

The GAO Report and Geospatial Coordination at USDOT: Fulfilling USDOT's Responsibilities to the NSDI

Steve Lewis

Geospatial Information Officer, USDOT

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology

July 2014

Background

- § In early 2012, Senators Joseph I. Lieberman Susan M. Collins from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs requested a GAO study.
- § They asked GAO to “determine the extent to which the federal government has established and effectively implemented policies and procedures for coordinating its investments in geospatial data and avoiding duplication”.
- § ***Geospatial Information: OMB and Agencies Need to Make Coordination a Priority to Reduce Duplication.***
GAO-13-94, November 26.
<http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/650293.pdf>

GAO Efforts

§ GAO focused its efforts on:

- Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) coordination efforts
- Geospatial activities in the Department of Interior
- Geospatial activities in the Department of Commerce
- Geospatial activities in the **Department of Transportation**
- Office of Management and Budget oversight

GAO Findings

The long-standing problem of effectively coordinating federal geospatial investments to reduce redundancies has yet to be resolved.

GAO Recommendations for Executive Action

- § Establish a time frame for completing a plan to facilitate the implementation of OMB's portfolio management guidance, and develop and implement the plan within the established time frame.
- § Develop and implement guidance for identifying planned geospatial investments using the Geospatial Platform, and establish a time frame for doing so.
- § Establish a time frame for creating and updating a strategic plan to **improve coordination and reduce duplication**, and create and implement the plan within the established time frame.

GAO Recommendations for USDOT

Recommendation 1: Designate a senior agency official who has department-wide responsibility for geospatial information issues.

USDOT Response: Concur. S-1 will designate the BTS Director as Senior Agency Official for Geospatial Information (SAOGI) by January 31, 2013.

Status: Complete. Memo designating Bureau of Transportation Statistics Director Patricia Hu as DOT SAOGI was signed by S-1 on January 17, 2013.

GAO Recommendations for USDOT

Recommendation 2: Prepare, maintain, publish, and implement a strategy for advancing geographic information and related geospatial activities appropriate to its mission.

USDOT Response: Concur. The Department will form a **Geospatial Coordination Council** that will develop and implement a strategy for advancing transportation geospatial data and information. Preliminary plans call for producing a draft strategy by July 31, 2013.

Status: Ongoing. Memo designating Geospatial Coordination Council was signed by S-2 on October 1, 2013.

GAO Recommendations for USDOT

Recommendation 3: Develop a policy that requires the department to make its geospatial metadata available on the clearinghouse.

USDOT Response: Concur. While all of the Department's geospatial metadata is on the clearinghouse, the SAOGI and the GIO will work with the Department's CIO to produce a formal policy that clarifies management expectations and requirements for making geospatial metadata available on the clearinghouse. The Department anticipates completing this policy by August 31, 2013 .

Status: Policy written and submitted before deadline. Policy FINALLY approved by S-2 on April 10, 2014.

GAO Recommendations for USDOT

Recommendation 4: Develop and implement internal procedures to ensure the NSDI clearinghouse before expending funds to collect or produce new geospatial data to determine (1) whether the information has already been collected by others and (2) whether cooperative efforts to obtain the data are possible.

USDOT Response: Concur. The SAOGI and the GIO will work with the Department's CIO to develop and implement internal procedures to ensure that the NSDI clearinghouse is accessed before expending funds to collect or produce new geospatial data. The Department anticipates completing this policy by August 31, 2013.

Status: Policy written and submitted before deadline. Policy FINALLY approved by S-2 on April 10, 2014.

GAO Recommendations for USDOT

Recommendation 5: Prepare goals relating to all datasets within the transportation theme that support the NSDI, and as needed, collect and analyze information from user needs and include those needs in the theme-related goals.

USDOT Response: Concur. The Geospatial Information Council that will be formed in response to Recommendation 2 will work with the individual dataset owners/sponsors to develop goals for continued development and improvement to ensure the data supports the NSDI. The Department intends to produce an initial set of goals by December 31, 2013. The goals will be reassessed by the Council on a regular basis.

Status: In progress. Will be aligned with FGDC “Implementation Plans”.

GAO Recommendations for USDOT

Recommendation 6: Develop and implement a plan for the nationwide population of the transportation theme that addresses all datasets within the theme; and that includes (1) the development of partnership programs with states, tribes, academia, the private sector, other federal agencies, and localities that meet the needs of users; (2) human and financial resource needs, (3) standards, metadata, and the clearinghouse needs, and (4) a timetable for the development for the theme.

