

Berrien County Transit Consolidation Feasibility Study RFP

Questions Received:

1. Has a DBE goal been set for the Berrien County Transit Coordination Study?

Answer: SWMPC participates in MDOT's DBE (disadvantaged business enterprise) program. The RFP was mailed to consultants who are registered with MDOT as DBEs. SWMPC does not have a percentage goal for the Berrien County Transit Coordination Study, but would like to encourage the prime contractor to subcontract to DBEs. DBEs can be searched on MDOT's website at <http://mdot270.state.mi.us:8080/UCP/HomePageServlet>.

2. How many reproducible copies and how many copies of the document are required? Can they be spiral-bound or bound in another way besides with staples?

Answer: If the question is referring to the RFP, one reproducible and seven copies, all paper-clipped.

3. Is it acceptable for the copies to be printed double sided?

Answer: Yes.

4. Is there a page limit?

Answer: No, but please keep it concise and to-the-point!

5. What factors are contributing to the project time of just over two years?

Answer: The breadth of the project scope and the length of the project authorization period.

6. Would SWMPC be open to a shorter project time period?

Answer: Yes, as long as all of the tasks are completed to satisfaction.

7. Please clarify the timelines for completing this study. The RFP (page 3) refers to study products and deliverables, one of which is a detailed work plan for the *three year planning process*. Are you anticipating this study will take three years to complete?

Answer: The timeline for the study is approximately two and a half years, from late spring or summer 2011 until September 30, 2013. The anticipated timeline for the study is based upon the breadth of the project scope and the length of the project authorization period.

- 8. The length of the project period (29 months) seems long. Does this schedule anticipate that the consultant's services would be "front loaded" (largely provided earlier in the project) with some assistance provided for a phased implementation over the entire period of the project?**

Answer: See above three answers for the reasons behind the projected timeline for the project. There's no current projection that the work will be "front loaded." It will be agreed upon in the contract how much of the contract amount will be paid out in each term. Ultimately, the way in which the study is conducted will be up to the discretion of the consultant. The steering committee will meet regularly with the consultant and will provide assistance with outreach to stakeholders. The consultant's work does not include implementation of the study, but it will include providing a detailed implementation plan as a final work product.

- 9. Would consultants be able to visit or call SWMPC and/or the transit operators before submitting a proposal?**

Answer: A proposing consultant could certainly set up an appointment to meet with the SWMPC staff and ask questions regarding the RFP or the project.

A representative of each transit agency will be involved in the consultant selection process and will be present at the interviews. The question of individual visits to the transit providers would be entirely up to the proposer. The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission staff will not provide any information to an individual proposer that would not be ready available to all.

- 10. Have the representatives of the steering committee / review committee / selection committee been designated? If so, can you let us know their agency affiliations?**

Answer: Yes, the selection committee has been formed. The steering committee that will be working with the consultant throughout the project period will likely be the same committee, although other members of the Berrien County Coordinated Transportation Coalition will likely provide assistance throughout the process. The selection committee includes representation from each of the public transit agency service areas (City of Niles, Community Development Director; City of Buchanan, Manager; Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority, Director; County of Berrien, Transportation Coordinator) and one representative from the area with no transit service (Lincoln Township, Township Supervisor).

- 11. Did any consulting firms assist with either the Berrien County Transit-Human Services Coordination Study or the Berrien County Transit Study?**

Answer: No, they were conducted by SWMPC staff.

12. Would SWMPC be open to alternative approaches to accomplishing the project?

Answer: Yes, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission would like to encourage innovative approaches. The proposal must give a sufficient explanation of how the outlined approach would adequately accomplish the goals and deliverables outlined in the RFP, as well as explanation of why the approach differs from that outlined in the RFP, where applicable.

13. Do you have a set overhead rate for startup firms?

Answer: No. It may be best for the proposer to consult with existing firms of a comparable size to come up with an estimate.

14. If our firm does not have an overhead rate bid proposal, can we get permission to submit an hourly rate plus direct cost proposal?

Answer: The proposal will have to include the best estimate possible for the total project cost. The contract will include a cap on how much of the total amount can be paid out per billing period, and that amount will be nonnegotiable.

15. If a firm is already working on another transit-related study in Berrien County, would the firm be disqualified for fear of conflict of interest?

Answer: No. The other work in the area must be disclosed, however.

16. What is the impetus for conducting the consolidation feasibility study at this time?

Answer: This study was the next step identified by the Berrien Coordinated Transportation Coalition, needed to address the findings of the Berrien County Coordinated Transit – Human Services Plan and the Berrien County Transit Study. See page(s) 39-40 and 49-50 in Berrien County Transit Study. http://www.swmpc.org/downloads%5Cfinal_berrien_transit_study.pdf

17. How is the study being funded?

Answer: Through a Statewide Planning & Research grant from MDOT, with funds from the Federal Transit Administration and local match from the Consortium 4 Community Development.

- 18. According to the May 2009 Berrien County Transit Study, the four transit agencies use a mix of manual and automated processes for scheduling and dispatching. Can you identify the software package (s) currently being used and by which agency (ies)?**

Answer: The four transit agencies have purchased Dial-A-Ride Online, a web based software. Currently there is one system utilizing the software. <http://www.dial-a-ride-online.com/>

- 19. Is there universal support among the four transit agencies for consolidation, or is it anticipated that potential benefits or drawbacks would be explored through this study?**

Answer: It is expected that the study will explore anticipated benefits and drawbacks of various levels of coordination or consolidation as they affect each transit agency's budget, capital assets, operations, and level of service. It is not known to what extent various levels of consolidation will be supported, but the study was deemed necessary by the Berrien Coordinated Transportation Coalition, which has representatives from each of the four transit agencies.

