



Date: March 21, 2019

To: City of Appleton Common Council
Fox Cities Transit Commission

From: Ron McDonald *REM*

Award Recommendation to Replace Scheduling & Dispatch Software

BACKGROUND

Valley Transit owns scheduling and dispatch software, which is used by staff and our paratransit contractor (Running Inc) to manage daily demand response trips. The software manages data for rides provided under four transportation services/programs: Valley Transit II; Senior Transportation Service; The Connector; and Outagamie County Human Services Transportation. Valley Transit staff uses the software to enter eligible riders, track data from each ride, view reports and monitor services provided by Running Inc. Running Inc uses the software to determine the eligibility of each requested trip, record trip reservations and produce daily manifests for each vehicle. The current software, called NOVUS – PASS, was purchased in 2001 and has surpassed its useful life. This software has many weaknesses that are expected from a product that is nearly 2 decades old. For example, the system does not use in-vehicle tablets, which severely limits the resulting data, does not provide vehicle tracking, cannot support real-time adjustments to vehicle manifests and reduces the overall effectiveness of the service.

In preparation for this procurement, Valley Transit staff began formulating a request for proposal (RFP) to solicit contractors to provide a new scheduling and dispatch software product. As part of this process staff reviewed RFP documents used by other transit systems that recently purchased similar software. The scope of work also took into consideration lessons learned from the previous software. Valley Transit required a software solution that was easy for staff to maintain and included the following features: cloud-based server; onboard tablet; improved reporting; increased on-time performance; increased install and acceptance terms; and proven success at similar sized transit systems. All of these issues were incorporated into the RFP document for consideration and review during the evaluation process.

The RFP document was sent directly to vendors who were known demand response software suppliers; posted on the State of Wisconsin's Vendornet system; and advertised online with the *Post-Crescent* and *Passenger Transport* (transit publication). Proposals were due on February 27, 2019. Three proposals were received: Ecolane USA, Inc. (Wayne, PA); CTS (Swansboro, NC); and HBSS (Lowell, MA). All proposals met the mandatory requirements in response to the RFP.



ANALYSIS

An evaluation team was assembled to review the proposals. Each proposal was evaluated by the evaluation team based on the proposed solution, experience/qualifications, technical support, training & price. City of Appleton IT and planning/GIS staff were consulted on the system specification and applicable elements within each proposal received. The evaluation team agreed that one of the three vendors was able to move forward with the evaluation. This vendor was then invited to a demonstration and interview on March 14, 2019. After considering all factors, the evaluation team unanimously concluded that Ecolane USA, Inc. (Wayne, PA) had proposed the best solution for Valley Transit.

Ecolane's scheduling and dispatch software is used by over 150 transit agencies in 25 states, including three properties in Wisconsin. All references checked came back with very positive comments and all cite a track record of continual service improvements (rides/hour) resulting from use of Ecolane's software.

A summary of the tools & features of the new system includes: 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; administrative software with custom user permissions; and access to data in established reports or raw format.

FISCAL IMPACT

Valley Transit's 2019 budget includes \$250,000 for this project. The project will have a total year-one fiscal impact of \$188,074, which is 25% under budget. The project includes an additional support agreement for project years 2-5 with an annual fee of \$7,399.68.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends authorization for Valley Transit to enter into a 5-year contract with Ecolane USA, Inc. to provide Scheduling & Dispatch Software according to the amounts listed above.