



MEMORANDUM (revised)

TO: Fox Cities Transit Commission & City of Appleton Common Council

FROM: Ron McDonald, General Manager

DATE: February 24, 2026

RE: Award Recommendation for Data Management System Subscription Extension & Automatic Passenger Counting Certification Support

BACKGROUND

Data Management System: Valley Transit relies on a centralized data management system to organize and manage enterprise-wide data from various sources. Valley Transit's current data management system provider is TransTrack Solutions Group. TransTrack's product manages data from fare collection (Genfare & WisGO), finance (TylerMunis), maintenance (TransitFleet), vehicle location (GMV), contracted paratransit/demand response services (Ecolane), fuel management (FleetWatch), and passenger boarding/alighting counts (GMV). Valley Transit staff directly enter customer feedback, lost & found, sales, operational and safety events, and other data. By merging Valley Transit's data silos into one central data management system, TransTrack's product enables Valley Transit to complete data intensive reports required by the National Transit Database (NTD) and WisDOT. It also enables day-to-day service oversight, performance monitoring, local reporting and data-driven decision making by management. The current agreement with TransTrack ends on 6/30/26.

Automatic Passenger Counting (APC) Certification: All of Valley Transit's buses are equipped with APC sensors above both doors that track rider boarding and alighting data at each bus stop. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has an extensive process to certify these onboard sensors. Valley Transit would like to certify its APC sensors but requires technical support and expert assistance to complete the certification process. Once certified, Valley Transit would be able to utilize the data collected to calculate average passenger miles traveled (PMT) and track ridership.

Every 3 years, Valley Transit is required by the National Transit Database to calculate and report average PMT by service schedule (weekday vs Saturday). The current process requires manually surveying passenger boardings and alights by bus stop at random route times throughout the year. For statistically valid data, staff completes 10 surveys per week over the entire sampling year. Each survey's data is then manually entered into a spreadsheet to ultimately calculate average PMT over the sampled year. This process consumes significant driver and staff resources to complete the surveys (>500), enter data, and compute average PMT. If APC sensors are certified, the data would be automatically calculated in software and eliminate the manual survey process.

Valley Transit currently tracks bus ridership with data supplied from each bus's legacy farebox and WisGO fare system. Ride tracking also includes manual counting by drivers for rides that are not automatically tracked by one of the fare systems. Manual counting is also relied upon when the fare system has a temporary failure. A concern of manual ride counting is inconsistency and accuracy. Many transit systems experience an undercounting of ridership when a manual process is used. If APC sensors are certified, Valley Transit can use boarding data from the door sensors to count ridership, which has been found to be more accurate than manual ridership counting. As a component of the APC sensor certification, Valley Transit would establish statistician-approved benchmark data to ensure a high degree of accuracy.

ANALYSIS

Valley Transit reviewed costs and options to maintain the current data management system software; and engage a contractor to help with the APC sensor certification. TransTrack has effectively managed Valley Transit's centralized database since 2021. Over this time, Valley Transit has changed some of the integrated software products and TransTrack has been able to maintain data imports and data integrity for each new system. TransTrack has an existing APC module used by other transit system clients, as well as, support services to develop APC sensor certification paperwork for FTA review. TransTrack has continued to be a responsible and responsive vendor for Valley Transit.

Valley Transit recommends a sole source purchase to extend use of TransTrack's data management system and include TransTrack's APC certification services. The sole source justification is based on a substantial duplication of costs Valley Transit would incur if another vendor was selected. A transition away from TransTrack would require significant investment in resources and staff time to implement a new data system and re-establish data imports from supporting software. There would also be costs to migrate all of Valley Transit's existing data over to a new product. The sole source justification was reviewed and approved by COA purchasing staff.

Since Valley Transit is a current customer of TransTrack, the data management system subscription extension would not require added transition, training or implementation costs. For the APC sensor certification project, the FTA's process requires an observation period when sensor data is analyzed to confirm accuracy and the resulting data is deemed statically valid. TransTrack provides all specialized support, including a qualified statistician, to file certification paperwork and comply with FTA requirements. The APC certification process is anticipated to take 7 months from kick-off to completion.

This project aligns with Valley Transit's 2020 Transit Development Plans. The TDP specifically mentions upgrades to the automatic passenger counter system for state/federal government reporting.

FISCAL IMPACT

The year-one annual subscription cost of TransTrack data management system would be \$70,346. After project year-one, the annual subscription cost increases 5% each year of the 8-year agreement. The total 8-year subscription cost would be \$671,742. The APC certification process has a one-time cost of \$44,950.

Valley Transit requests a 15% contingency for any unknown costs during implementation. This brings the total year-one implementation cost is \$132,590. The total 8-year project cost is \$733,986. Existing federal grants would cover 80% of total project cost. The remaining cost would be expensed from Valley Transit's annual budgets.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends authorization for Valley Transit to enter an 8-year contract with TransTrack Solutions Group (Cedar Rapids, IA) to provide a data management system and automatic passenger counting certification process support.