

**Comments from the GIS Listserv community regarding the practice of sharing data to eliminate associated costs.**

Comprised by:  
Pete Koenig  
GIS Coordinator  
Kansas Rural Water Association

**Email sent to the GIS ListServe by Pete Koenig on June 27, 2007 regarding the practice of sharing data.**

I have been invited to attend a County Commissioner's meeting at which I will be asked why a County Appraiser's office should share high resolution aerials with a county Rural Water District in exchange for the District's infrastructure shapefiles. Our stance is that everyone should share data as it may be useful for purposes that the owner may presently be unaware of. If infrastructure data from Greensburg was available to DASC (or other off site agencies/departments) when the tornado went through, repair and cleanup crews could have used that data and wouldn't have damaged other infrastructure, thus causing more repair and cleanup.

Greensburg is just an example. I am asking for feedback, both positive and negative, that I can share with the county commissioners, the county appraiser and the rural water district board members that will assist them in making an informed decision about whether to share data (either free of charge or simply to recoup staff time and materials) or charge an amount that 'prices it out of range' for the district or anyone else who is interested.

All responses are welcome.

Thank you,

Pete Koenig  
GIS Coordinator  
Kansas Rural Water Association

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**These responses were received by KRWA from Appraisers, GIS department heads, State agency staff and GIS software representatives.**

Nancy Herrenbruck, RMA  
Cherokee County Appraiser  
Cherokee County, KS.

Marilyn passed this on to me and I think anytime we can share info it is beneficial to everyone concerned. If there are no statutes preventing the info to be shared it can only help us to be kept informed. Our policy in the past has been to share on a basis that if we exchange info there would be no charge. Otherwise we have been instructed by our commissioners to charge everyone for maps, info, or any other type of info we give out. The appraiser's office is public information except sale prices, income/expense info for commercial properties, and personnel records. Our GIS consultant is really good about helping us use shared info. I think as you mentioned about Greensburg, you might not need certain info all the time, but when you do it might make a big job easier. We would like to track private storm shelters, in case of a tornado, you would know which properties had a shelter. If the house falls on the shelter, you would at least know where to look.

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Tom  
(Jackson County Appraiser)

Hey Pete,

You and I have had this conversation and I still don't have my arms wrapped completely around it. Either way. I certainly feel the data should be shared. I also have empathy with the taxing authority which pays to have the data created.

It may be as simple as considering all data as under the KORA (Kansas Open Records Act) and after a formal request is made, the county (or whoever) is able to make that decision and live with or suffer the consequences as the case may be. If someone is going to make a profit from taxpayer driven materials, then the county should be able to recoup some costs. However, if a small city is doing a sewer study then obviously sharing is in order.

Maybe some discussion of what reasonable costs may be? I have discussed this also with Dr. Tom Schaffer at Fort Hays and no definitive answer came of it, yet. I hope Ivan Weichart (Department of Administration) will consider this in his GIS initiative workshop in Topeka next month.

Good luck,

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Mr. Koenig:

I recommend that a check list, of potential required information, be prepared and coordinated with all State agencies. An executive order from the Governor, based on a consensus, would implement the guidance. I believe Shared information will make our several tasks much more mission and cost effective.

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**John Gagliardo**  
Crawford County

Crawford County began the program of collecting both public and private storm shelters in mid 2006. The public ones we have listed on our system for anyone to view. The private ones are only accessed by dispatch and Emergency Management personnel. Currently, the State has no taxes on storm shelters so the general public has been good at giving us info on their shelters. We have found that since the shelters are not taxable, the appraiser's office does not collect good information on them such as location, size, etc. We are preparing to do a public information request to ask the citizens to report to the GIS the addition of storm shelters or safe rooms as well as any other structure that a family may use during a tornado.

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Sheriff Mike Keating  
Hamilton County

Pete:

There was a flap over data sharing, even amongst governments, about 18 months ago which was resolved by an opinion from AG Morrison, though I can't remember the opinion number. As a rural water district is likely an elected government, I see no problem.

***In response to this comment, Ed Crane, who sits on the Kansas GIS Policy Board, was asked if he knew of the Attorney General's opinion. He stated:***

PS the Atty General opinion was focused on a restriction in HLS Grant funding that any data should not be shared outside the emergency management or public safety offices, but that got fixed. Kathleen and Joel played a crucial role in making that move too.

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Ed Crane ESRI Kansas City

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Basically, the highest value of GIS comes from the collaboration between entities that heretofore couldn't or wouldn't share information readily. Just considering the mere time/materials cost avoidances, more experienced eyes checking the quality and consistency of data, and the fact that taxpayers, ratepayers and businesses even are all the same people in a community—that has been enough to warrant more open sharing of data. There are numerous notorious examples of excessive behavior on both sides of the coin though that I could share, but suffice it to say that the predominant attitude, particularly in small to medium communities is to share openly.

