



February 18, 2005

Governor Tim Pawlenty
 130 State Capitol
 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
 St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Pawlenty:

This letter is about cuts you have proposed in the Department of Administration that would severely affect the Land Management Information Center (LMIC): a 75% reduction. The state is in hard financial times and cuts are required somewhere, but as chair of your *Governor's Council on Geographic Information*, it is my duty to advise you about LMIC's value to Minnesota. Members of the Council unanimously asked me to communicate LMIC's importance to your principle of *Improvement by Innovation*, especially by promoting collaboration across state agencies and among local, state, and federal governments.

The Council's mission is "to promote efficient and effective use of resources by providing leadership and direction in the development, management and use of geographic information in Minnesota." We are a volunteer group representing state and local government, the federal government, academia, and the private sector. We operate under executive order and receive administrative and technical support from LMIC. LMIC helps us organize our meetings so we can connect with people across the state, maintains our website, and staffs key committees. Equally important, LMIC is responsible for implementing our major coordination initiatives. With LMIC's support, we have been effective in accomplishing our mission; our latest annual report is attached.

Let me share four examples of this work with you. The examples illustrate that value of coordinating efforts to save money and help government operate more efficiently:

1. 2003 Orthophotography Acquisition. In our meetings around the state, a constant theme was the need to update aerial photography from the early 1990s. This photography is used to manage development, natural resources and agriculture, plan infrastructure, and support public safety and emergency response functions throughout the state. Few local governments or state agencies can afford to pay for organizing and executing flights for their sole use. A coordinated approach is cost effective and yields a common product that works across multiple jurisdictions. In 2003, LMIC saw an opportunity, pieced together \$250,000 of state funding from other agencies, and leveraged \$1,000,000 of federal funding to produce new photography covering the state. LMIC makes this data available as an e-government web service, providing more than 2000 images a month to grateful users.

I can attest to the value of this photography to my own business. The Lawrence Group is a map publisher and GIS service center; you may have heard of our *King's Street Atlas* or seen our *NASCAR Road Atlas*. We use the photography all the time to double-check the accuracy of the maps we produce. LMIC's success on behalf of the state helps firms like mine develop and support jobs within Minnesota.

2. Federal Coordination. Minnesota, like other states, struggles to coordinate with the federal government. Federal agencies have many programs to *help* us, but they run independently of each other and often conflict with local efforts. Last year, the Council learned about an EPA initiative that would have ignored our own well-advanced program to standardize watershed

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map boundaries and duplicate them with a new official federal map of questionable quality. Federal staff would never have set foot in Minnesota and funding was inadequate to do an adequate job. LMIC played a key roll in alerting the right people about the problem. The project was canceled, but EPA awarded Minnesota a major grant to help fund our own work.

The National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) is working with the Federal Geographic Data Committee to institute a *50 States Initiative* requiring federal agencies to communicate their plans to a state coordinating body. LMIC is the recognized coordinating body in Minnesota and the point of contact for federal agencies. Largely because of LMIC's role, NSGIC ranked GIS coordination within Minnesota among the best in the nation.

3. MN Geographic Data Clearinghouse. In 1997, the Council recommended establishing a Clearinghouse to help state and local government workers find and download data they needed to do their work. The Clearinghouse was built by LMIC and contains information on some 2,100 datasets from 50 organizations. Last year almost 67,000 datasets were located and downloaded through Clearinghouse services. The Clearinghouse saves Minnesota organizations the time and expense to find the good data they need. By providing information about available data, funds are not wasted to create redundant data.
4. Strategic Plan. We have prepared a strategic plan for a common Minnesota GIS infrastructure. Such a plan is needed for state and local government to benefit from GIS in a coherent and cost effective way. The plan, *Foundations for Coordinated GIS*, recommends building on LMIC's capabilities to strengthen GIS coordination within the state. The plan was submitted to the Drive to Excellence project and is available on our website at www.gis.state.mn.us.

LMIC has many other accomplishments to its credit. For example, its *Minnesota Atlas* software will be used in classrooms to support the state's social studies standard and by public safety offices across the state. It also supports *Datanet*, providing online maps and data to some 50,000 users annually. These services are well appreciated and have received awards nationally and locally.

The major message of this letter is that LMIC has been useful and productive. From our perspective, its most important contribution has been its ability to communicate and coordinate: horizontally across state agencies and vertically across levels of government. Its work in these areas has complemented and supported the work of your Council. The need for such coordination continues and grows as resources are stretched.

Feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this issue.

Sincerely yours,



Larry Charboneau, Chair
MN Governor's Council on Geographic Information

cc: Dana Badgerow, Commissioner of Administration

Attachment: Annual Report