

Bad Maps Costing Cities Money

ISSUE:

Maps of city boundaries are inaccurate and or out of date. These boundaries are used to determine issues that are critical for cities: such as the 2020 Census population; property tax jurisdictions; voter districting; representation in the legislature; franchise fee collection , and much more. The map needs to be up to date and as accurate as possible, and it needs to be digital.

City boundaries are challenging to maintain in the state map database; partly because of the volume. The following table lists the number of cities by category.

Count - Category

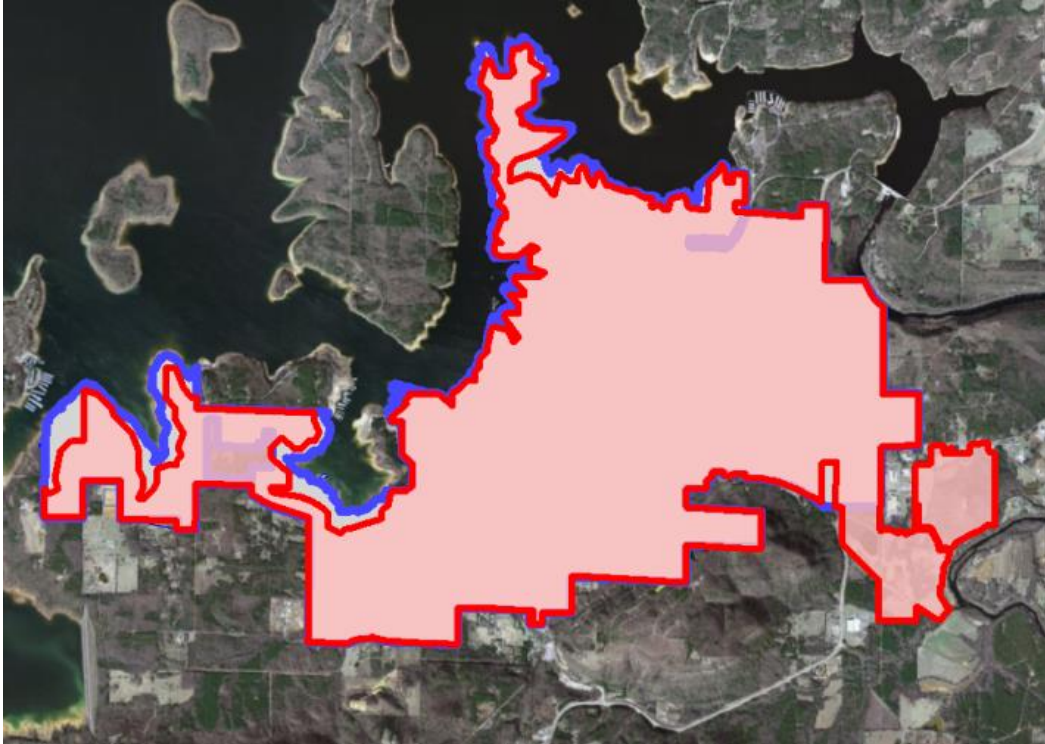
- 109 – Cities of 1st Class
- 171 – Cities of 2nd Class
- 241 – Incorporate Towns

For calendar year 2011, 49 cities filed annexation records that changed their boundary which resulted in a change on the state map.

Generally speaking 2nd class and incorporated towns do not have the expertise to prepare the legal descriptions and plats to accompany the filing process. We have also seen cases where annexation records were not filed or could not be located.

Getting the state map change is a lengthy process. City and County Clerks file the record; the Secretary of State receives the filing, and forwards the record to the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) Mapping Section. Once there, the legal description is digitally platted into a geographic information system (GIS). Finally, the data are sent to the Arkansas Geographic Information Office, where it is published in the State GIS and used to calculate source jurisdiction for sales tax distribution and also shipped to the U.S. Census Bureau to be formally included in the redistricting data.

