

The Private Sector

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This review of the private-sector role in the use of census data answers these questions: Do those in the private sector support and facilitate the use of census data? Do they provide supplemental data? Do they supply data that might be a substitute if the journey-to-work data or other census data were not available? Do the private-sector companies rely on the journey-to-work data for their business practice?

There are a number of areas in which the private sector is providing either products or services. Of course, some of these are being provided through contracts with government agencies such as the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Some are also private commercial enterprises selling products and services.

The first area in which services and products are being provided by the contractors represented in this session is repackaging of census data, including different kinds of repackaging of the population data; repackaging of the employment data from the census in combination with data from other sources; and repackaging of both of those kinds of employment and population data for life-style identifiers. Provision of boundary and line file information from the Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (TIGER) files is quite common.

The second area also involves software to facilitate the use of census data. There are two examples of reformatting the Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP) files for easier use. Another significant contribution is geographic information system (GIS) software for better integration of the census data as well as other transportation planning data into the planning and programming process. It is a significant enhancement of professional practice for transportation planners to be able to display data and the results of analyses graphically in a way that facilitates the decision-making process more readily.

The services also include guidance in the use of the CTPP data, a CTPP training course and handbook, conversion factors for the use of the CTPP data, Census Mapbook, and supplemental data, particularly data on business inventories and locations.

CALIPER CORPORATION

Caliper Corporation develops software products to support transportation planning and research. One is TransVU CTPP, developed for BTS specifically to aid in the reading and graphical display of the CTPP data. TransVU CTPP is a specialized application designed to read the files, provide mapping and tabular representation of the data, and transfer data to another format in which it can be manipulated and printed. The software is free to all users and is not designed to compete with other kinds of presentation software and thus does not print products but will allow viewing of the data in graphic and tabular forms. The data can then be transferred to another software in which it can be used for spreadsheets or graphic presentations. It is Windows-based with pull-down menus and a point-and-click orientation that makes it quite easy to use.

Other products that Caliper provides to the industry include TransCAD and Maptitude. TransCAD is one of the GIS software packages that is being used extensively within the transportation industry. It was designed specifically for transportation applications and has a broad range of capabilities. It is supported by a large data set including all of the census data to support transportation planning already available on CD-ROM for use with TransCAD.

Maptitude is an inexpensive but versatile software for mapping. There has been a significant increase in the use of mapping software from a variety of sources to support transportation decision making. The new software helps to put the information and analyses in a more interesting and usable format for presentation to broad audiences, particularly to decision makers.

CLARITAS, INC.

Claritas is an information provider relying heavily on census data but also drawing on a significant number of other sources for information both of a residential nature and business or employment nature. Claritas supports primarily private-sector clients doing market analysis but also supports many public-sector clients in completing inventories or making supplemental use of data.

PRIZM and Workplace PRIZM are two products that Claritas provides primarily to its private-sector business clients for use in market research and market analysis. These products use clustering analysis techniques to create 62 different clusters of residential populations according to income, household size, and household characteristics, a variety of information that can be drawn from the census. These 62 clusters range from the Blood Estates and the Winners' Circle populations all the way to the Scrub Pine Flats and Hard Scramble populations, with such other characterizations as Big Fish, Small Ponds neighborhoods; Boomers and Babies; and Big City Blend neighborhoods. It is easy to see how this type of characterization of neighborhoods might be useful to companies to identify the greatest potential markets for their goods.

Workplace PRIZM uses the census journey-to-work data and flip-flops the residential information to provide characterizations of workplaces. Using the information on origins and destinations of the work trips, Claritas is able to identify for a particular tract where the population that works in that tract resides and, on the basis of that place of residence, to be able to identify the types of neighborhoods from which the workers come.

Because of confidentiality requirements, the actual characteristics of the individuals who are traveling to those workplaces cannot be revealed, but the characteristics of the neighborhood can provide identification. Each workplace cannot really be developed as one type of area, such as the Big City Blend, but is a combination of residential categories. This software has been quite useful to a number of firms that specifically want to market to the workplace location and understand the characteristics of its population. Although this application is primarily outside the public-sector transportation orientation, it may become more useful as lifestyle information is brought into transportation planning or as more marketing of a broader

range of products develops, not just for transit, but also intelligent transportation systems, information strategies, and products of different kinds.

Claritas also repackages the data from the census in several forms, for example, the journey-to-work information in the STF-3 Info Pack, but also provides a demographic data base that is very similar to the census but is updated regularly by Claritas with in-house staff and methodologies. Claritas provides a 5-year forecast for all of the demographic data, which can be quite a valuable source for ongoing updating and projecting of information.

Finally, Claritas provides business data, including type of establishment, number of establishments by tract and Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code, and employment inventories. The primary source for the Claritas business data is the telephone Yellow Pages.

DUN AND BRADSTREET

One of the premier suppliers of business data, Dun and Bradstreet has for many years supplied such data as a byproduct of its main line of business, which is providing information on credit evaluation of companies. It has roughly a 99 percent complete business data base with information on over 10 million businesses in the country, including valuable information on SIC code and number of employees by location that can be provided on a point-specific basis and aggregated to any kind of zone system. They have also attached geographic referencing data so that the data can be tied into virtually any kind of GIS system for processing.

Another byproduct of the business data from Dun and Bradstreet is the TRINC transportation file, which contains quite complete information about businesses that own transportation fleets and the characteristics of those fleets. This, again, can be an important data base for any organization attempting to do a commercial vehicle survey and wanting to know who owns and operates commercial vehicles within any particular area.

ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEM RESEARCH INSTITUTE

One of the foremost providers of GIS software is the Environmental System Research Institute (ESRI), whose principal package is called ArcInfo. ESRI also provides a mapping software called ArcView that is also getting significant use within the industry.

ESRI puts out a catalog that lists a large number of data suppliers, including suppliers of census information, geographic boundary information, and business data. The emergence of actual suppliers of geographic boundaries and of data to populate the GIS has made GIS much more usable in the transportation industry.

JHK & ASSOCIATES

JHK & Associates has been actively involved with FHWA in developing a training course that was first delivered using the Statewide Element of the CTPP and in describing more generally the products available from the census. The course was taught in over 30 locations, and about 900 people were trained in the use of CTPP data. A handbook was developed for those who attended but is also available for those who could not attend one of the training sessions. A 20-min video and a brochure are available on the use of CTPP data.

The TransVU software and the Urban Element of the CTPP became available at the conclusion of the original training course provided by JHK, which has now contracted to provide another training course specifically on the Urban Element using TransVU. JHK also provides a variety of other technical assistance in the use of the CTPP.

COMSIS CORPORATION

COMSIS Corporation has developed a Conversion Factors Handbook for use with the census data. The handbook provides factors that are essential in converting the information to a

format that is usable in modeling or urban translation analysis. It was developed under contract with FHWA and should be available soon.

COMSIS, also under contract to FHWA, developed SAS software for use of the CTPP, recognizing that there may be different kinds of users: some who would use the predesigned TransVU software for viewing, but others who would want to use SAS for different kinds of applications. COMSIS developed a number of programs for easy use of the package with SAS; the software should be available soon from FHWA.

SUMMARY

Products and services are available from the private sector that facilitate the use of the census data. Employment data are available from the private sector to check, supplement, and factor census workplace data. There really exists no commercial source that can substitute for the journey-to-work data, particularly the detailed tract-to-tract, origin-destination information that is so important in the transportation industry. Census data are essential to both public- and private-sector practice.