

1 Introduction

1.1 What are TIGER/Line Shapefiles?

The TIGER/Line Shapefiles are extracts of selected geographic and cartographic information from the U.S. Census Bureau's Master Address File/Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (MAF/TIGER) database. The shapefiles include information for the fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Island areas (American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the United States Virgin Islands). They do not contain any sensitive data, areas used for administering censuses and surveys, or attributes used only in internal processing. The TIGER/Line Shapefiles are designed for use with geographic information system (GIS) software.

The MAF/TIGER database contains geographic linear, areal, and point features such as streets, railroads, rivers, lakes, and landmarks (airports, schools, etc.). Geographic entity boundaries from the MAF/TIGER database are represented in the files, as well as the polygons that make up the legal and statistical geographic areas for which the Census Bureau tabulates data. The MAF/TIGER database also contains attribute information about these features, such as names, the type of feature, address ranges for most streets, the geographic relationship to other features, and other related information.

1.2 Relationship of the TIGER/Line Shapefiles to Census Statistical Data

What makes the TIGER/Line Shapefiles particularly valuable in the GIS environment, and to the data user community, is the ability to directly link the geographic areas to data from the 2010 Census, the American Community Survey, the Economic Census, and other survey and population estimates data. The TIGER/Line Shapefiles include Federal Information Processing Series (FIPS) codes and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) codes, where available. Census Bureau codes, or locally produced codes to uniquely identify geographic areas for the nation's legal and statistical entities also are included for selected geographic areas.

TIGER/Line Shapefiles do not include demographic data from surveys and censuses, but the two can be joined by using the geographic entity codes found in both the shapefiles and the demographic data. The inclusion of a set of unique key codes allows for geographic entities to be easily matched and linked with data from censuses and surveys. Data from many of the Census Bureau's surveys and censuses, including the geographic codes needed to join to the TIGER/Line Shapefiles, can be obtained from American FactFinder (<http://factfinder2.census.gov>).

1.3 History of TIGER/Line Files and Shapefiles

The TIGER/Line files were initially released in 1989 and provided the first nationwide street centerline coverage of the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas in a series of ASCII format fixed tables or record types. These ASCII TIGER/Line files could be converted to a GIS compatible format with the use of a translator. Periodic versions were released throughout the 1990s in ASCII format.

For Census 2000, several versions of TIGER/Line files were released from 2000 to 2006 in the ASCII TIGER/Line file format to support the Census 2000 data tabulations. Beginning with the 2007 version, the format of the TIGER/Line files changed from the ASCII TIGER/Line file format to shapefile.

Where to locate the TIGER/Line Files and Shapefiles

TIGER/Line Shapefiles (2007 and beyond)

All versions of the shapefiles are available from the Census Bureau's website at <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/shp.html>.

Census 2000 TIGER/Line files

The Census 2000 versions, the 108th Congressional District version, and the 2006 second edition of the TIGER/Line files in ASCII format are available on the TIGER website at <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/shp.html>.

Pre-2000 TIGER/Line files

The 1992 TIGER/Line files in ASCII format provide a link between 1980 and 1990 Census geography and are also available on the TIGER website at <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/shp.html>.

1.4 TIGER/Line Shapefile Legal Disclaimers

No warranty, expressed or implied, is made with regard to the accuracy of the data in the TIGER/Line Shapefiles, and no liability is assumed by the United States Government in general, or the Census Bureau specifically, as to the positional or attribute accuracy of the data. The boundary information in the TIGER/Line Shapefiles is for statistical data collection and tabulation purposes only. Their depiction and designation for statistical purposes does not constitute a determination of jurisdictional authority or rights of ownership or entitlement and they are not legal land descriptions.

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1.5 Questions and Contact Information

Questions about TIGER/Line Shapefiles obtained from the Census Bureau can be directed to the Geographic Products Branch, Geography Division, U.S. Census Bureau. The TIGER/Line Shapefiles are offered to the public free of charge through the Census Bureau's website. If you obtain the TIGER/Line Shapefiles from a third party, we recommend you contact that vendor for assistance as it is possible that they made changes to the files that we are unaware of or unable to support.

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