One challenge, to ensuring the correct portrayal of your city, stems from a breakdown in filing. During the redistricting process, we saw several examples where election commissioners reported that the city boundary was incorrect. And after research, we found the problem to be in the filing process. City Directors, Mayors and Clerks can easily correct this short coming with diligence in the annexation and de-annexation process; By following up at every step and making certain the correct filing process is followed.



In the screen shot above, the blue is the most recent Archived Boundary for Heber Springs and the Red is the most up-to-date city limit. You'll see that land that was added is in the south east part of the city and that two island areas are now in the city. These were updated this year after a controversy during redistricting. The Heber Springs annexations that were not sent to the Secretary of State Office included two from 2005 and one from 2007.

A second issue is that, city boundary legal descriptions are often poorly written and the map or plat is substandard. The smaller cities do not have the resources or expertise to prepare accurate legal descriptions and they cannot afford to hire Professional Surveyors to prepare these legal descriptions.

SOLUTION:

Require the Arkansas Geographic Information Office to provide annexation technical services to Cities and Incorporated Towns. Services would include preparing legal descriptions and digital plats for the annexation filing process. Require Cities and Incorporated Towns to use this service. Instead of having a map at the end of the process, the map would begin the process. In essence the annexation record would be born digital. Existing legislation would need to be changed to require a map/plat to be filed regardless of the annexation or de-annexation process.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This would require the Arkansas Geographic Information Office to add a Professional Surveyor to staff to meet State standards for plat filing.

Arkansas Master Address Program
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To ensure the long term maintenance and development of the Arkansas Master Address Program. If we do not, the state and counties risk losing the investment made to date on this strategic resource. At this time, the agency cannot ensure local authorities will continue to create and maintain this data.

BACKGROUND:

Since 2005, the Arkansas Geographic Information Office -- working in partnership with the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration, Revenue Department -- slowly began building an address point GIS file in support of Arkansas' participation in the National Streamlined Sales and Use Tax agreement. Connect-Arkansas, who uses this address point data to analyze Broadband service, accelerated this project over the past three years via the infusion of additional capital from federal sources.

The primary benefit of this data is its direct applicability to County E-911 coordinators. In fact, our agency works hand-in-hand with the County E-911 coordinators, or their designees, to facilitate the creation of this address point data. The address point data represents the official E-911 physical address assigned by the local Addressing Authority and contains the latitude and longitude of each location; no personal information is collected or stored. This information is fed directly into the E-911 dispatching system and provides immediate benefit to local E-911 emergency service providers in locating incidents. Likewise, citing just one example of the data's non-E911 benefits, this same information is fed into the DFA-Revenue Streamlined Sales and Use Tax database. There it is used to validate the source jurisdiction for sales tax collection. For example, Paragould and Greene County will collect sales tax for a load of lumber delivered from Jonesboro to Paragould due to the fact that the valid delivery address is situated in Paragould.

By the end of calendar 2014, the agency -- working with the counties - will have address point data for sixty-five counties. However, after 2014, the incentive funding will no longer be available for the counties to create or maintain this data for their jurisdictions.

SOLUTION:

We are taking immediate steps to mitigate this issue by developing a method where local jurisdictions may update and maintain their data online. This system would cut down on local software expense and benefit other state agencies in accessing this data in near real-time. We are seeking legislation whereby the local jurisdiction is required to maintain the data through this centralized statewide system.

FISCAL IMPACT:

STATE - This policy will require that the Arkansas Geographic Information Office maintain this online system. We believe the agency has the operational funding necessary to maintain this system and that it will provide considerable cost savings to state and local agencies through accurate address verification services. We are estimating the cost of \$225,000 to complete the remaining counties' unfinished address point data. We will continue to seek Federal Grants that align with the program and would request General Improvement Funding as well.

LOCAL - This would require the local jurisdictions -- currently using isolated local databases -- to maintain their data on this centralized statewide system. Some local entities may suggest this is an unfunded mandate. However, if these entities already provide some level of E-911 capability, then this only enhances how they would provide services to their constituents.