



February 26, 2024

To: Fox Cities Transit Commission
City of Appleton Common Council

From: Ron McDonald, General Manager

Subject: Award Recommendation for Paratransit Scheduling & Dispatch Software (ADA & Ancillary)

BACKGROUND

Valley Transit owns software to assist with the scheduling and dispatch of demand response rides provided by our service contractor (Running Inc). Running Inc staff use the software to manage rides provided under six transportation services/programs: Valley Transit II; Senior Transportation Service; VT Connector; Northern Winnebago Dial A Ride; Outagamie County Rural; and Outagamie County Human Services Transportation. The software helps Running Inc. staff to determine the eligibility of each requested trip, record trip reservations, produce daily manifests for each vehicle, monitor on-time performance, track vehicles, and other operational support. Valley Transit staff use the software to enter eligible riders, access data from each ride, and monitor services provided by Running Inc. The current software was purchased from a vendor named Ecolane in 2019. Valley Transit's 5-year contract with Ecolane expires on July 8, 2024.

In preparation for this procurement, Valley Transit staff developed a request for proposal (RFP) to solicit contractors to provide a scheduling and dispatch software product. The scope of work included required features of the existing software and considered lessons learned from the previous software vendors. City of Appleton IT staff provided input on the data security and storage elements of the scope.

The RFP document was sent directly to vendors who were known scheduling and dispatch software suppliers; posted on the State of Wisconsin's VendorNet system; and advertised online with the *Post-Crescent*, *Oshkosh Northwestern* and *Green Bay Press Gazette*. Proposals were due on January 26, 2024. Six proposals were received. The proposing vendors included: Ecolane USA, Inc. (Wayne, PA); CTS (Swansboro, NC); HBSS (Lowell, MA); IT Curves (Gaithersburg, MD); Spare Labs (Vancouver, BC); and Via Mobility, LLC (New York, NY). All proposals were deemed responsive by meeting the mandatory requirements cited in the RFP.

ANALYSIS

Each proposal was reviewed by the evaluation team based on the proposed solution, experience/qualifications, technical support, training & price. The evaluation team unanimously agreed that the proposals from Ecolane and Via should move forward with the evaluation. Both Ecolane and Via were invited to a demonstration and interview held on February 28, 2024. After

considering all factors, the evaluation team unanimously concluded that Ecolane USA, Inc. (Wayne, PA) had proposed the best value for Valley Transit.

Ecolane's scheduling and dispatch software is used by over 300 agencies in the United States, including several transit properties in Wisconsin. All references provided positive comments and all cited a track record of continual improvements resulting from use of Ecolane's software.

A summary of the tools & features of the new system includes: intuitive and effective scheduling; ability to handle multiple programs with complex service boundaries; cloud-based server; data security measures; effective training & support; web interface for all browsers; detailed client screen; GTFS interface (displays when bus is better option); vehicle tracking; detailed reports & ability to create ad-hoc reports; data integration with Valley Transit's TransTrack database; administrative software with custom user permissions; access to data in established reports or raw format; and proven success at similar sized transit systems. Valley Transit currently uses Ecolane's legacy software product and will transition to Ecolane's new product, called EVOLUTION, this spring.

Since Ecolane is Valley Transit's current provider, there will be no need to purchase new hardware (tablets, power cords or mounting) for Running's fleet of vehicles.

FISCAL IMPACT

The project will have a total year-one fiscal impact of \$27,520, which is within the 2024 budget line item for this software service. The software's annual service fee remains at \$27,520 for years 2-8 of the contract.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends authorization for Valley Transit to enter into an 8-year contract with Ecolane USA, Inc. to provide Scheduling & Dispatch Software according to the amounts listed above.