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The CIP Pilot Project Series—A GECCo Is Born!

By Bob Samborski, GITA Executive Director

Each of the articles in this column this year has dealt with our ongoing effort to increase the involvement of infrastructure management professionals in national geospatial policy and programs.

Beginning with initiatives that evolved through the GITA-created Geospatial Leadership Coalition (GLC), such as the report of the Study Mission to the Road Administration Information Center in Japan (ROADIC), the ROI Research Project, and the establishment of the association's National Geospatial Initiative for Critical Infrastructure Protection (NGI-4-



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CIP), we've maintained steady progress. The invitation we recently accepted to join the Steering Committee of the Federal Geographic Data Committee and the creation of FLAG—the Federal Liaison Advisory Group—demonstrate GITA's continuing commitment to providing leadership the infrastructure management community can rely on.

The latest step in this effort was taken at the end of June, when a GECCo was born in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Creating Relationships for a CIP Pilot Project

As all members should know by now, GITA has been increasingly active in establishing dialogues with other associations and groups involved with the many facets of protecting our critical infrastructure. The primary obstacle of data sharing emerged as a

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focal point of an approach that evolved into the concept of a critical infrastructure pilot project.

In response to a request from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Geospatial Management, GITA established a CIP Task Force to create a framework for the pilot and generate a proposal. Since January 2004, this proposal has been reviewed on several occasions by representatives of DHS, the Transportation Security Administration, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, the Open Geospatial Consortium, and several other organizations.

The primary purpose of the pilot is to facilitate an interactive dialogue among infrastructure stakeholders in a defined geographic area to address data-sharing issues that inhibit effective response and recovery in times of emergency. Specifically, the pilot would serve as an interactive, cooperative forum for collecting and categorizing information that will define:

- Data requirements (type, currency, accuracy, etc.).
- Intra- and inter-organizational process requirements.
- Interoperability and enterprise architecture requirements.

- Technology requirements.

The serious nature of terrorist threats demands our attention. The U.S. government has made homeland security a national priority and it will likely remain a primary focus for the foreseeable future. But beyond the obvious effect of potentially successful terrorist attacks, it is important to remember that the results of natural disasters are just as serious. Typhoons and hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, and fires occur with unpredictable regularity and significant cost in lives and property. Damage to our underground infrastructure by excavators occurs on a daily basis. Although most of this accidental damage goes unnoticed on the national level, the aggregate effect on the economy is staggering, and the number of lives lost is tragically unnecessary.

No matter the root cause of the emergency—terrorism, natural occurrences, or human error—the methods of responding to, mitigating, and ideally preventing reoccurrences are based in a common approach: the coordinated use of geospatial information. This cannot happen without the many mutually dependent agencies and organizations charged with protecting a nation's citizens and infrastructure's ability to efficiently and effectively share their geospatial data. There are obstacles that need to be overcome before this collaboration can occur, however, and

that is the primary impetus behind GITA's CIP Pilot Series, now known as "Geospatially Enabling Community Collaboration" or GECCo for short.

The Honolulu Pilot— Capital Gain for Hawaii

Why Hawaii? As this initiative progressed, our CIP Task Force identified several locations for pilot projects, but it chose Honolulu as the first potential pilot site because of circumstance and opportunity. A discussion with representatives of the City and County of Honolulu evolved into a broader consortium of interested organizations, and the level of support among representatives of governmental, utility, and private organizations in Hawaii proved to be the primary driver for selecting Honolulu. A relatively self-contained community with excellent long-standing cross-organizational relationships, Honolulu is a very practical location for a state-based effort as well. The fact that most of the interested organizations are using the same land base was also a prime consideration. It looked to be the closest domestic example to a ROADIC-style model that we could find, and although there were no illusions that this would be easy by any means, we felt that these considerations would enhance the potential for success.

The GITA Hawaii Pilot Workshop Team included GITA Past President and FLAG Chair Dave DiSera and two colleagues of his from EMA, Inc., St. Paul, Minn., Claire Cooper from Honolulu and Dan Vaaler from St. Paul; At Large Board Member Brent Jones, James W. Sewall Co., Old Town, Maine; Ken Schmidt, City and County of Honolulu; and me. The day-and-a-half workshop was held in one of the hearing rooms of the Hawaii State Capital Building.