USDOT Response: Concur. The Department already has a plan that covers the development of a nationwide geospatial network of roads. This plan is significant, as roads account for more than 85 percent of passenger miles travelled and for more than 80 percent of freight (by value). The existing plan, known as the *Transportation for the Nation Strategic Plan*, will be expanded to cover the rail, air, and water components of transportation. The effort will be led by the GIO with support from the entire transportation geospatial community. The plan will be completed by December 31, 2013.

Status: Delayed awaiting a final NSDI Strategic Plan, which was completed in December 2013. A draft is now completed that complements the NSDI Plan and is awaiting approval.

GAO Recommendations for USDOT

Recommendation 7: Create and implement a plan to develop and implement transportation theme standards.

USDOT Response: Concur. While standards have not been issued, all geospatial data maintained and distributed at the Department has been consistent and useful. The SAOGI and the GIO will work with the individual data owners/sponsors to develop official standards for each transportation dataset and anticipate completing these standards by December 31, 2013.

Status: Not yet underway. We hope to leverage existing standards where possible.

Executive Champion

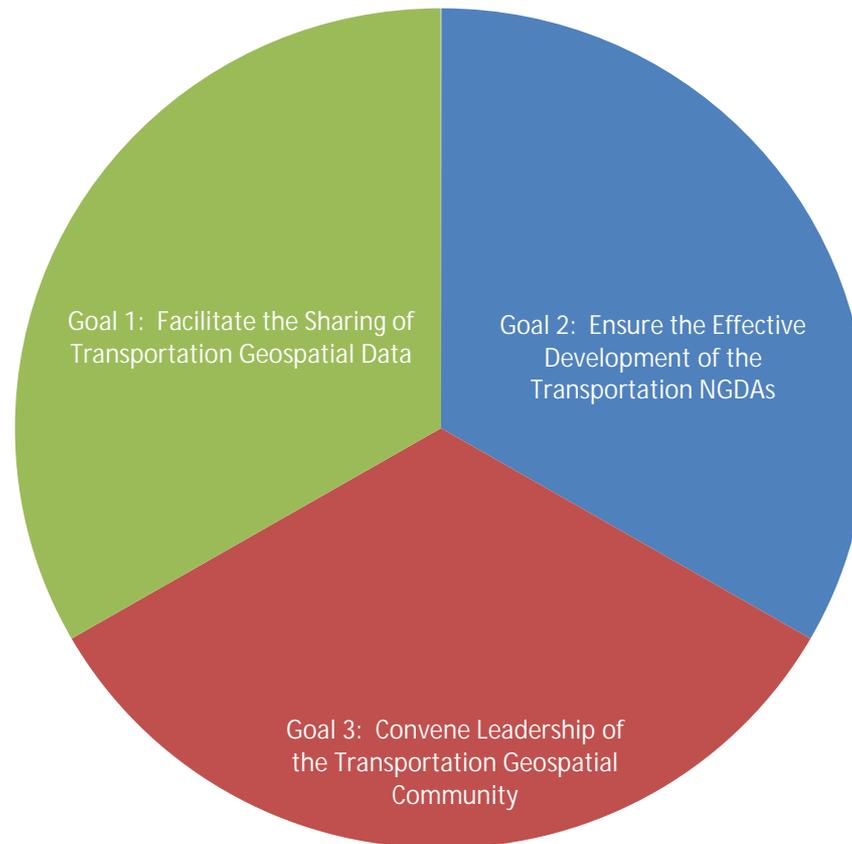
- * OMB and the FGDC require NSDI Theme Lead agency have an “Executive Champion” for their Theme.
- * The Executive Champion will “provide high-level sponsorship and support for the NGDA Theme and associated NGDA Datasets; facilitate communication among the FGDC, other Executive Theme Champions, and agencies to promote **effective and efficient development and management of themes and their associated resources** to benefit implementation”.
- * DOT Executive Champion is CIO Richard McKinney.

Preview of the Strategic Plan – Vision Statement

The Transportation Theme of the NSDI leverages investments in people, technology, data, and procedures to create and provide the geospatial knowledge required to understand, analyze, protect, and promote our national transportation system.

Preview of the Strategic Plan – Goals

Transportation Theme of the NSDI Strategic Plan 2014 - 2017



Questions/Comments?

Steve Lewis

(202) 366-9223

steve.lewis@dot.gov