
Technical Advisory Committee

Monday, February 13, 2017

Regular Session

Item H4

Approval Recommendation of Consultant Selection for Regional Transit Needs and Feasibility Study

The 2017 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) includes the work activity for the MPO and a selected consultant to undertake a Transit Needs Assessment for the Grand Island Urban area. In October 2016, the City of Grand Island released a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to seek a consultant to provide professional services for performing a Regional Transit Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study. The City received four proposals from the following firms – Felsburg Holt & Ullevig, Olsson Associates, SRF Consulting Group, Inc., and Wilson & Company. Olsson Associates was selected through the consultant selection process. The City has reached an agreement on scope and fee with Olsson Associates.

Staff Contact: Allan Zafft, MPO Program Manager

Scope of Work

Regional Transit Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study

Task 1: Public Involvement

Deliverables:

- Public Involvement Plan
- Presentations, public notifications, and informational materials for meetings and outreach activities
 - Documentation of public involvement process and input received
- Updated study contact list

The Public Involvement Plan will provide information regarding the focus groups, Interested Parties, stakeholder meetings and public outreach activities to be conducted throughout the study timeframe. Three rounds of public input, engaging the above groups, will be conducted at major milestones during the study. Focus groups represent a group of persons typically with similar background or themes, such as major employers. The focus group meetings typically include from 5 to 20 people during one meeting session. Stakeholders include specific persons or person within the region to contact individually or in small numbers to discuss the study purpose and goals. Stakeholders would include City/MPO staff directly involved with the study, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and other individuals to be identified with the local project team.

- 1st public meeting with Interested Parties and general public will occur before the upcoming focus group meetings
 - Discuss project scope, schedule, established vision/goals
 - Notify representatives to attend focus groups
- Up to three rounds of focus groups and stakeholder interviews
 - Round 1 – Discuss transit needs/demand for service and possible partnering opportunities
 - Round 2 – Input on transit alternatives
 - Round 3 – Input on preferred alternative which is fiscally constrained
- 2nd public meeting with Interested Parties and general public will be scheduled separately from Round 3 of public engagement
 - Input on Final Draft Report

The first round of public open house meetings will be held in March 2017, assuming the Notice to Proceed is executed in February 2017. For each round of public engagement, Olsson will prepare display boards and a brief questionnaire allowing attendees to submit thoughts and ideas for future transit services in Hall County and Grand Island. Olsson will be responsible for preparing materials for meeting notices and meeting minutes.

An extensive list of stakeholders was developed for the GIAMPO LRTP. Olsson, in coordination with the local project team, will review that information and build a comprehensive list of contact persons for this regional transit study. This list is the beginning step to arranging several groups to meet with and

discuss the transit study. From that contact list, we will identify stakeholders and focus group opportunities. We will work with the local project team to identify the best mechanism for outreach to the disabled, LEP communities, and underrepresented groups. Meetings will be approximately 60-minutes for each public engagement group. The meetings will be held on concurrent days during the specified outreach days, as directed by the local project team.

Olsson Associates will prepare online materials for the Regional Transit Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study. The materials will be available for the City's website. It is recommended a link be established on the City's website for the study. Olsson will work with local IT staff to determine the appropriate file structure best for posting information and for receiving information from the community.

A community survey will be developed for the project, both online and hardcopy. Olsson will not have leading questions incorporated into the survey. The purpose of the community survey is to assist in the identification of transit needs and gaps for service in the next five years. Olsson will also develop a survey for the transit riders using the service today. The Hall County Public Transportation (Senior Citizens Industries, Inc.) staff will administer and collect the completed surveys. Olsson will compile and summarize the results for both surveys.

During preliminary discussions with the local project team, tentative interested parties were identified and will be invited to participate in public engagement activities, such as focus groups and public meetings. The interested parties will not have a leadership role. City staff and/or the TAC will provide guidance to the consultant team throughout the study timeframe. A preliminary list of interested parties is shown below. These will be reviewed and adjusted as needed.

1. United Way
2. County Supervisor
3. Chamber
4. Department of Health
5. Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee
6. School District Transportation
7. City Council
8. Mayor
9. Transit Providers
10. College
11. NDOR
12. Downtown Business Improvement District
13. MPO/City
14. County

Focus Groups will also be conducted as part of the Regional Transit Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study. Preliminary groups are listed below. As the stakeholder list is revisited, groups will be formed as appropriate.

