

Legislative Priority: Removing Barriers to Geospatial Data Sharing in Wisconsin Government

WLIA's Request

WLIA respectfully requests legislative support for the following:

- **Advance open data initiatives** that make geospatial data freely accessible—without licensing restrictions, fees, or administrative hurdles.
- **Support the creation of a single point of access** for geospatial data across all jurisdictions.
- **Ensuring privacy protections are carefully balanced** against the public interest in data accessibility, avoiding overly restrictive barriers that hinder beneficial data use.

Background

The Wisconsin Land Information Association (WLIA) believes data produced with public funding should be available in the public domain. WLIA supported the creation of the Wisconsin Land Information Council (WLIC) and has been engaged in the development of the WLIP Program Plan, which sets a benchmark for making WLIP-funded geospatial datasets open and accessible. WLIA believes this standard should apply to all publicly funded geospatial data.

Value of Geospatial Data

Geospatial data and related tools have become essential for modern governance and business operations. Businesses, government agencies, institutions, and utilities rely on datasets such as Public Land Survey System, property parcels, addresses, centerlines, right-of-ways, zoning, wetlands, floodplains, land use, aerial imagery, and elevation data to effectively manage their daily operations and support informed decisions. These datasets are critical for emergency response (e.g., NG911), land ownership and assessment, transportation planning, broadband mapping, redistricting, and voter registration. **By making publicly funded geospatial data more accessible, Wisconsin can stimulate our local economy and attract businesses and new jobs to our state.**

Existing Barriers to Open Geospatial Data Exchange

- Time-limited contracts and agreements for data sharing
- Inconsistent data distribution policies across all levels of government
- Inadequate funding for data distribution infrastructure
- Lack of uniform standards and specifications
- Difficulty identifying authoritative data sources

Benefits of Open Geospatial Data Exchange

Removing these barriers will increase government efficiency, reduce duplication of effort, and improve data quality by establishing a single authoritative source. A common operating picture will enhance collaboration, spark innovation, and drive economic growth across Wisconsin.

Balancing Transparency with Privacy

WLIA recognizes the importance of protecting individual privacy and safety—particularly for those at heightened risk if personal information is disclosed. Datasets containing personal information may unintentionally reveal sensitive personal details. WLIA supports responsible data release policies that protect privacy while preserving the public's right to information.

A well-balanced framework is essential to ensure transparency does not compromise individual safety or civil liberties.

The purpose of the Wisconsin Land Information Association is to foster the understanding, development, operation and maintenance of a network of statewide land information systems. Specifically, the Wisconsin Land Information Association's mission is focused on promoting sound policy, promoting interaction and cooperation, technical research and education