- 20. How many different service providers contract for day-to-day operations with the four transit agencies?**

Answer: If this question is referring to transit agency day-to-day operations, Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority conducts its own operations. The other three contract for management and operations. The County of Berrien and the City of Buchanan contract with the same service provider/broker and use a joint dispatching facility and the City of Niles contracts with a separate service provider/broker. See page 50-67 of Berrien County Transit Study, http://www.swmpc.org/downloads%5Cfinal_berrien_transit_study.pdf.

If this question is referring to organizations that contract with the public transit providers for service (e.g., senior centers, workforce development agencies, community organizations, etc.), SWMPC does not have access to that information and it would have to be obtained directly from the transit providers.

- 21. The RFP indicates (page 12, section 8) that "under various circumstances the budget could be subject to review . . ." and is referencing the Federal Acquisition Regulations Systems (48 and 49 CFR). What are the specific terms and conditions that the awarded vendor will be subject to and what is the intent of this section? i.e. is it the SWMPC's intent to (because of the project funding source) be able to comply with these regulations OR is the intent to ensure that the SWMPC has a consistent way to compare costs for level of effort?**

Answer: The purpose of including Section 8 of the RFP is to alert proposers that the process will be subject to review by MDOT and FTA, and therefore must comply with all applicable federal and state regulations. The selection committee will be developing a weighted list of criteria by which the proposers will be evaluated, and the budget proposal will be only one of those factors used.

- 22. The example on pages 14 and 15 does not include profit as one of the required components, thus it would not comply with the cited regulations – again, what is the intent of including section 8?**

Answer: The RFP has been reviewed and approved by MDOT, and the example budget proposal used in the RFP has been provided by MDOT as well as by other organizations that have been through this process. So according to SWMPC's interpretation of the legislation, the budget proposal format used in the RFP is in compliance with the legislation. The purpose of including Section 8 in the RFP is primarily to make the proposers aware of the legislation to which the process is subject.

- 23. Please clarify whether the project will consider coordination only of the 4 public transit providers in the county, or of human service providers as well.**

Answer: The project will consider coordination of human service transportation providers along with the four public transit providers if it makes sense from a funding and operational perspective. The foundation for this has been laid in the Berrien County Transit – Human Services Plan, which is available at http://swmpc.org/transit_study.asp.

- 24. The RFP describes resumes as being included both in the body of the proposal (Point 7, "Management Approach") as well as in Attachment D. In which location should they be included?**

Answer: Attachment D

- 25. Attachment D asks for "one or two relevant work samples." Could you describe more specifically what is desired? Generally, "work samples" would be fairly lengthy reports, but I don't believe that it what you desire.**

Answer: It is up to the discretion of the proposer to select the best method for displaying previous work in a manner that showcases relevant qualifications. Lengthy reports could be made available on a disc or via links to a web page. Eight copies of the work samples are not needed.

- 26. Page 3 of the RFP indicates that "the overarching purpose of the deliverables will be to assist the steering committee members and stakeholders in envisioning a coordinated county wide transit system..." . Should this sentence have read "coordinated" and/ or a consolidated county wide transit system?**

Answer: Yes.

27. Page 6, Physical Asset Analysis, (third bullet) indicates the consultant will review each transit provider's projected capital needs for the next 20 years based upon current and projected levels of services, including but not limited to maintenance and administrative facilities, rolling stock, etc. Considering the current operating environment of transit operations a realistic projection of capital needs in the 3 to 5 year period is much more fact based. Is the SWMPS willing to re-evaluate the need for a review of 20 year projected capital needs with the selected firm? Note the projection of 20 year capital needs of a consolidated operation also is required on page 8.

Answer: Yes, a 3 to 5 year projection could be considered as long as the proposal explains the rationale behind the proposed method. Future considerations must be made beyond 3 to 5 years because it may take longer than 3 to 5 years just to implement the coordination/consolidation option that is chosen.

28. Page 6 , Physical Asset Analysis, (fourth bullet) seeks to identify "current capital opportunities, resources and plans that could be used in support of potential transit consolidation options." Should this bullet point have read "coordination and/ or consolidation options?"

Answer: Yes.

29. Page 7, Task 2: Evaluation of Proposed Options indicates the study will include a detailed analysis of potential options for future transit service scenarios, including considerations of the following:

- **Cooperation / Coordination of existing providers.**
- **Consolidation of service providers.**
- **Consolidation to a single county-wide service providers.**

Please clarify the difference / distinction between the second and third bullet points?

Answer: Certain elements of service provision could be consolidated without consolidating the four transit agencies completely into a single agency. The creation of the scenarios will be up to the consultant, with input from the steering committee.

30. Page 9, Task 3: Guidance and Implementation Document – Steering Committee Support (first bullet) seeks identification of "fatal flaws" of a consolidation option and determining if other alternatives can be developed. Should the "fatal flaws" review be undertaken for all of the coordination and consolidation options?

Answer: Yes.

31. Pages 11 and 12 of the RFP describe how the Proposal should be organized. Under Item 4. Detailed Work Plan, it notes that "This section should include the following components: ". There are no other components listed under Item 4. Can we assume that Items 5 and 6 are a subset or components of Item 3 and that Items 9, 10 and 11 are to be included under Item 8. Budget and Billing?

Answer: Yes.