

VCGI Quarterly Operational Overview
For the Board of Directors of the
Vermont Center for Geographic Information, Inc.
March 2014 (FY 2014)

Funded Projects

Vermont Agency of Transportation:

VCGI provides technical assistance to VTrans in the form of GIS support services, RFP development, and other technical support services that enhance Agency and State objectives. There are ongoing discussions with VTrans relating to their funding of a statewide digital parcel data effort. There are no decisions made at this time, but given the subject matter VCGI anticipates being a partner in the statewide data coordination, standards management and long-term project planning activities as this project develops.

Vermont Emergency Management, Homeland Security and Dept. of Public Safety:

VCGI continues to provide project design and emergency data support to DEMHS and the Dept. of Public Safety for their operations. Ivan Brown is the designated support individual for VCGI to DEMHS data and the Public Safety community.

In November of this year VCGI received approval to proceed on the support contract with DEMHS. The final contract value is still under consideration by DEMHS. Activities planned for next year include;

- Continue support for development and utilization of the GIS capabilities within the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).
- Support GIS functionality of DisasterLan system.
- Maintain software and system configuration in Virtual Vermont infrastructure.
- Address DPS GIS resource needs.
- Support ongoing DPS mapping and analysis needs.
- Continue support to maintenance of the Critical Facilities data set.

VCGI, in coordination with DEM and the RPCs, has developed and released a web-based local road status tool called VLRI. VLRI allows RPCs to populate road closure information directly for use by DEM for emergency management purposes. The Commissioner was given a demo of the site and he was impressed. Further integration into DEM operational systems is planned.

Contract Value: Unknown at this time, proposed value is \$75,000

VT E-911 Board:

VCGI has a Service Level Agreement with E-911 for VCGI to host web services using

ArcGIS server for E911. Last month VCGI ended support for these services as E911 has taken on service development of their own. Yearly value \$7,000

VT Dept. of Agriculture:

VCGI is working with personnel at the VT Dept. of Agriculture to help them develop their internal GIS data and services organization and capacity. Ag is reviewing the establishment of a data services agreement with VCGI similar to what was provided to E911.

VT Sustainable Jobs Fund:

VCGI is working with the VT Sustainable Jobs Fund to define, access, collect and organize their geospatial information in support of their alternative energy development goals. A new MOU was signed by VSJF enabling them to engage VCGI to upgrade the data and data models used in the Sustainable Energy website. Mike Brouillette is the project manager for this project. VSJF management is also discussing using available LiDAR in the state to do local solar siting evaluations on a large scale. MOU Value: \$40,000 (Estimated)

Northern Border Region Commission Grant:

The goal of this program is to increase municipal parcel data infrastructure in the northern 6 counties of Vermont, by providing information, support, and funding to a limited number of priority towns to enable them to create or update parcel data and ensure that it meets the state GIS parcel data standard. Many towns have out of date GIS parcel data, many have only CAD data, some have only paper maps, and some have no parcel maps or data of any kind. The program is a partnership between VCGI and the three northern RPCs: Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC), and the Northeast VT Development Association (NVDA). Initially, the RPC GIS specialists in each region contacted towns that they felt were priorities (no data, no maps, or out of date data) to alert them to the grant opportunity. During January and February, VCGI and the RPCs presented a workshop in each region to discuss parcel data, how it can be used, what the data standard offers, and how the grant program was structured.

The team received 19 grant applications from towns by the deadline of February 23, 2014. The grant selection committee consisted of staff from VCGI and the GIS specialists from each RPC. Priorities in the selection process were towns with no maps, no data, old data, development pressure, and a lack of plan/funding to create or update data if not funded. Eleven towns have been tentatively identified as grant recipients. Final grant amounts will be determined through an RFP process for some towns, and through a negotiation with mapping contractors in the case of towns who already have a relationship with a mapper. RPC and VCGI staff will help the grantee towns develop RFPs, contracts, and a data maintenance funding plan. The towns receiving grants include 4 that previously had no maps or data, 5 that had only CAD data, and 2 that had old and low quality GIS data. Six towns are served by NVDA, 3 by NRPC, and 2 by LCPC. Program activities will conclude in late fall and data meeting the identified

specifications will be delivered to VCGI at that time.

Partners:

Each Regional Planning Commission has at least one staff member who serves as a GIS specialist/planner. This mapping expert will serve as technical support to the municipalities who participate in this project. The Outreach Coordinator at the VT Center for Geographic Information will serve as project manager and education lead. The RPC GIS Specialists and VCGI's Outreach Coordinator will also work together as a steering committee.

- Vermont Center for Geographic Information (VCGI)
- Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC)
- Northeast Vermont Development Association (NVDA)
- Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC)

Total proposed value of the grant is \$338,000 with half contributed from participating towns and half from the NBRC. The final amount will depend upon the ability of towns in the northern border region to participate.

