



**Testimony of Frank Hebbert, GIS Manager, Regional Plan Association
before the New York City Council Technology in Government Committee
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My name is Frank Hebbert. I am the Manager of Geographic Information Systems at Regional Plan Association, a non-profit research and planning organization serving the greater New York region. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on Introduction #991.

Regional Plan Association welcomes the open data proposals in this Introduction.

As a research organization, information created and released by City agencies is vital to our planning and advocacy work. For non-profit and community organizations, data availability is often a limiting factor. A central data portal will make it easier to obtain information and to respond more accurately, speedily and effectively on issues affecting the City.

Benefits for open government and innovation

The Introduction will benefit open government and transparency. Providing a one-stop destination for all city data will help residents make use of information that has previously been buried within a sub-section of the City website, or not directly available.

Easier access to city data will lead to innovation in how citizens interact with government, with social and economic benefits for the city. These future interactions may take place in ways we cannot today foresee - DC's Apps for Democracy project is a leading example, with many innovative tools only possible because of open access to data feeds. Open data will spur software and related industries, and strengthen the City's innovation and attractiveness as a place to live and work.

Improvements to the Introduction

We think the Introduction could go further on geographic data. It does not make specific provisions for greater sharing of currently unavailable geographic data, though the definition of Record in article 23-301 includes prepared maps. We suggest that the legislation open up existing map data services created and maintained by the city. Giving unrestricted, free access to all map data in common digital map formats could be transformative.

The Introduction could be more specific on data formats, and the definition of 'raw and unprocessed' could be strengthened. Data in machine readable and disaggregated form is necessary for the greatest flexibility and innovation in future use.

We welcome the use of consensus standards for formats, and we urge that formats used be non-proprietary. For guidance on data format and structure, the methods used by the DC Office of the Chief Technology Officer should be considered as minimum requirements for any system adopted here.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.