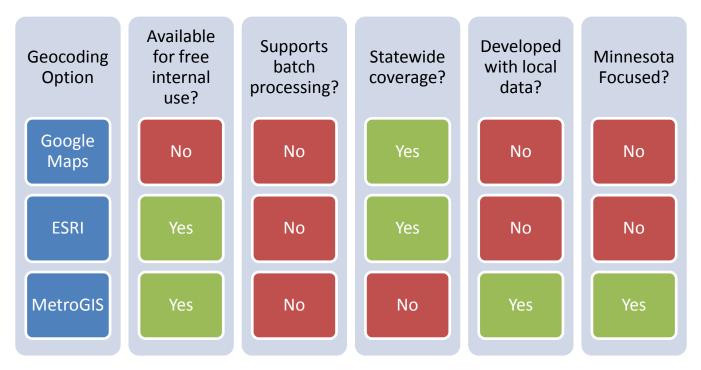# MnGeo Geocoding FAQ

Why does Minnesota need a geocoding service?

Minnesota state agencies and the wider GIS community have a need to translate addresses, mile markers, and landmarks into point locations in order to support a wide variety of functions. There is a growing interest in displaying government data on a map, and geocoding services are often the best way to perform this task. For more information on why a service is needed, see the Geocoding Workgroup Charter.

Aren't there already geocoding services that do this?

Yes, there are several existing geocoding services available to the public, web developers, and GIS users. Unfortunately, none of them completely meet the needs of the state agencies and the wider GIS community. The matrix below is a basic (and oversimplified) examination of three existing geocoding services from Google Maps, ESRI, and MetroGIS. See the Statewide Geocoding Service Requirements document for more information on the "ideal" requirements for a geocoding service.

Geocoding Option	Available for free internal use?	Supports batch processing?	Statewide coverage?	Developed with local data?	Minnesota Focused?
Google Maps	No	No	Yes	No	No
ESRI	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
MetroGIS	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

Who will develop this web service? Who will host it?

That is undetermined at this point. A Geocoding services RFI will soon be issued to attempt to identify some options.

I have non-public data attached to my addresses. How will its confidentiality be maintained?

A "No Storage of Request Data" section can be found inside the Statewide Geocoding Service Requirements document , which makes it clear that the Geocoding Workgroup does not intend this service (or its host) to store non-address data sent inside requests.

What will this service cost?

That is undetermined at this point, although a "No Cost / Low Cost for Use" section can be found inside the Statewide Geocoding Service Requirements document for more details.

If the service is dependent on licensed address data sets, will individual departments have to get these licenses, or will licensing need to be available for all potential users?

One of the goals of this service is to reduce the need for any agency to buy and store their own street or address data. If the service depends on licensed data, then the workgroup does not envision that licensed data being shared beyond the host agency. This is currently how the MetroGIS geocoder works: it utilizes (as one source) metro-area street ranges from NCompass (formerly The Lawrence Group/ TLG), which is a licensed data set. However, it does not expose that source data to the users.