

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission Information Resource Exchange Group

Highlights from meeting of Wednesday, December 12, 2012

The 85th meeting of the Information Resources Exchange Group (IREG) was called to order at DVRPC by Tanya Flynt, Manager of Financial Analysis & Operational Performance for SEPTA. Thirty people were in attendance. Highlights from the September 7th meeting were available as a handout and on the internet.

Presentations

Aaron Ogle, Senior Software Developer, OpenPlans gave the first presentation. He gave an introduction to his background, and previous work with Azavia, City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Water Department, and a fellowship at the Code for America nonprofit, working on projects such as stormwater & parcel mapping, research for developing a 'walkshed', a mobile web app for the Mural Arts Program, and developing a transportation alternatives web app called ReRouteIt.

OpenPlans is a nonprofit technology company that focuses on integrating technology, urban planning, and public involvement. A recent project called Shareabouts is an application platform to scale citizen engagement nationwide by gathering as much high quality public input as possible (via the internet) and directing it to the proper public authorities. The project started out as a crowdsourced map for the NYC Bike Share program, which gathered thousands of locations that were analyzed and distilled into targeted locations using GIS. Using GIS analysis, the NYC DOT was able to download the crowdsourced data, and run desktop analysis on the raw data to identify the best locations for bike share programs throughout the city. Based on the success of the Shareabouts program for NYC, the City of Chicago (CDOT) is currently collecting input on a bike share program using similar technology. Now, OpenPlans is working out the details to make the central application programming interface (API) for Shareabouts scalable for many government and nonprofits across the country. Aaron went into more detail about the architecture of the programming, and how clients are able to consume, analyze and display collected data.

Aaron showcased some examples of their mapping client and how they operate, including local applications for Sister Cities Park, Bike to Transit, and a Google Street View Comments App.

Jesse Strangfeld, Web Developer, DVRPC presented the Commission's *Choices and Voices* web application, a precursor to Connections 2040 long-range plan. This is a public education and outreach initiative for people to learn more about long-range planning, and how it impacts everyone in the region. This first component of the plan allows the average citizen to interact with many of the challenges faced by regional planners, and give them an idea about what kind of constraints prevent unbridled growth in the region. The user identifies their preferred development patterns, selects tax commitments and funding priorities, and projects what that future region would look like based on their decisions. The application strives to show the relationship between transportation funding, maintenance, and improvement, while explaining the trade-offs between increasing funding and increasing travel costs. Using the crowdsourced data, users can compare their scenario with the vision created by all visitors to this website. DVRPC plans to collect this data on visitor's preferences for regional transportation options, and hopes to aggregate the data to give insight into developing the long-range plan for the region.

Jesse discussed some alternatives to creating our own custom in-house solution that were considered, and why these did not meet the goals of this project. He also went into some technical details about the technology frameworks used to develop this application, and our reasons for using them. He discussed the prototyping process and the challenges encountered in creating a simple to use, highly-graphically user interface. He reviewed the usage statistics, and the impact that publicity through social media has had on driving traffic to this website. DVRPC is currently discussing how to make useful information on the collected data, and plans to present the findings at a future IREG meeting.

Other Business

- Members emphasized the role of community libraries, and the bifurcation of typical users, with the young and old most active, as middle-aged citizens are more likely to have their own personal technology for accessing the internet.
- The latest 2011 U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) data was released on December 6th www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2011_release_schedule/. Census Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) and Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) file releases have been pushed back to spring 2013. A new version of the American FactFinder will be released in January <http://factfinder2.census.gov/legacy/r6tour.html>. Noemi Mendez Eliassen (noemi.mendez@census.gov) in her new role in Information Services with the U.S. Census Bureau's Regional Office, will be sending out monthly email blasts on Census Bureau updates on geography and data. Please contact her directly if you wish to receive these updates.
- Temple University Social Science Data Library will host their 4th Annual Planning for Qualitative Research Conference, January 16-18, 2013. www.temple.edu/ssdl
- DVRPC reached out to USGS about partnering again for the 2015 aerial imagery project.
- PaMAGIC actively advocates for the creation of a Pennsylvania statewide geospatial coordinating council. For more info: www.pamagic.org/initiatives/Pages/LegislativeInfo.aspx
- DVRPC partners were reminded to stop using the TransitChek trademark on their literature and websites after December 31st. The new program is called RideECO.
- DVRPC discussed their new cost-effective wide-angle video camera for recording of training sessions, meetings and eventually, transportation corridor site visits.
- Noemi Mendez was elected as 2013 Chair for the committee. Nominations for a Vice-Chair are still being accepted, and their election will take place at the March 2013 meeting.
- GIS Day at Clarion University and Harrisburg Area Community College was well attended.
- The 21st Annual PA GIS Conference will be held June 3-5 2013 in State College, PA www.pagisconference.org/Pages/default.aspx
- The Esri Mid-Atlantic Users Conference took place December 11-12 in Baltimore, MD. The focus was on the Esri cloud, ArcGIS online, and improving workflow. www.esri.com/events/mid-atlantic/
- Burlington County GIS Day took place December 5. A highlight was John Reiser, Rowan University's coverage of post-Sandy satellite imagery of the Jersey Shore. www.co.burlington.nj.us/pages/pages.aspx?cid=894
- A group in PA met in State College about establishing a Sustainable PA group similar to the NJ Sustainable Practices website where communities can learn how to gain points and can take self-assessment test.
- The next IREG meeting is scheduled to take place on March 6 2013 at DVRPC. The June 5 meeting is scheduled to take place at the U.S. Census Bureau's Philadelphia Regional Office. The September 11 and December 11 meetings will take place at DVRPC, with a special agenda being planned for the December meeting.