

PRESS RELEASE

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City, County, TheRide collaborate on IT resources

ANN ARBOR, Mich. – The City of Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County and the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (TheRide) have joined technological forces to save on the costs of operating their respective computer networks.

According to City of Ann Arbor IT Director Dan Rainey, a network of fiber optic cable was installed several years ago connecting the major municipal buildings in Ann Arbor and essentially connecting the city, county and TheRide together into one large computing network.

Although the municipalities were separate at the time (e.g. separate firewalls, etc.), the IT Directors of the agencies saw an opportunity to collaborate and share information technology infrastructure with the purpose of reducing overall costs.

The three agencies have since engaged in multiple projects whereby resources are shared, including web services, phone (VoIP) services and collocation of the data centers. There is also the potential for more services to be offered and shared, including web mapping applications, enterprise content management and more.

“For almost everything we use technology-wise, there is an opportunity to work together and improve service levels to the community,” said James McFarlane of Washtenaw County IT.

"Through collaborative efforts like this, we are able to reduce the overall cost for technology services for Washtenaw County and City of Ann Arbor taxpayers by leveraging common technology services to a larger economic base and thus reducing the cost per unit served," Rainey said. "I believe this collaboration agreement can be held up as a successful blueprint for other municipal organizations across the state to emulate."

In order to implement potential services in a timely manner, an interagency agreement for collaborative technology and services between the City of Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County and the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority has been instituted.

The agreement was approved by the Ann Arbor City Council and the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners earlier this month.

This document is structured in two parts:

Agreement – describing how the entities will operate
Schedules – describing specific shared resources

As new opportunities for sharing resources arise, a schedule describing each resource will be added to the agreement document.

Jan Hallberg, IT manager for TheRide, said, “By sharing resources, we are not only saving by getting volume pricing, but we also are reducing redundant investments in infrastructure and services.”

Hallberg added, “One of our upcoming projects will be to move our backup processes to the county’s off-site backup environment and be able to back up server images, which we have not been able to do with our current backup system. This is an important requirement for our disaster recovery process.”