Recommendations

By Angela Gonzalez-Curci for WSDOT as part of University of Washington/Open Data Literacy Internship

1. **Right of Way Plans should be made open in a machine readable format, preferably as GIS data**

Right of Way Plans, with exception of bridge plans, are both frequently requested records and low risk, having no Personally Identifying Information or Record Exemptions attached to them.

However, these plans are not kept in a machine readable format. Right of Ways are kept by WSDOT in two forms, as 22 X 36 inch print documents and/or electronic scans of the print documents. Some of these scanned documents are accessible through WSDOTs website, but not all. Either way, the process of finding a Right of Way is cumbersome, requiring either the requestor or coordinator to first lookup the File Number and Sheet Number for a particular stretch of road in an index before finding or requesting a particular plan. By converting the information on Right of Way plan sheets into GIS data, this two-step process become a one-step search a public requestor can easily do without assistance of a WSDOT employee.

The next step to for WSDOT is asses the feasibility and scope of making this recommendation a reality. WSDOT should consider whether or not it is possible to make all Right of Ways open data or only the most recent ones. Due to the 99-year retention span of Right of Way Plan records, WSDOT has plans in many and differing iterations of standards and created in with just as differing levels of technological sophistication. Applying a useable metadata schema to recently finished plans created using CAD software may be too difficult, and creating cross-walks between such differing standards will be difficult at best.

1. **Consider Restricted Access to License Plate Readers (LPR) through GovQA**

While more frequently requested than Right of Way Plans, data from License Plate Readers are highly restricted by Washington State law. LPRs give WSDOT the ability to track motor vehicles as they travel on Washington State roadways and ferries, making data taken from these instruments a great risk to public privacy. For this reason, only a vehicle’s owner can receive LPR data for that specific vehicle. Though highly restricted, requests for LPR data made by government entities and transportation companies are often granted.

Just because LPR data is not a candidate for open release does not mean it is impossible to make it more accessible to the entities that have access to it. Giving requestors restricted access to their own data is one way of ensuring that the public has access to their own data. With WSDOT’s recent implementation of the GovQA database management system it might be feasible to create custom database views for Companies allowing them restricted access to their own data.

1. **Consider Data Licensing or Sharing Agreements with frequent Government type requestors such as Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Washington State Patrol (WSP).**

The frequency with which other Government entities request WSDOT data highlights an opportunity for the Department reduce the number of both incoming and outgoing public record requests by exchanging data. Both ODOT and WSP are good candidates for consideration due the frequency of their requests and due to their record request types. Both requestors are consistently asking for the same types of records: Oregon Dept. of Transportation wants License Plate Readers and the Washington State Patrol wants Collison Reports. However, due to exemptions, neither of these records are Open Data candidates. Entering agreement with these agencies would increase their access to these records while still upholding privacy law.

1. **Further Assessment of Crash and Collision Data is needed.**

Although aggregated crash and collision data are available on the WSDOT site, it is apparent that this data is not meeting requestors’ needs. Crash and Collision dataset still make up more than a quarter of all public disclosure requests despite the fact that versions of the same data are already publicly available. WSDOT should figure out what is not working for these requestors. Potential reasons are lack of accessibility to WSDOT site, difficulty finding the particular webpage, or that the data is aggregated in such a way that it cannot answer these requestors’ questions.