

METRO 2021 LEGISLATIVE ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

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ISSUE: Creating a Statewide Repository for Geospatial Framework Data

BACKGROUND: Metro is a pioneer in the preparation of standardized data at the regional scale for use in public sector planning, programming, and policy-making. Metro's Research Center created and manages the Regional Land Information System (RLIS), which provides data to support critical Metro functions such as Urban Growth Boundary decisions, the Regional Transportation Plan, and various operations including solid waste flow management. The State of Oregon has sought for some time to emulate Metro's example by creating a "framework data" repository at the state scale. The data in this repository would be similar to Metro's RLIS in content and would span the entirety of Oregon.

Framework data includes fundamentals such as where streets, rail lines, and other transport assets are located; the boundaries and characteristics of taxlots; jurisdictional and legislative district boundaries; and other data essential for supporting public decision-making. Making statewide framework data available through a central repository in a standardized format would allow state agencies to provide consistent services statewide (e.g. ensuring that school districts know their student populations accurately and that emergency service providers know how to get to people in need quickly and efficiently).

Unfortunately, Oregon does not now have complete and standard framework data statewide. The main obstacles include lack of technical resources (e.g., local staff capacity and the means to create data and maintain it) and lack of institutional resources at all levels of government for collecting, standardizing, and aggregating the data to regional and state geographies.

The Legislature created the Oregon Geographic Information Council (OGIC) to help ensure that framework data are created, sustained, and governed appropriately.¹ OGIC makes recommendations regarding framework data to the Legislature every long (odd numbered year) session.

To realize its mandate, OGIC is recommending a 2021 legislative concept that would adequately program for and fund framework data creation, management and storage in a central state repository, or hub. It proposes that the state provide \$2.89 million to support the programs needed to achieve that goal, with oversight provided by OGIC and state staff per current law. OGIC's preliminary proposal, pending legislative feedback, is to request state General Fund revenues to enlarge the state's geospatial data program housed under the Chief Data Officer.

¹ Metro's RC Director Jeff Frkonja represents regional interests on OGIC and is currently serving as OGIC chair.

After failing to secure funding for this effort in the 2019 session, OGIC is working to better communicate the benefits to end users of creating this data hub by focusing on four key needs:

- Wildfire response and recovery
- Workforce development and recovery
- Elections administration improvement
- COVID recovery

RECOMMENDATION: Support OGIC’s framework data legislative concept, which would return multiple benefits to Metro and to the jurisdictions within Metro’s boundary.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY: OGIC was created in a somewhat different form more than a decade ago. In 2016 legislation was introduced that would have required all public bodies to share data, but Metro and most cities and counties felt the bill was deeply flawed in that it failed to resource the needs and provide solid governance. After that bill failed, the Legislature created a working group (on which Metro played a key role) that produced a bill (HB 2906) that received almost universal support and became law during the 2017 session. HB 2906 reconstituted OGIC, enlarged its data and budgetary governance roles to better target resource needs, and enlarged its representation to include more local voices. In 2019, the “new OGIC” unsuccessfully sought an appropriation to fund the work described above.

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES: All counties, cities, and special districts within Metro and statewide would benefit from seeing the framework recommendation realized and are affected by state law and programs concerning framework data. In addition, “one stop shopping” for spatial data will benefit all state agencies and non-profits providing services such as workforce development and social programs.

IMPACT IF PROPOSED ACTION OCCURS:

- More money for framework data creation, management, and sharing will be available to all levels of government in Oregon, including Metro;
- Areas of the state previously lacking some or all framework data would have resources to create that data;
- The Legislature would achieve its objective of requiring that all public bodies share framework data with each other (but not to the public or private firms) free of charge;
- End users would be able to more easily access data to help address key public challenges, including emergency management and economic recovery;
- Metro’s own data production efforts will benefit from access to standardized, centralized state data.