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Dear Commissioners:

Selecting a Mapping Expert. I hope that you find one of the mapping companies to be what you want. However, if not, please consider the alternative of subcontracting for a more local or qualified expert through your counsel. In Texas, the mapping capacity is generally provided through the office of the legal counsel.

Hiring a Local Mapping Expert. However you chose to proceed, I hope you will consider asking your mapping expert or counsel to provide (hire?) a mapping specialist that can be present at all of your meetings.

Individual Commissioner Mapping Capability. One potential advantage of hiring a software company as your mapping expert is the possibility of having it provide a capability for each commissioner on his or her own computer to map the district options and to instantaneously see the effect of proposed changes. The Legislative Council system shown earlier has this capability, but the Council alternative was not pursued.

Databases. All bidders should already possess a basic database of 2010 census data reported by census geography (e.g. blocks, block groups, tracts, etc.). However, the selected company also should already possess or have plans for obtaining the following databases:

1. 2010 census data reported by 2012 election precincts for precincts in the city of Austin, including the partial precincts on the edge of the city and precincts outside Travis County. This data is available from the Legislative Council.
2. The ACES data showing estimates of citizen voting age population by election precinct or census geography. This data comes from the census, but is not an enumeration (i.e. count), but is an estimate based on extrapolation. This data, along with the number of Spanish-surname registered voters (SSRV) by election precinct is important in assessing the viability of minority opportunity districts. Mere population is not enough. These databases can be obtained from the Legislative Council.
3. Data showing the boundaries of Austin neighborhoods. This data is not available from the Legislative Council.

Good Luck.

Steve Bickerstaff