It's good to have a MOU that says when, how and where, plus some authoritative Point of Contact at each node for keeping the channel open and passing questions or updates back and forth. In the case of sharing base maps, we've expending some serious effort to establish guidelines/standards of good practice on that so communities don't under-procure on control or get bamboozled by the pretty picture folks. That generally means higher costs initially but substantially lower overall costs—hard to justify without multiple overlapping constituencies going it together.

Now that's pretty easy and straight forward to understand and promote. However if one or a group of entities have ALREADY gone together and another wants to play, we can get into some antics that are hard to overcome. I fall into the group that encourages open sharing if the need is there and there is a future 2-way partnership or sharing that can be agreed to. Such as data exchange, working on a joint project, or merely agreeing to participate somehow 'next time' base map imagery is acquired. But most of the time, the newbies are 'hazed' a bit for not being on-board earlier, and things can go south for a long time.

In any case, sharing facility data—and the Greensburg example is very appropriate Pete—in exchange for cooperating in use of a common base map is a very positive sign of maturity in GIS vision. The caveat is there needs to be an on-going communication relationship between the entities that live off the same land.

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Pete,

I don't have any actual examples of benefits of sharing with the Rural Water District (I don't have our RWDs' info) but I will list some that might be valuable. I had heard that many RWDs didn't have any maps or just had very old maps in very poor condition, the the system was in 'someone's head'. 1. Just getting the information into more than one location is critical because of storms like Greensburg. 2. The county and townships are always doing maintenance on roads and drainage and need to know where the lines are. 3. The county is usually the first place people come with questions about easements and if the county had the RWD info they could direct questions about their lines to the right person. (Would the RWD want the county to give that info to the public or direct them to the RWD office?) 4. Knowing where the RWD system is would facilitate planning and zoning efforts. 5. The same for emergency response to fires and hazardous spills, etc. 6. In Barton County there is or was an effort to put in dry hydrants around the county, both for use in case of emergencies but also for insurance purposes, it would lower home owners insurance making an area more desirable for development. 7. And finally the standard reason of the fact that the county's info is public data, the RWD is also a government agency and taxpayer money should be saved by sharing data whenever possible.

I hope some of this will help you convince the county to share.

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Pete,

I am the GIS Director with Butler County Kansas. GIS is all about sharing data across many different platforms. The more data shared, the better decisions can be made. Not all data shared has to become "public" knowledge. Some data is utilized for internal purposes, emergency services, and decision making only.

Here in Butler County we openly share any of our data we have created with other municipalities within our county levy (budget) over an ftp site at no charge. For all others, our fees are .01 per polygon, line segment or point on digital data, and \$25 per CD and \$100 per DVD on aerial photography. We do not feel that this is 'pricing it out of range'. This allows companies to purchase our countywide parcels for approximately \$320 and countywide streets for approximately \$77. Aerial photography countywide in Mr Sid format at 2' pixel resolution is \$1000. We also have 6", 1' and 2' available in .tif format.

We have been willing to share data with outside entities in exchange for their data. This only makes both of our entities stronger. We are currently working on a data share agreement to use for this data sharing process. From our past experiences, usually it is a one way street. They want all of our data, and they don't have anything they are

willing or able to share back. You also have to set up a process for getting updates. This can be labor intensive on small departments.

Just some of my immediate thoughts on this subject.

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Becky Samuelson  
522 Mechanic Street  
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Hi Pete,

I am from Lyon County and if you recall, you were doing a project for Olpe regarding waterlines. I sent you quite a bit of data. Parcel lines, dimensions, lot numbers, addresses, and aerial photos. No charge because you were doing a project for the taxpayers of Lyon County. I think in addition I spent time on the phone telling you how to use the data to get your desired result. Part of the reason I was willing to share involved you sharing the finished data (water distribution) back with me. To this day, I still have no data back from you. I believe that GIS should be based on collaboration and I walked the walk. Today, my opinion of KRWA is they talk the talk. I have yet to see you walk the walk. I have had several counties call me about my opinion and have not been shy about expressing it. And by the way, you are not the only firm who said they would share and have not reciprocated.

I hope in the future we will be able to work together to benefit the people we serve.

Becky,

I am sorry for my lack of responsibility. The data does NOT belong to KRWA. We are a non-profit organization that provides mapping as a service to the rural water districts and cities that are our members. We do not initiate giving out the data that we collect and are completely at the direction of those systems/cities that we serve.

I was under the impression that Joyce Wilson in Olpe was going to contact you to deliver the city's infrastructure shapefiles. I will be happy to send them to you upon her direction. I will cc this to Joyce and allow her to instruct me to send you the data or tell me if she will initiate contact. I'm sure that the city is grateful for the high resolution aeriels and is willing to share their data. Joyce, Dean Hermes and I discussed this very issue when I delivered their maps and installed the software and data onto the city's computer.

