Project Update:  
Statewide Digital Parcel Map Inventory

Many local governments, counties, and state agencies would like access to up-to-date parcel maps to assist with engineering work, tax assessment, zoning, environmental inventories, and a variety of other applications. Having the maps in digital form is particularly desirable because it permits rapid updating, allows other data layers to be added, and facilitates GIS applications like producing letters addressed to adjacent property owners. Until recently, no one had a good idea which counties maintained digital parcel data, which hampered the sharing of such data and resulted in unnecessary duplication of effort and inconsistency among data sets. A recent CURA project has changed all that.

The Statewide Parcel Data Inventory Research Project is an ongoing effort to track which Minnesota counties maintain digital parcel data. The inventory identified existing digital parcel systems across Minnesota and compiled information on the method of parcel data development, the frequency of maintenance, data development standards and distribution practices, key contacts for acquiring data, remonumentation efforts, and more. Sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), the project was conducted in cooperation with CURA, which acted as the lead research organization, and the University of Minnesota’s Center for Transportation Studies (CTS), which administered the research project. Data was collected and organized by Pro-West & Associates, Inc.

Figure 1 provides an overview of digital data capacity among Minnesota counties based on the inventory. Of the 86 counties in the state that responded to the survey, 54 (63%) are creating digital parcel maps. In well over half of those counties (33 of 54), parcel work is nearing completion. Many of the remaining 21 counties are in the process of initiating digital parcel mapping projects. Most of the 32 nondigital counties are small and rural. Detailed survey results, including maps with summary data for 22 additional questions in the survey, are available for each county at http://rocky.dot.state.mn.us/SPMI/.

In addition to reducing redundant efforts in parcel data development among counties, cities, and state agencies, the inventory is intended to foster improved working relationships and increased knowledge exchange. It is also hoped that the project will facilitate increased uniformity of data, standardized information, improved methods of data access, automated data exchange, and sharing of best practices.

The inventory is current through early 2003. Plans are in place to update the inventory on an annual basis, ideally by having government agencies update their own digital parcel development status information online. The current Web version of the inventory is in portable document format (PDF) and not amenable to this approach. If you identify errors or omissions in the current version that need to be corrected, however, contact Jay Krafthefer at MnDOT at jay.krafthefer@dot.state.mn.us.