Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
Information Resource Exchange Group

Highlights from meeting of Wednesday, September 11, 2013

The 88th meeting of the Information Resource Exchange Group (IREG) was called to order at DVRPC by Noemi Mendez, Information Services Specialist at the U.S. Census Bureau, Philadelphia Regional Office. Thirty-three people were in attendance. Highlights from the June 5th meeting were available as a handout and on the internet.

Presentations

Cynthia McCoy, Risk Analyst at FEMA Region III, Mitigation Division, gave an overview of the new flood information portals available for counties within Region III and around the nation that have participated in the Risk MAP program. These information portals provide one resource for both risk regulatory and non-regulatory products, including datasets such as flood maps and depth grids. In particular, these tools highlights changes in boundaries for the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) and identify high-risk structures and locations. This aggregation allows agencies and local governments to best allocate limited resources for effective mitigation. Other uses for governments include determining safe evacuation routes from low-lying or flood-prone areas and to assess risk to properties by overlaying the depth grid intersecting with elevation and structures. Each county in the Risk MAP program received an individual application. The demonstration focused on www.riskmap3.com, which is the information portal for Allegheny County, Pennsylvania because of its rich datasets. Each application has varying degrees of detail based on the data collected and available for use by the public. Data layers demonstrated included building and parcel layers from county GIS departments, flood hazard lines for the 100-year and 500-year floodplain boundaries, and the depth grid raster file overlay. Tools provided to use these data layers effectively are available to the user to investigate individual map layers, extract data from given layers for downloading, and measure distances between two points on the map. The data extract tool provides the user with several download options such as geoDB file, shape file, CAD compatible file, and raster image formats. In addition the flood level profiler can illustrate the water depth at a certain flowrate relative to surrounding elevation.

Rob Graff, Manager, Office of Energy and Climate Change Initiatives, DRVPC gave an overview of the recently published report, "Ready to Roll! Southeastern Pennsylvania's Regional Electric Vehicle Action Plan." He discussed some of the data analysis and geocoding necessary to complete the study and establish recommendations for electrical infrastructure improvement, basic demand levels requiring a supply of electric vehicle (EV) chargers, types of EV chargers and their benefits, and prime locations for charging stations. EV ownership patterns were first observed. Correlations were found between EV ownership and both income level and familiarity with previously owned hybrid vehicles. Using over two million passenger vehicle registration records from PennDOT, the most likely areas of EV ownership were mapped based on census block group. Both density and distribution were analyzed and several characteristics were found. First, charging EVs will primarily occur at home overnight; yet there is a lack of garages in many locations. This introduces problems with the difficulty of placing and maintaining charging stations at the street level. Second, quick charging stations can be useful at locations with longer-term parking such as office complexes, shopping malls, theaters, sports complexes, casinos, and other destinations. By measuring the distance travelled in a daily commute by a single electric vehicle, it was determined that these destinations would be able to offer sufficient time to charge a parked EV, if there was a charging station unoccupied by another parked vehicle.

Sarah Cordivano, Project Manager, Data Analytics for Azavea gave a report of the development of the Azavea Summer of Maps internship program and some of the projects that were undertaken in Summer 2013. The Summer of Maps program is a fellowship for college students to offer pro-bono web development, information management, and data analytics tool development to non-profits and social organizations across the county. Azavea is a registered B-Corp, which requires a business focus on social missions and employee satisfaction equally or above profits, revenue, and growth. To participate in the program, non-profits register and identify their needs. Accepted organizations are placed in a pool of opportunity that fellows will later consider. Each student chosen as a fellow receives a summer stipend and the chance to evaluate the non-profits available. Allowing the students to choose their own projects ensures buy-in from both parties and high quality of work. Azavea professionals volunteer their time on a weekly basis to act as mentors to the fellows and provide guidance and resource where necessary. If possible, the goal is to expand the program to include teams of students instead of individuals to provide real-world experience; however, resources are limited by the availability of mentors. Several projects for organizations were presented: the Sunlight Foundation, working towards political campaign transparency; Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children, evaluating the quality of and access to childcare resources within Philadelphia, Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, mapping areas of high bicycle theft including population centers and universities; Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger, analyzed locations in Philadelphia of high-risk individuals and of underserved food shed areas; Texas Tree Foundation, mapping the change in tree canopy cover in the city of Dallas; and Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, analyzing the success of their Tree Tenders program in Philadelphia.

Other Business

- A civic hack-a-thon called Apps for Philly Transit will be held September 21-22 and are in need of multimodal datasets open to the public.
- OpenPlans is hosting PlanningCamp NYC on September 21. Another unconference is planning for Philadelphia in Spring 2014.
- DVRPC is hosting the U.S. Census Bureau to provide a free training seminar on Local Employment Data (LED) tools to analyze employment, economic, and community data. The seminar will include an overview of the Center City District uses LED in analysis and reports. The event will be September 30 in the DVRPC Conference Center.
- GeoPhilly is a new monthly meetup designed to bring together geospatial professionals to talk and share about GIS, mapping, and spatial analysis. The first meetup is October 17.