1. Major employers
2. Transportation Providers
3. Elected Officials
4. Educational institutions
5. Elderly Services and Residential sites
6. Faith-based Community

Olsson will prepare a formal letter to welcoming participation from interested parties in the community. The letter will be signed by representatives from the local project team and sent to representatives agencies on appropriate letterhead. In addition, prior to sending the formal letter, members of the local project team will contact interested parties to give a brief introduction to the study and request their assistance on the Committee. Olsson will provide the verbiage for the short introduction to the study.

Task 2: Transit Vision, Goals, Objectives

Deliverables:

- 5-Year Transit Vision Statement
- Study Goals

A clear 5-year vision statement and well-defined study goals will be developed by Olsson in coordination with the local project team. The vision statement and goals are important for identifying and analyzing reasonable transit concepts. They serve as the primary criteria used to develop, evaluate, select, and prioritize service improvements. The first round of public engagement will provide the basis for the development of the 5-year vision and goals for the study. Sample goals are shown below.

- Getting the transit programming up and running in compliance with 5307 FTA requirements (i.e. paperwork)
- Cost efficient and cost effective program
- Maximize current revenue (federal and local)
- Funding partnerships

Task 3: Existing Transit Assessment

Deliverables:

- Transit Provider Profile
- Assessment of Existing Transit Services

The purpose of Task 3 is to analyze the existing transit agencies providing service in the region. Olsson will provide an analysis of the current public transit providers within Hall County and Grand Island. We

will review service days, service hours, peak service, and vehicle utilization. Olsson will obtain, organize, and review available data and reports pertaining to the existing public transit providers. These data may include:

- Historical ridership data
- Average ridership by time of day
- Itemized annual operating expenses and revenue trends
- Budget projects
- Annual revenue hours and revenue miles trends
- Farebox data
- Transit supervisor data pertaining to ontime performance, if available
- Previous customer survey data
- Current schedules
- Organizational chart
- Average boarding data, identifying high activity transit locations
- Previous quarterly reports to NDOR
- Public transit data included in the City/County departments
- Transit maps
- Service area
- Fare structure
- Fleet data, including age, mileage, replacement year, accessibility
- Maintenance arrangements
- Annual customer service data for requests, complaints, etc.
- Facility data, including structures, age, annual maintenance
- Reservation and scheduling procedures
- Daily or weekly call volume
- Marketing plan
- Existing communications equipment, technologies in place, and future plans

Olsson will conduct ride-alongs and site visits on the transit buses and to the contractor agency offices, as appropriate. We will interact with transit riders and staff for the services. Once these data are collected for Hall County Public Transportation (Senior Citizens Industries, Inc.) and for the other transit providers in Hall County, a profile for each agency will be developed to understand the level of public transportation services are available to residents. We will use this information to develop strategies, if applicable, for better coordination among the agencies.

Olsson will collect and review annual, quarterly or monthly operations reports for the previous three years. We will also review existing policies, procedures, and performance standards currently in place for all transit services. We will document current staffing for management and operations positions.

A peer review will be conducted for comparative review of communities of similar-size. Up to five peer communities will be identified for review. Olsson shall determine how other communities are addressing their transit needs. The review will include the types of transit service existing within the community, transit governance structure, funding, community population, number/types of transit providers, riders, and the community characteristics.

Task 4: Market Assessment/Transit Demand

Deliverables:

- Transit Demand for the Region (Maps and Summary)
- Market Analysis and Community Profile (Maps and Summary)
- Technical Memo 1 – Existing Conditions, inclusive of Tasks 1 - 4

U.S. Census data, along with quantitative and qualitative data gathered in the preceding tasks, will be used to determine the need for transit service in the Grand Island region. Data compiled will help identify existing and future transit demand. Understanding the community dynamic and Census statistics allows the team to assess future transit services for those areas indicating a high transit need.

It is important to establish with the community that transit demand is not the same as transit need. Transit demand is defined as the number of passenger trips to be taken when a given level of passenger transportation service is available. Gauging transit need is different than estimating demand for transit services. Needs will always be greater than demand. A common methodology for quantifying need is the Mobility Gap methodology.

