



Earlier today, [al.com/The Birmingham News](http://al.com/The_Birmingham_News) reported about the [called work session](#) for the Birmingham Board of Education scheduled to begin at 5:30 p.m. One of the items to be discussed is [Virtual Alabama](#).

So, what is it?

The service has operated internally since 2006 ([and publicly since late 2007](#)), a project that's grown out of the state's department of homeland security. It's built on Google Earth's enterprise solution, meaning it's pretty powerful. It's access is limited to local, county, and state government offices and associated agencies.

What is it capable of doing?

Perhaps this video created in 2008 by Google Business as a case study can help shed some light on what it's done already - and maybe get folks to imagine just what the potential importance to the state will be as it continues to be refined.

[youtube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-1I0JTWiY?w=625>]

[A post published on the Google Enterprise blog back in 2009](#) touts how its gone on to serve as an inspiration to other states. The platform has received increased attention recently, in part due to the tragedy in Newtown, CT, and [its ability to help officials craft a school safety systems](#) for districts statewide. It's something already [utilized by the University of Montevallo](#).