The 32 workshop participants were senior managers with a good understanding of their organization's operations and emergency management functions. They also knew how GIS and other technologies could be used to

manage and protect corporate assets and critical infrastructure. A wide variety of organizations responded to our invitation to participate. Individuals represented various departments from the City and County of Honolulu; the State of Hawaii; the U.S. Geological Survey; U.S. Corps of Engineers; Hawaiian Electric; Bureau of Water Supply; the Honolulu Fire Department; Oahu Civil Defense; Oceanic Cable Company; The Pacific Disaster Center; several military organizations; and a number of other public and private entities, utilities, and first-responder and emergency management organizations. It was, by all accounts, quite a diverse group.

Our team gave the group an overview of why geospatial technology is such a key tool for supporting CIP and emergency management efforts. GITA's National Geospatial Initiative for CIP was also reviewed and discussed. But the bulk of the workshop was devoted to interactive sessions in which all the participants defined the barriers to effective collaboration among their respective organizations.

Questions, Questions

"You are updating the data anyway, so why not just give them to us?"

"We spent \$3 million, and you want it for free?!"

"Who is liable if there is an error in the data?"

"Do my proprietary data become subject to the Freedom of Information Act?"

These questions should sound very familiar to anyone who has contemplated the intricacies of sharing data with other organizations and sometimes even other departments within the same organization. The group addressed these issues and many other barriers to data sharing. A survey of security-related initiatives under way in Honolulu and around the State of Hawaii was also taken. It was interesting to see some participants' reactions when they realized that the data sets they wanted and needed had, in some cases, already

been developed and that other organizations were using them. Some serious discussions took place in the hallways during breaks.

A central element of the workshop involved a scenario-based exercise designed to test participants' ability to respond to a realistic emergency event. In this case, the event was the detonation of a dirty bomb in downtown Honolulu during a holiday parade. Small group breakouts facilitated by the Workshop Team resulted in identifying



what internal and external data were needed to plan for or respond to an emergency event, and also identifying what organization was responsible for those data. The groups were also asked to identify those issues involving the "controlled" access or exchange of data to support CIP during an event, e.g., "Existing internal rules do not allow for sharing of data with external organizations." Finally, the groups were asked to classify these issues by type—technology, practices/organization, and data.

The second day focused on identifying the various data sets that would be needed to constitute a comprehensive approach to provide critical infrastructure protection, and if those data existed, who maintained them. The workshop concluded with the group engaged in discussion to identify the primary keys to pilot success.

The information obtained in this pilot project workshop will enable local and state critical infrastructure stakeholders to develop a framework by which organizations can better collabo-

rate in order to protect the critical infrastructure of Oahu and the State of Hawaii. We are in the process of digesting the large volume of feedback and good ideas that generated in Honolulu, and we plan to make it available to GITA members on the Web site in the near future.

Great Timing

Less than a week before the Honolulu pilot took place, we learned about the Homeland Security Information Technology Evaluation program, a joint effort between the DHS Chief Information Officer and the DHS Office of Domestic Preparedness. This program was created to “foster and evaluate novel uses of existing ‘state of the market’ information technology that will remove barriers and improve information sharing and integration.” It seemed to us that our GECCo concept

fit all the stated program criteria extremely well. Because only state agencies could apply for funding under this program, we successfully solicited the support and assistance of our workshop hosts at the City and County of Honolulu to facilitate the grant application through the state. Despite a remarkably short timeframe, the state of Hawaii, in conjunction with the City and County of Honolulu and GITA, submitted an application for funding to support a Hawaii GECCo.

Funding or No Funding...

We envision the Hawaii GECCo resulting in a replicable model that stakeholders in other communities can employ in constructing data-sharing agreements for critical infrastructure protection, among other things. GITA will encourage additional GECCos in other communities that leverage the

effort and experiences of preceding pilots. Eventually, a growing network of GECCos nationwide will contribute to national programs defined by the federal government, such as the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). The model could also be exported internationally, as recent discussions with federal government officials in Australia have suggested.

Although we have reached a point beyond which GITA would be hard-pressed to continue to provide unilateral support to conduct a full-blown GECCo, we are committed to holding additional pilot workshops, such as the highly successful one in Honolulu, even if no additional funding is forthcoming. In addition, we are in the process of developing a CIP Symposium to be held in December this year to more fully explore the GECCo concept. You’ll read more about these developments in my next column.