Three ways to make your data private
1. Get into the data retail business
What’s the “market” price?!
Price for Building, Zoning, and Elevation Contour GIS Data by Jurisdiction

- DC: $0
- Alexandria: $100
- Loudoun County: $122
- Arlington County: $325
- Prince William County: $857
- Fairfax County: $2,850
- Prince George's County: $52,950
- Montgomery County: $121,300
Fairfax County GIS Data

$2,890 per copy
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$24,613 total sales for FY2010
Fairfax County GIS Data

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$24,613 total sales for FY2010

>$1 million to produce/maintain
Fairfax County GIS Data

This isn’t working as a business venture.

It’s not even materially offsetting costs.
Fairfax County GIS Data

Where does the >$1 million come from to maintain this data?

Does GIS Dept. or its ten customers have the political clout needed to make improvements?
Counterpoint:
Parks and Trails Data from Portland, OR

Getting people to care about your data helps you make it better!
2. Give the rights to your vendor
Three easy steps:
Three easy steps:

1) Buy a multimillion-dollar software license
Three easy steps:

1) Buy a multimillion-dollar software license

2) Discover it has no “export” feature (buy more software)
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1) Buy a multimillion-dollar software license

2) Discover it has no “export” feature (buy more software)

3) Discover “exported” data is proprietary and can’t be shared
Success!

“Your data” is no longer yours.
This is the situation faced by many transit agencies, including WMATA in DC.

Thanks
Alternative 1:

Use open software platforms and open data standards to avoid vendor lock-in altogether.
Alternative 2:

Get rid of vendors that don’t care about your goals.

You are the customer!
3. Let someone else make it public
“Congress shall have power . . .
To promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.”

*Article I, section 8, U.S. Constitution*
Things haven’t quite gone according to plan...
The following USPTO **patent products** are available for free download.

**Patent Grants**
- Patent Grant Multi-Page Images (1790 – present)
- Patent Grant Full Text with Embedded Images (2001 – present)
- Patent Grant Full Text (1976 – present)
- Patent Grant Bibliographic Data (1976 – present)
- Patent Grant OCR Text (1920 – 1973)
- Patent Grant Single-Page Images (Oct 2010 – present)

**Patent Application Publications**
- PAR (Patent Application Information Retrieval) Data

**Additional Patent Data**
- Patent Maintenance Fee Events (1981 – present)
- Patent Classification Information (current)
- Patent IPR Petition Decisions

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This is an attractive model, however...
This is an attractive model, however...

By definition
this isn’t public data.
This isn’t a sustainable model for dissemination of public data.
This isn’t a sustainable model for dissemination of public data.

What happens when has a bad quarter?
This isn’t a sustainable model for dissemination of public data.

What happens when has a bad quarter?

Or has competing business interests?
Public data is a public responsibility.
Public data is a public responsibility.

Deferring that responsibility is an abdication of public trust.
Public data is a public responsibility.

Deferring that responsibility is an **abdication of public trust**.

It’s also a bad idea.
Ways to make your data better while avoiding privatization:
1) Let go of the *dream* of self-funded data operations.

Instead, grow your base.
2) Control your data and your vendors by using open source/data.
3) Remember *who really pays* for the data and make sure they have access.
Thanks!