To gauge the transit demand, one common best practice to be used in conjunction with peer analysis is the national report, *2016 Estimating Ridership of Rural Demand-Response Transit Services for the General Public*.¹ This report builds from a previous report, TCRP Report 161, which focused on program and non-program transit trips.

In addition to the above methodology, Olsson will complete transit demand estimates using population and existing transportation programs from peer agencies, using passenger trips per capita, which typically relates to population density and land use patterns. Future service alternatives will be developed based upon the transit demand and needs for the area. These may include demand response service, similar to today, flex routes, express routes, fixed routes, coordination of existing services, etc.

The market analysis begins with collecting socio-economic, demographic, land use, and travel pattern data for Grand Island region. We will analyze how these data relate or “match up” with the existing public transit services. Olsson will identify major activity centers, street/roadway networks, and community characteristics. Quantitative and qualitative data gathered will determine the need for transit service in Hall County. A comparative review of community transit need vs. available transit service will be conducted to determine the degree of unmet transit need. Developing transit service alternatives aimed at addressing this unmet need will then be the focus for the next tasks of the study.

Data compiled within this task will identify existing and future transit demand, as well as provide guidance on appropriate modes to meet that demand (such as demand response, flex routes, express routes, fixed routes, increased coordination of existing services, etc.) within the study area.

¹ <http://www.nctr.usf.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/21177060-NCTR-NDSU08.pdf>

Task 5: Transit Alternatives

Deliverables:

- Transit alternatives for Grand Island and Hall County

The Olsson team, in coordination with the local project team, will develop realistic 5-year transit service alternatives aimed at addressing specific goals and objectives relating to providing transit service and meeting unmet transit needs within Hall County in the context of transit coverage versus transit performance and transit convenience versus transit cost-effectiveness. This effort will build upon the current and forecasted transit demand identified in the market analysis of Task 4.

Attention will be paid to identifying specific transit service types that best meet identified needs and will include discussing coordination strategies that local transportation providers can participate in to improve the overall transportation within the region. Non-traditional, innovated alternatives may also be evaluated, which would include, among other modes, discussing taxi programs, route deviation, rideshare programs, or real-time demand response for residents throughout the region.

Along with alternatives, the service cost of each transit type and service level will be developed. The method of determining the costs will be documented. This will include the advantages and disadvantages of each method of addressing unmet transit demand to provide the most cost-effective transit service to fill the transportation gaps of residents accessing civic buildings, accessing major employment areas, medical services and other areas.

Task 6: Operations Management

Deliverables:

- Operations Management Assessment
- Technical Memo 2 – Transit Alternatives, Tasks 5-6

Olsson will research the advantages and disadvantages of using a contractor for service versus operating the service in-house. This section is important for the next step after the City's current bridge contract with Senior Citizens Industries, Inc. We will also provide a brief overview of recent nationwide research projects discussing the best practices for transit management. We will document the most common reasons for transit agencies to contract services and the primary reasons to retain services in-house. Olsson will explore the multiple ways service can be contracted out and provide common guidelines for contracting should the city maintain contractors in the future. In addition, Olsson will discuss management options for the City of Grand Island, such as a regional transportation authority. An authority in the state of Nebraska currently has limitations due to state statute; however, efforts are underway to change the statute. Olsson will identify current efforts and how that may impact Grand Island.

Task 7: Preferred Transit Alternative

Deliverables:

- 5-Year Preferred Transit Alternative
- Technical Memo 3 – Preferred Alternative, Task 7

Olsson will evaluate the alternatives presented in Task 5 and develop the preferred transit alternatives for the next 5 years. These preferred alternatives will be selected based on their ability to address the community's preferences related to transit coverage, performance, convenience, and cost-effectiveness. This task will result in an evaluated and prioritized list of recommended transit services, capital projects, and coordination strategies in which transportation providers can participate to improve the overall transportation within the region, as well as recommendations for new transit services in Hall County and Grand Island.

Olsson will develop a sustainable budget that outlines the most desirable funding structure for the transit service preferred alternative. This will include identifying potential funding sources and describing how the funds will be used. The plan will offer recommendations for enhancing transit services, aimed at addressing more immediate transportation needs within the county. The budget will include a detailed operating and capital plan for implementing recommendations based on information provided by the local project team on reasonable expectations for capital and operating revenues during this time.

