced hydrography

Many participants expressed an interest in gaining access to the enhanced NHD hydrography under development by DEC and there were questions about why these data are not currently available. It is hoped that continued communication with DEC will result in those data being released when they are “ready”.

There was some discussion about the process of adding “local hydrography” names to the statewide data sets (i.e. ALIS). It was noted that name attributing is currently inconsistent and many hydrography features are un-named. Is there an opportunity for locals to add local hydrography names to the ALIS data set using a tool such as the MMNT?

Updating the Data Sharing Cooperative Data Sets

Some workshop participants acknowledged that they had been lax about sending updated data to the data sharing cooperative web-site. It was suggested that CSCIC send periodic reminders to cooperative members encouraging them to update their data sets regularly. Such reminders could potentially include the “time stamp” of when the last data was supplied.

Collaborative Updating of ALIS Roads/Addresses via MMNT

While there was conceptual agreement that collaborative effort is required to keep the statewide roads current, there was not universal support for using MMNT. Several participants, notably Steuben County, described requirements to keep their own county centerline files updated and an unwillingness to do it twice (i.e. once locally, once via MMNT). Counties are receptive to providing their countywide centerlines to the state for wholesale incorporation into ALIS.

As with Suffolk County, other participants reported that their local 911 dispatching solutions have prescribed centerline files that prevent them from using ALIS. Again, these counties are choosing to maintain their own centerline files rather than using MMNT to contribute to ALIS.

In other counties, such as Erie and Chautauqua, even when there’s a willingness to use MMNT there have been challenges in identifying which county personnel should have this responsibility as it implies a potentially significant amount of work.

Cross Jurisdictional Boundary Issues

One challenge with assembling statewide roads based on the wholesale contributions of counties is ensuring that there will be accurate and connected roadways that can cross county boundaries. What happens when one county’s roads have superior accuracy to their neighbors’?

In addition to the county-to-county challenge workshop participants noted that they face similar challenges for both interstate and international neighbors. Further, some participants noted hurdles in obtaining neighboring jurisdiction data from other states and Canada and asked whether CSCIC could potentially provide assistance in gaining these data sets on a statewide basis. In a similar vein, some participants asked whether the state could help broker appropriate “data deals” with other private sector data custodians such as utilities and railroads.

Regarding FOIL and digital data distribution

- **Public Safety Exemptions:** Workshop participants expressed some confusion about which data sets were “sensitive” and had FOIL restrictions for data sharing. While fully understanding and supporting the public safety necessity

of some restrictions it would be very beneficial if it was made clear which data sets have restrictions (i.e. a uniform standard does not seem to be applied).

- **Reasonable Fees for Data:** Workshop participants described a situation in Western NY where digital data are readily distributed to the public albeit with a variety of pricing policies. In general, most counties applied the principle of charging “reasonable fees” that would avoid incentivizing people to use the formal FOIL process.

Parcel Standardization

Overall, workshop participants expressed a willingness to contribute/distribute parcel data to other parties.

Two regional efforts to assemble multi-county parcel data sets were described: First, numerous sets of county parcel data were assembled as part of the Great Lakes Shoreline project. Second, the Buffalo Regional Institute assembled parcel data for 8 western NY counties. In both cases workshop participants reported that the county data fit together “decently”. While there were some “edge issues” they were not egregious.

Some counties reported that in addition to inter-county edge issues there are often intra-county edge issues where adjoining municipal parcel data sets can also have overlaps and/or gores.

Engaging ORPS to be More Involved in GIS

There was a brief discussion about the potential and desirability of engaging ORPS to be more involved with GIS. In 2007, with most counties using GIS to produce their tax maps, it is somewhat ironic that ORPS is relatively silent on GIS data issues. They have the mandate and business orientation to meaningfully engage local parcel data custodians.

Regional Cooperation and the Governor’s Government Efficiency Initiative

Several counties described initiatives where they are cooperating with other governments on geospatial initiatives, including:

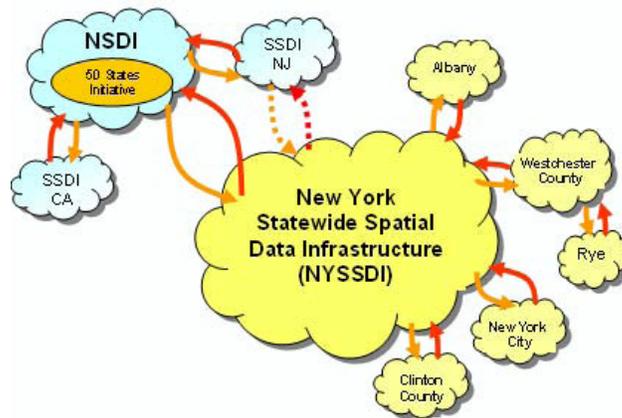
- **Erie & Niagara Counties:** Niagara County’s equipment is being hosted within Erie County’s server room. Thus, a single GIS technical infrastructure can serve more than one county.
- Both **Monroe and Erie Counties** reported that they host local government GIS web-sites. Again, a single county technical infrastructure has the ability to provide service to both the county as well as smaller jurisdictions within the county.

There was general agreement that this approach can be followed in other jurisdictions and that it was consistent with Governor Spitzer’s initiative to promote government efficiency by providing “consolidated regional services” when possible and appropriate.

Administrative Boundaries

Wyoming County noted that in addition to annexation there are municipalities that are being dissolved and that these boundary changes need cataloging as well.

Chautauqua County described a use case where their fire department is looking at new GIS enabled opportunities for redistricting. Historically, street centerlines have generally been used as fire district boundaries. This results in situations where different sides of the same street can have different fire companies respond. Using GIS and parcel data the fire department now realizes that they can readily use parcel boundaries as the district boundaries and this provides greater flexibility including placing an entire street within a single district.



Participants:

Michael Perry (Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council)
Victor Jorin (Tompkins County)
Keith Jenkins (Cornell University)
Dale Morris (Erie County GIS)
Mary Pasciak (Buffalo News)
Nathan Burtch (Finger Lakes Institute at Hobart and William Smith Colleges)
Kevin Beers (Genesee Transportation Council)
Jacob Needle (WENDEL)
David Bubniak (James Sewall Company)
Scott McCarty (Monroe County GIS Division)
Jeff Volpe (Bergmann Associates)
Justin Cole (Monroe County GIS)
Kevin Schultz (Ontario County)
Todd MacConnell (Wyoming County)
C. Melville (NYSDOT)
Angel Mott (NYSDOT Office of Real Estate)
Maxwell Ruckdeschel (University at Buffalo Regional Institute)
Scott Copey (Town of Greece)
Thomas Sears (Steuben County Planning)
Hector Boggio (Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council)
Douglas Johnson (NYSDOT)
Tao Tang (Buffalo State College - Department of Geography)
Susan Hoskins (Institute for Resource Information Sciences)
Richard Vary (City of Elmira)
Chris Tortora (GFLRPC)
Jon DeAngela (Chautauqua County)
Nancy Brelos (Pictometry)
Gregg Sargis (The Nature Conservancy)
Bill Daly (Chautauqua County PED & IDA)
Christine Kinn (Chautauqua County Planning)
Kimberly Smith (Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council)
William Ostrander (Tioga County GIS Department)