

## Request for Information: Executive Branch Agency Handling of Commercially Available Information Containing Personally Identifiable Information

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/10/16/2024-23773/request-for-information-executive-branch-agency-handling-of-commercially-available-information>

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The Coalition of Geospatial Organizations (COGO) is comprised of the major geospatial associations spanning both producers and users of geospatial data. The organizations comprising COGO are leaders in the geospatial field, collectively representing over 170,000 individual members and speaks with a unified voice on national geospatial policy initiatives.

COGO cautions OIRA to carefully define terms and assign activities to such terms, as some states have done, when developing policy affecting Commercially Available Information Containing Personally Identifiable Information. Use of terms such as “location”, “precise geolocation data”, and “personally identifiable information” if overly broad or imprecisely utilized can result in intended or unintended consequences that harm geospatial companies and government agencies and work against the best interests of citizens.

COGO has a long held [policy](#) (unanimously adopted by all of the COGO member organizations) on individual citizen privacy and geospatial data. After carefully reviewing legitimate individual citizen concerns and privacy threats, we developed this best practice model which concluded that geospatial data that includes certain location attributes, such as, but not limited to an address or a parcel identification number, should not be considered precise geospatial data or personally identifiable information. It is important to note that the geospatial community is not in the business of collecting dynamic, real-time information on a person’s location. However, a static address or parcel identification number is often foundational to geographic information systems (GIS), whether collected by government or purchased from a commercial entity. Given the ubiquity with which GIS is used today, limits on such data would not serve the public interest.

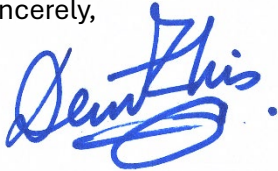
In 2011, COGO [commented](#) to the Federal Trade Commission on its draft report, *Protecting Consumer Privacy in an Era of Rapid Change* regarding imprecise or absent definitions. As a result of these comments, and several meetings between FTC, COGO, its member organizations, and the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), the FTC’s [final report](#) noted in footnote 187, “With respect to use of geolocation data for mapping, surveying or similar purposes, if the data cannot reasonably be linked to a specific consumer, computer, or device, a company collecting or using the data would not need to provide a consumer choice mechanism. Similarly, if a company takes reasonable measures to de-identify smart grid data and takes the other steps outlined above, the company would not be obligated to obtain consent before collecting or using the data.”

Several member organizations of COGO adopted a [best practices guideline](#), consistent with the aforementioned COGO policy and the FTC statement, that seeks to define those limited geospatial activities that merit consumer privacy protection. We commend this to your attention.

COGO respectfully urges OIRA to adopt policies and guidelines affecting Commercially Available Information Containing Personally Identifiable Information consistent with the FTC finding, the COGO policy, and the best practices guideline.

For further information on COGO privacy activities and recommendations, please go to <https://cogo.pro/news> and see items in 2011, 2012, and 2013.

Sincerely,



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2024 COGO Chair



### COGO Member Organizations

American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)	American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS)
American Association of Geographers (AAG)	Cartography and Geographic Information Society (CaGIS)
American Association for Geodetic Surveying (AAGS)	Geographic Information Systems Certification Institute (GISCI)
International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO)	Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS)
National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS)	National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC)
United States Geospatial Intelligence Foundation (USGIF)	University Consortium for Geographic Information Science (UCGIS)
Geospatial Professional Network (dba URISA)	