Any enhanced transit service in the preferred alternative will have cost estimations and suggested funding partnerships. In addition, capital cost elements, including facilities and other infrastructure that might be required, estimated fleet requirements, and any applicable technological systems, will be determined.

The 5-year plan will describe the transit system in that timeframe and the costs to operate. The Olsson team will identify processes and mechanisms necessary to move forward with the plan by developing an Implementation Plan. This will include recommended prioritization of transit service elements and sequencing of service initiation. Details related to operational characteristics, service types, management, capital requirements, scheduling, funding, training, marketing, interagency agreements, contracts, and monitoring will be included in the Implementation Plan.

Task 8: Draft/Final Report

Deliverables:

- Draft Final Report
- Final Report

The Olsson team will compile the three Technical Memoranda into a Draft Final Report, which will include all graphics and narratives from the previous reports. This report will be written in non-technical language so as to be understandable to a diverse audience. Digital versions of the draft report will be

provided to the local project team, who will have the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report. Comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

The final report will clearly state existing transit service, transit demand, transit alternatives, and the preferred transit alternatives for the next five years. The final study will reflect all of the previous task efforts and input during the study timeframe.

Project Management

Deliverables:

- Project Management Plan
- Monthly Status Reports

Olsson is prepared to manage this project through a process of open and frequent communication, including progress reports and regularly scheduled conference calls. Corinne Donahue or Matt Rief will be your primary contacts for this study.

The project Kickoff Meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 2017. To initiate the study, Olsson staff will meet with the local project team to introduce the study, identify roles/responsibilities, goals/objectives, and listen to any local questions or challenges for the study. We will discuss data and mapping needs and present a tentative plan for public engagement. Feedback from the Kickoff Meeting will be incorporated into the Project Management Plan and the Public Involvement Plan, which will be presented to the local project team for approval.

The Project Management Plan will identify members of both the study team and the consultant team, and their roles in the project. A priority task will be to establish communication links and information processes that are necessary for the success of the study. Project conference calls will be held via conference call approximately every two weeks to discuss ongoing activities for the project. Olsson will be responsible for hosting meetings and for preparation/distribution of meeting minutes.

Progress reports will be submitted monthly. These reports will include completed work to date for each task and work expected to be performed in the next month. The report will also request any outstanding data requests or questions that Olsson has for the local project team.

Specific presentations of the transit study at appropriate key milestones will be coordinated with the local project team. These include presentation to:

- GIAMPO Technical Advisory Committee
- GIAMPO Policy Board
- Hall County Board of Supervisors
- City of Grand Island City Council

The Public Involvement Plan will provide additional information on the three rounds of public input, which will be conducted at major milestones during the study. Three rounds of public input will be conducted at major milestones during the study. Focus groups represent a group of persons typically with similar background or themes, such as major employers. The focus group meetings typically include from 5 to 20 people during one meeting session. Stakeholders include specific persons or person within the region to contact individually or in small numbers to discuss the study purpose and goals. Stakeholders would include City/MPO staff directly involved with the study, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and other individuals to be identified with the local project team.

- 1st public meeting with Interested Parties and general public will occur before the upcoming focus group meetings
 - Discuss project scope, schedule, established vision/goals
 - Notify representatives to attend focus groups
- Up to three rounds of focus groups and stakeholder interviews
 - Round 1 – Discuss transit needs/demand for service and possible partnering opportunities
 - Round 2 – Input on transit alternatives
 - Round 3 – Input on preferred alternative which is fiscally constrained
- 2nd public meeting with Interested Parties and general public will be scheduled separately from Round 3 of public engagement
 - Input on Final Draft Report

Olsson will meet with up to 10 focus groups and stakeholders during the three rounds of public engagement. The meeting dates and times will be determined closer to the dates and near the key milestones. The proposed schedule is shown on the following page. This schedule and timeframe for the study will be adjusted as needed by the local project team.

Olsson will provide electronic copies of all reports/presentations, spreadsheets, databases, and any other relevant electronic materials. These will be in a format suitable (i.e. PDF, Microsoft Word, GIS) for archiving by the City of Grand Island.

Schedule