NTIA State Broadband Initiative (SBI) Grant Updates:

The VT Broadband Mapping Team continues to maintain the BroadbandVT.org (www.broadbandvt.org) website. The contract is now in the final year of the grant. While there are still issues that need attention for every delivery the processes in place have stabilized.

All of the sub-contract agreements are finalized and in-place. Project planning continues and based upon decisions about new directions in outreach, the agreement with Marketing Partners was changed to conclude on Dec. 31. VTA and VCGI has come to agreement on two proposals for supporting broadband infrastructure data collection activities.

The team is working on submission of the April 1 data submission to the NTIA. This will be the second to the last statewide broadband availability coverage data collected for the state. Continuance of the effort, supported by state resources, beyond October 1, 2014 has been discussed, but no decisions have been made. Many other states have committed to very robust broadband mapping continuation plans because they recognize the value of doing so.

Connect VT and the Dept. of Public Service has hired Stone Environmental to create maps and statistics based upon the SBI data to show the availability of broadband in the state. Total SBI Grant Value: \$3,542,996

Core Activities

Staff:

There have been no significant staff changes this quarter. Although the staff is definitely growing weary of the ongoing discussion about VCGI's future status with no resolution.

Board of Directors:

There were no changes to the Board of Directors in the past quarter.

FY 14 Legislative Activities:

In January, the ED met with House Appropriations to discuss VCGI's current proposed appropriation of \$378,700. Most of the, admittedly limited, discussion time was spent reviewing the contents of the Business Plan submitted to the Joint Fiscal Committee in November. There was also a discussion about the options available to the organization and both the DII merger and additional funding were considered.

H. 516, the bill proposing a VCGI merge with DII, remained in House Government Operations without action until very recently. On March 13 the VCGI ED, Rich Boes from DII and Kate Duffy from State Human Resources met with the House Government Operations Committee to discuss H. 516. Much of the discussion was similar to what was discussed the previous year. The most problematic consideration appears to be concerning the addition of 6 positions to the state. Human Resources was asked to speak with the Administration and come back to the Committee with the Administration's perspective on adding the positions to state government.

On March 14, the discussion was continued and the Committee adjourned to go to the floor. They were going to take up the legislative testimony from others, later in the day. The decision of the Committee is not known at this time.

Imagery Data Program:

The statewide orthophoto imagery is made available free to the RPCs, and Towns in uncompressed format. The public has access to the same data in compressed format through our free data download capability and anyone may purchase the data in uncompressed format on a hard drive at very reasonable prices.

Color and infrared ortho imagery was successfully acquired in the Spring of 2013 over Chittenden, Grand Isle, Lamoille, Franklin and Washington county areas.

VCGI has an agreement with Chittenden County (through Pam Brangan) and Dept of Homeland Security (through Lin Neifert – USGS) to perform buy-ups over the Chittenden and Barre-Montpelier areas in the spring of 2013. Chittenden was collected at 15cm and 20cm GSD and Barre-Montpelier was collected at 30cm.

All of the 2013 imagery was acquired, QC'd, and distributed as of Mid-January. Planning has begun for Spring 2014, scheduled over the Northeast Kingdom.

Enterprise Geospatial Consortium Activities:

VCGI continues to provide coordinating support to state agency related Enterprise GIS activities.

The EGC continues to work on a Data Warehouse Redesign. The EGC Warehouse Workgroup conducted a “competitive analysis” to review “data portals” similar to what the Workgroup is trying to design and build. The goal was to evaluate what the “competition” is doing, determine what stakeholder needs the competition is addressing, and, as part of such analysis, gather ideas (design, layout, and functionality) which the Workgroup could potentially integrate into VT’s new geodata portal.

On March 10, the EGC voted to move forward with the build-out of a new VT Open GeoData Portal now. In the past the development of this platform has always been the full responsibility of VCGI. While VCGI fully supports the opinion of the EGC, the organization is currently in unusual circumstances given the legislative discussions of H. 516. Waiting 6-8 weeks to determine what should be done seems prudent at this time.

This is not meant to diminish the efforts of the EGC in doing the analysis and determining the system requirements. The effort done to this point will allow the work of platform development to begin as soon as a decision is made.

Data Initiatives:

Statewide Parcel Data

After many years of discussion among the VT GIS community about the necessity for statewide parcel data, there is real movement toward accomplishing that goal. A Statewide Parcel Data Initiative Work Group has been created with representatives from VCGI, several agencies, RPCs, VLCT, and others. In addition, VTrans has discussed providing funding for this effort. They have decided any potential funding would be held for a year pending a formal analysis of the costs and benefits of the project. As the current Legislative session is nearing, VTrans Directors will be providing testimony to the House and Senate Transportation Committees and this project would be discussed in general terms. It was suggested that additional funding be provided by the stakeholders in this project and VTrans cost-shares this effort. The other key consideration is having a plan for maintenance in place before the work on the project commences, as there is a large risk to develop a dataset without having future updates fully considered.