Joyce, please let me know that it is acceptable to release your data to Becky. If you need to discuss the issue with the city council or if you need to set up some "sharing guidelines", you may want to contact Becky and discuss.

Becky, I am sorry to hear that you have "not been shy about expressing it (your opinion)". I am also very hopeful that we can work together in the future to benefit the people we serve. Feel free to call or email me in the future in order to avoid any similar situations. I may have missed any communication from you about sharing Olpe's data, and for this I am sorry. Be assured, any communication from you, or anyone, will not go un-responded to.

Sincerely

Pete Koenig  
KRWA

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Jerry L. Denney CKA  
Gray County Appraiser

Good Morning Mr. Koenig,

Gray County is in it's infancy with GIS. We have contracted with Kimball Mapping to do most of our map work. However, we did purchase new high resolution colored photography in 2005 that has been shared with Gray County municipalities with only minimal cost (around \$200. for complete set of DVD's). Other agencies have purchased the aerials on DVD directly from G.E. Energy (M.J. Harden) who actually took the aerial photographs.

The more agencies who have access to this information, will surely benefit the community as a whole by efficiently keeping more accurate records as well as other benefits from just working together to generate an atmosphere of people willing to help people.

We're all in this together, and if we have information that is viable to other sources, our taxpayers would demand our willingness to share information.

I hope this helps.

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Darlene Lister

PO Box 60

101 S. Hickory St.

Ottawa, KS 66067

Pete,

I have occasion to use the aerial photography from the county. They provide it to me for free. They really have no use for the GIS info that I have as it is mostly utility info. Our planning dept. does provide the county with zoning info though. As it is right now, we only store our info on a server as a back up, but I'm going to be talking to Ken at DASC about storing it on their server at some point in time.

I hope this helps. If you have any questions, let me know.

Darlene

Have a great day!!

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Rick Miller  
GIS Director  
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Pete: Douglas County shares data with other public entities at no cost. Otherwise we charge \$1.00/mb for data and various charges for map production. The \$1.00/mb charge is under review as it is too prohibitive for some large data sets (Lidar). Rick

John Cowan  
GIS Coordinator  
Geographic Information Systems  
GIS Web Page: [www.rileycountyks.gov/gis](http://www.rileycountyks.gov/gis)  
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Pete.....your e-mail was forwarded to me by Rodney Sanders, so I thought I'd put in my 2 cents worth.

Riley County GIS (with an extensive geospatial database including several different years of aerial photography) provides all digital data free of charge on our ftp site. A simple request is required with the understanding that the material can not be resold or distributed. If a hard copy (CD or DVD) is requested a charge is applied that represents the actual cost of the CD/DVD plus the time it takes to write the material to disc. I refer you to K.S.A. 45-219(c).

It states that "each public agency may prescribe reasonable fees for providing access to or furnishing copies of public records....." Reasonableness means that fees for copying are not to "exceed the actual cost of furnishing copies, including the cost of staff time required to make the information available." The exception is in the case of "records maintained on computer facilities"- in those instances the access fee is to "include only the cost of any computer services, including staff time required." We (at Riley County GIS) wave the fee for hard copy request from any government agency regardless of the affiliation. We haven't had any hard copy (CD/DVD) requests for years since it is free to everyone on our ftp web site. Let me know if you have any questions.

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Kristen Jordan, Jefferson County GIS Dept

A city would want to share data because it would be fun and interesting.

Ok, seriously now, where to begin...

1.) Our main reason for wanting cities to share data is to be able to provide them with GIS capabilities. Most cities, especially smaller cities in a rural county, do not have the financial base to build a GIS Department. Our county already has GIS set up with a robust system of software, hardware, trained personnel and GIS knowledge. With the possibilities included in ArcGIS Server, the cities can view and even edit their data over the internet. We want to be able to provide them with GIS capabilities because of the city's expertise of their own data. No one will know better where the water, sewer, gas, road, whatever infrastructure is located, so they are the best ones to double check, correct, and use the data.

2.) Besides being an excellent housing point for the city data, our county would also like the data for our county Emergency Management Agency. For example, if a tornado were to pass through Jefferson County like in Greensburg, physical infrastructure locations are lost in the rubble. Having accurate locations stored digitally for infrastructure would be an essential part of emergency mitigation and effective, efficient relief and rebuilding.

3.) John Doe who has worked for the city for 50+ years and knows all the shutoff valves might be highly capable, but is not a great source for data integrity, data accuracy, data sharing, data analysis, city planning, emergency planning or long-term storage. By sharing data, more than one copy of the data exists, thus making a backup easier in the event that something went down, unlike Mr. Doe who is only good as a data storage device while he is alive and functioning.

4.) Most engineering firms work with AutoCad and can easily integrate the city's infrastructure into their project models. Providing accurate city infrastructure data would help maximize the engineering project's effectiveness and accuracy.

Ok, if I think of any more, I'll let you know. You might ask Chris (Schmeissner) as well; he could probably write a book about this topic.