



GREAT LAKES REGION – HEIGHT MODERNIZATION CONSORTIUM

APRIL 2013

THE ROLE OF STATE GOVERNMENT OPERATED REAL-TIME NETWORKS

The Great Lakes Region Height Modernization Consortium (GLRHMC) includes six core states (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH and WI) and four overlapping states (IA, KY, NY and PA). GLRHMC is a group of state and federal agency partners, whose mission is to support NGS's National Height Modernization Program (NHMP). The Consortium provides support by organizing, coordinating, and otherwise supporting projects and activities that further the mission and goals of the NHMP. The majority of states in the GLRHMC have state administered real-time GNSS networks (RTN) operating free of charge. This paper provides a statement of why the GLRHMC feels RTN operations should remain the responsibility of each individual state.

State administered RTN operations in the GLRHMC have proven quite successful. The positioning capability this service enables supports the efficiency and accuracy of functions of the government (both local and federal); such as building roads and bridges, maintaining accurate tax and flood maps, and providing emergency services. There are alternatives to support the RTNs but the only way to assure that accuracy and not profit is the leading factor in managing these networks is to make sure that the administrative duties required for these networks remain in-house.

Multiple disciplines (surveying, construction, agriculture, and many others) have gained significant efficiencies and cost savings through the incorporation of RTN networks into their respective operations. Under the current operating model in IN, MI, MN and WI there is no fee to the user/taxpayer. If the system were to be outsourced and a fee implemented, there would be a user expectations of 24/7/365 operation and support. Administering the fees and providing accountability to meet higher expectations will add additional cost overhead to the system.

There are reference station sites where public and private partners agreed to participate in the RTN programs with the understanding and belief that the state would be the agency directly responsible for fulfilling the obligations as outlined in their agreements. Effective partnerships rely on the level of confidence and comfort that come with a reliable, consistent point of contact. Being driven by profit and self-serving goals, privately operated RTN have no long term assurance of providing services to the users, whereas with state operated RTN the opposite is true. Some partners were very apprehensive about hosting an RTN station and allowing an outside entity access to their internal networking systems. Only with the reassurance of working directly with the state were these partnerships able to be forged.

Only a small number of consultants would be capable of operating state RTN Networks. Selling the RTN components would create an unfair competitive, business advantage that would allow one firm to control all access to a network. RTNs have proven to be a necessary public utility that should remain in the hands of publically funded agencies in order to provide consistent, accurate, up-to-date positioning capabilities to the users.