Organization of the effort is still in preliminary planning stages, but the involvement of so many interested parties across the community combined with the potential for funding makes this effort very promising. Managing the creation of a sustainable statewide parcel data will be a significant effort.

The working group representatives have had discussions with representatives from other

states that have achieved the goal of statewide parcels. The effort will require an enormous outreach and coordination effort to be successful. The effort needs to be clearly defined, project phases have to be agreed upon and achievable goals have to be established for each phase. None-the-less the potential for a statewide parcel data set is a very promising development and all parties need to keep the effort moving forward.

LiDAR Data

The state currently has LiDAR data or funded projects for LiDAR data over approximately 40% of the state. The EGC's LiDAR data working group has created a Statewide LiDAR Plan and an informational brochure intended to draw out funding to support LiDAR collection in the remaining 60% of the state. Estimated cost for the effort is \$2.1M.

VTrans has generously offered \$400K in support of this effort if other funding partners can be found. Public-Private funding from the state's utilities have been discussed. Additional funding may be available from FEMA in support of VT's critical post-Irene flood mapping needs. Traditional federal funding partners are also in the discussion as long as the state is looking to complete statewide LiDAR coverage. The next most optimal acquisition window for LiDAR data collection in VT is Fall 2014 leaving some time for all of the potential partners to come together, but mid-summer is a realistic deadline for completion of the acquisition funding plan.

NTIA State Broadband Initiative Grant Overview

VCGI, as prime contractor representing the larger team from VT, was awarded Broadband Mapping Grant by NTIA for 3.5M over 5 years. The original award was for 5 years, but only the first 2 years were funded. Subsequent to the first award, in late September 2010, NTIA awarded additional funding for years 3 thru 5 as an Amendment to the existing grant. VCGI's partners in this grant are the VT Telecommunications Authority, UVM- Center for Rural Studies, VT Dept. of Public Service and VT E911. There is also a significant role for private sector contractors. The full grant covers broadband telecommunications data collection, verification, and display for federal fiscal years 2010 thru 2014.

- VCGI awarded the wireless voice and data propagation mapping and verification contract to a team lead by Pericle Communications Inc.
- VCGI awarded the contract for the development of a BroadbandVT.org Website to a Team lead by Applied Geographics.
- VCGI awarded the contract for marketing support for the project to Marketing Partners.
- The last full delivery of Broadband data, with limited verification, was provided to NTIA in mid-November, 2010. Provider coverage data is being compiled and integrated by VCGI with support from DPS and the Providers themselves.
- DPS, VTA and VCGI have each hired a full time employee, with benefits, to support the

State Broadband Data and Development grant activities. The latest data and information relating to the NTIA Broadband Mapping Grant is available at;

<http://www.vcgi.org/projects/bmi/>

- When the Team was awarded the Amendment in September 2010, all of the proposed initiatives were accepted at the requested funding level with the exception of the e-Vermont School Modernization Initiative which was not funded at all.

The initiatives that were funded thru the Amendment are as follows;

1. Data Collection, Integration, Verification, and Display – Vermont’s Broadband Mapping Initiative (BMI) is a collaborative broadband data collection and verification effort involving partners from the public, private and academic sectors. The Team will collect broadband availability data from the Providers and from public sources. Broadband availability data will be verified by drive testing, field checking, public surveys (offline and online), and through interaction with the providers. Data and broadband related information will be made available through the BroadbandVT.org website. The requested amount for this effort is \$1,562,000.
2. Broadband Capacity Building – The Vermont Telecommunications Authority will create a position for a Director of Broadband Coordination and Outreach. The Director will act as a liaison between Providers and government and the bodies they serve to instill the broadband vision, preserve its consistency and create an atmosphere of common mission. The liaison will be a bridge between state offices and regional planning agencies to convey information in both directions about infrastructure, aggregation, adoption and policy efforts. The proposed Director will accelerate opportunities to achieve the outcomes set forth in the VT Telecommunications Plan. The requested amount for this effort is \$531,900.
3. Regional Broadband Planning - Vermont’s participating Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) will develop a network of contacts in communities and local sectors to assess where promising opportunities are available to develop broadband adoption and/or access. Regional Technology Planning Teams will be formed to plan and realize these opportunities. Through these partnerships, groups will have new opportunities to access various technical assistance programs available for others. The Regional Technology Plan will offer the State and other groups a plan for rolling out broadband technologies at the local and regional levels. The requested amount for this effort is \$250,034.