

A National Geospatial Image Map of the U.S.
(aka “Imagery for the Nation”)

“Map it once, use it many times” is not only a mantra in the geospatial community, but it is technologically feasible through the use of satellite and aerial imagery and geographic information systems (GIS). To save tax dollars, create private sector jobs, and provide baseline geographic data for economic development and a variety of other applications beneficial to government programs and private business and investment, MAPPS urges Congress to authorize and fund a program of geospatial image maps of the United States (also known as “Imagery for the Nation” or IFTN). A draft bill, known as the Making America Prosperous (MAP) Act, would accomplish this goal.

A recent study by Input, a market research firm, identified geospatial as one of five technologies that will transform the Federal government. The foundation to base mapping and GIS is imagery – aerial and satellite images “ortho-rectified” into maps to permit accurate measurements, calculation of areas, determination of locations, analysis of land use and land cover, and detection of changes in natural and made man features on the landscape.

Dozens of Federal agencies, virtually every state, and hundreds of regional, tribal and local units of government acquire imagery each year. These acquisitions support a variety of applications, including E-911, police, fire and public safety, emergency response and homeland security. Additionally, orthophoto image maps are used for efficient and equitable local property taxes; transportation operations, management and planning; utilities management; planning and zoning; agriculture and resource management; insurance; education planning and social services.

Today, these agencies each acquire their own imagery. These independent ad hoc programs result in duplication and wasted tax dollars. The MAP Act provides an economic approach to inter-governmental use of ortho imagery. Tax dollars will be saved by designing acquisitions to achieve bulk purchase economies of scale and by pooling, rather than duplicating, such programs.

It is estimated that the MAP Act can save as much as 30% compared to today’s stove-piped process. This is a cost avoidance savings of some \$23 million. A Federally-sponsored return on investment (ROI) analysis shows a cost benefit ratio of 3.7 to 1.

The economic benefit of a national geospatial image map is demonstrated by an actual road construction project. For 12 miles of road, the aerial photography cost is \$6,000. This results in surveying and mapping of \$124,000. The engineering fee for design services is \$4.2 million and the total cost of construction is \$49 million. ***Thus, while aerial photography accounts for only 0.011% of total project costs, it has a multiplier effect of 9074%.*** It is a proven stimulus and generator of economic activity.

Moreover, the MAP Act would result in more than 1,000 real private sector jobs in image acquisition and mapping, as well as leverage another 10,000 jobs in value-added and “aftermarket” activities based on the image maps.

ACTION REQUESTED: MAPPS urges Congress to enact the Making America Prosperous (MAP) Act to authorize a program to provide for cost sharing among Federal agencies, and state and local government, to develop consistent, seamless, current and accurate image maps of the United States. For further information and draft legislation, please contact John Byrd, MAPPS Government Affairs Manager, jbyrd@mapps.org or (703) 787-6996.