

MetroGIS

Cooperation, Coordination, Sharing Geographic Data



August 27, 1998

(Awarded 10/9/1998)

Governor's Council on Geographic Information
330 Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

Nomination for Letter of Commendation

To Whom It May Concern:

The MetroGIS Coordinating Committee¹ hereby nominates the MetroGIS Street Centerline Data Project for a Letter of Commendation. This project exemplifies the action and vision necessary to institutionalize the mission of MetroGIS. The project has and will continue to have a significant impact on outside organizations as well as the home agencies. In short, it has yielded tangible and exceptional results which further widespread sharing of geospatial data among government units that serve the seven county, Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area. In so doing, the Committee believes that it meets the requirements for recognition by the Governor's Council on Geographic Information as an exemplary GIS activity.

Nature of the Project: The Metropolitan Council (Council) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) formed a partnership in 1997 to acquire a license to use The Lawrence Group's (TLG) Street Centerline Dataset, enter into a five-year maintenance contract with TLG to provide quarterly updates for this dataset, oversee the licensing of stakeholders, and provide and support a FTP (File Transfer Protocol) site to distribute the dataset to licensees. The subject spatial dataset contains lines that represent the location of roads, public and private, located in a nine county area that includes the seven county, Twin City Metropolitan Area. The dataset is designed to align with parcel data maintained by the counties. It also contains the range of addresses for each road segment (generally intersection to intersection) and landmarks including, schools, churches, parks, rivers and lakes.

Notable is that Council and Mn/DOT both chose to look beyond their respective internal business needs. (Metropolitan Council and Mn/DOT officials have each been asked to submit a letter to describe their motivation to underwrite this project. The Council's is attached. Mn/DOT's will be forwarded when received.) The resulting arrangement, which cost both parties more than they needed to expend in time, effort, and resources to address their individual needs, provides free access to this dataset by all government organizations and academic institutions serving the State of Minnesota and also provides them with free quarterly updates for five years. The dataset can be retained and used by the recipients into perpetuity at the end of five-year maintenance contract. A decision will be made before the end of the maintenance contract, most likely involving the

¹ See the MetroGIS Internet site at www.metrogis.org for more information about the mission of MetroGIS, its stakeholders, projects, and committee structure.

MetroGIS Policy Board, as to how to best maintain the currency of the dataset from that point forward.

The project was initiated by Metropolitan Council's GIS staff in 1996 in accordance with the Council's pledge to facilitate moving MetroGIS from concept to reality. Council staff sought a partnership with Mn/DOT when it became apparent both had common needs.

Mn/DOT and the Metropolitan Council financed the licensing of this dataset and a maintenance contract on behalf of all government and academia to promote standardization and sharing of geographic information; both cornerstones of the MetroGIS initiative.

Impact on Other Organizations: In October 1997, government and academic organizations were advised of the availability of this dataset to them at no cost. By May 1998, the MetroGIS Policy Board had endorsed it as a primary source of address matching for MetroGIS. And, as of August 18, 1998, forty organizations, in addition to the Metropolitan Council and Mn/DOT, had acquired licenses to use it. Current licensees include all forms of local government, metropolitan agencies, state and federal agencies, and colleges and universities. (See the attached list.)

Public benefits that have been and that are expected to continue to be realized from the MetroGIS Street Centerline Data Project include:

- 1) Significant savings through reducing duplication of effort and expenses. Street centerline data are fundamental to development of geographic information systems used by local government. In excess of 420 units of local government and numerous metropolitan, state and federal agencies serve the seven-county Metropolitan Area. Prior to this project and the resulting endorsement of a regional street centerline dataset for MetroGIS, stakeholders were compelled to develop and maintain numerous stand-alone street centerline datasets.
- 2) Substantially less cost and effort to develop applications dependent upon street centerline data (e.g., pavement management, routing, aggregation of socio-economic data, etc.) and which span multiple jurisdictions than was the case prior to the availability of an endorsed, seamless, regional dataset.
- 3) More productive use of staff time and better, more reliable information for applications and projects that cross-jurisdictional boundaries. Standardization of a fundamental dataset such as this makes possible the ability to standardize and tie to it other datasets, such as census geography.

Two letters of support from beneficiaries of this project are attached; one from Dick Carlstrom, a Services Consultant with TIES, and another from Nancy Reed with the Metropolitan Mosquito Control Commission. Mr. Carlstrom states in his letter that availability of The Lawrence Group street centerline data files has "provided very important geocoding resources for a recent project" and that the "project could not have succeeded without the help of the MetroGIS effort" (data sharing agreements). Ms. Reed states in her letter "In addition to these products (street centerlines and digital imagery) being very cost-effective for our agency, the fact they are set up as uniform datasets for the entire region (not each in separate county coordinate systems) have made them immediately usable for us. I also appreciate MetroGIS's staff's efforts to make the street dataset easily accessible through their ftp site." Other local government beneficiaries have been asked to submit letters of endorsement under separate cover.

GCGI Goals Served: We believe the MetroGIS Street Centerline Data Project furthers the following four goals of the Governor's Council on Geographic Information:

1. *Efficient investments in geographic information, such as those that serve multiple purposes or users or have exceptional cost-benefit ratios.*

According to The Lawrence Group officials, prior to the agreement reached with them by the Council and Mn/DOT, sales of a single copy of the street centerline dataset for internal business purposes, without updates, ranged from \$2,500 for a small city to in excess of \$85,000 for the entire seven county area. The combined expense to the Council and Mn/DOT of \$385,000 for the license has likely been or soon will be realized in savings to the forty

MetroGIS stakeholders who have obtained a license in the seven months since the dataset has been available free of charge to government and academia. The Council and Mn/DOT also agreed share the \$37,500 annual expense to obtain quarterly updates of the entire dataset for five years. This expense is substantially less than Mn/DOT and the Council were each spending annually to update their own street centerline datasets and the benefit quarterly updates is passed along at no expense to each licensee.

2. *Sharing of geographic data, expertise, and technology and 3) Development of geographic data as a public resource, widely available at reasonable cost.*

A fundamental goal of MetroGIS is to institutionalize widespread sharing of geographically referenced data commonly needed by its stakeholders. The Regional Street Centerline project is the first of several MetroGIS projects designed to achieve this goal. Street centerline data is fundamental to local GIS programs. This project sought to and achieved conversion of The Lawrence Group's street centerline dataset into a public resource. Collaboration between the Council and Mn/DOT made it possible to meet their individual needs cost-effectively. But, more importantly, each elected to embody the vision of widespread data sharing and agreed to make this resource widely available to others free of charge. Additionally, the Council agreed to share its data distribution expertise and technology to insure widespread access by MetroGIS stakeholders.

4. *Establishment and promotion of geographic standards and guidelines*

The MetroGIS Policy Board adopted "*Guidelines and Issues for Working with Address Data*" at its January 1998 meeting. These guidelines were developed to help users of the Regional Street Centerline Dataset make the most of the GIS capabilities associated with it. Each licensee is informed of this document when they execute a license agreement. The document is also promoted and available through the MetroGIS website at www.metrogis.org (see projects and demonstrations/street centerline)

Thank you for this opportunity to nominate the MetroGIS Street Centerline Data Project for recognition by the Governor and the GIS Community. If you have questions, please call me at 673-3620 or Randall Johnson, MetroGIS Staff Coordinator, at 602-1638.

Respectfully,

Brad Henry, Chair
MetroGIS Coordinating Committee

cc: Randall Johnson