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Agenda Item: 2 E

Date: 3/20/14



Supplemental Information Packet

Agenda Related Items – 2 E

Supplemental Packet Date: March 18, 2014

Item(s)

Award a contract in the amount of \$1,481,230 to Parsons Brinkerhoff, Inc. (PB) for a revised FAX Q Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project management services agreement – Department of Transportation (FAX)

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CITY CLERK, FRESNO CA

DATE: March 18, 2014

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR ASHLEY SWEARENGIN
CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT STEVE BRANDAU
CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

FROM: BRUCE RUDD, City Manager 

SUBJECT: CONTRACT TO PARSONS BRINKERHOFF, INC. (PB) FOR THE
REVISED FAX Q BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT) PROJECT
MANAGEMENT SERVICES AGREEMENT

Attached is a revised staff report that provides clarification related to grant funding provided by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which is used to purchase new buses (page 3, Project Description).

Date: March 20, 2014

AGENDA ITEM NO. **2 E**
COUNCIL MEETING: 3/20/14
APPROVED BY _____

DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR _____

CITY MANAGER 

FROM: BRUCE A. RUDD, City Manager/Interim Director
Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: Award a contract in the amount of \$1,481,230 to Parsons Brinkerhoff, Inc. (PB) for the revised FAX Q Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project management services agreement – Bid File No. 3288

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Council award a contract in the amount of \$1,481,230 to PB for project management services for the design, engineering and construction of a revised Blackstone and Ventura/Kings Canyon BRT Project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On January 30, 2014, the Fresno City Council elected not to approve two contracts that would complete the design and engineering work, as well as hiring a firm to provide project management services for a proposed 15.7 mile BRT project. The proposed BRT project is intended to complement the City's General Plan Update, which assumes reductions in vehicle miles traveled and related emissions (i.e., greenhouse, nitrous oxides, particulate matter) through rehabilitation of existing neighborhoods, increased densities in new growth areas, the use of public transportation or other alternative modes of transportation, and incentivizing housing close to transit areas. While the items were not approved, a number of Councilmembers indicated support for the project if changes were made to the scope of work. Others also expressed an interest in improving service levels on other routes, specifically Shaw Avenue.

Staff has reviewed the proposed scope of work, as well as the capital costs for vehicles and bus stations, and has determined that the project can still provide the same level of convenience and efficiencies as originally envisioned, but at a cost that is approximately \$13.5 million lower than the previous iteration. The savings in capital costs also provide a unique opportunity to complement this project by augmenting service levels along a five mile segment of Shaw Ave. The ability to fund improve service levels along Shaw Avenue can be accomplished by reallocating funds that were needed to match the original Blackstone and Ventura/Kings Canyon BRT Project and leveraging other grants and investments already made by the City.

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BACKGROUND

On January 30, 2014, the Fresno City Council chose not to approve two contracts related to the Fresno Area Express' (FAX) proposed Q BRT Project. During what were extensive deliberations regarding the project, a number of Councilmembers also indicated that they would support the project if changes could be made to reduce the overall cost. In addition to lowering the cost of the project, some Councilmembers also expressed a desire to improve the level of service for other routes operated by FAX, specifically Shaw Avenue.

Since that time, staff has reviewed the different cost components associated with the project and **has identified changes that would reduce the capital cost of the project by approximately \$13.5 million.** While these changes reduce the cost of the project, none of them would compromise the intent of the project, which was to provide a level of service that will be more convenient and efficient than the existing service.

The revised FAX Q BRT Project, and subsequent cost reductions, has also provided a unique chance to augment service levels along a five mile segment of Shaw Avenue that would operate between California State University Fresno (CSUF) and West Avenue. The introduction of BRT along the Blackstone and Ventura/Kings Canyon corridors, complemented by improvements in service along Shaw Avenue, are consistent with the City's General Plan Update, which calls for reductions in vehicle miles traveled by rehabilitating properties and filling in vacant and underutilized parcels along the transit corridors. The frequencies along the proposed segment of Shaw Avenue would be the same as what will be provided along the original Blackstone and Kings Canyon/Ventura BRT corridors. The seven new 40 foot buses needed for this service would be identical to those used on the Blackstone and Kings Canyon/Ventura BRT corridors.

For Shaw Avenue, buses would serve existing bus stops located at half mile intervals, including West Avenue, Palm Avenue, Maroa, Blackstone, Fresno Street, Angus, First Street, Sixth, Cedar and Maple Avenues. The new, limited stop service, would operate in addition to the current service that operates on 30 minute frequencies that operates along Shaw Avenue from Willow Avenue to west of State Route 99. Existing bus stops will be upgraded with newer shelters and would include many of the features that will be found at BRT stations located along the Blackstone and Ventura/Kings Canyon BRT corridors. Traffic signal priority will be achieved by traffic synchronization investments already in place along Shaw Avenue.

Funding for buses, improvements to bus stops and traffic signal priority integration will be funded by reallocating grant funds originally dedicated to the original Blackstone and Ventura/Kings Canyon BRT Project and/or by using other grant funds currently available for these purposes. For example, the original FAX Q BRT Project included a \$3 million grant from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to purchase three articulated BRT buses. These grant dollars will no longer be needed to support the Revised Q BRT Project and could be used to purchase six new 40 foot buses that would be used to support new service along Shaw Avenue.

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It is estimated that the annual operating cost of providing the new service along Shaw Avenue would be approximately \$1.27 million. In an abundance of fiscal conservatism, as is the case with the Blackstone and Kings Canyon/Ventura BRT service, the revised pro forma (Attachment A) does not assume any increases in ridership from new passengers or changes in travel patterns from existing customers due to the improved levels of service. While staff is confident that the improved levels of service will increase ridership, the attached pro forma assumes no increase in ridership to ensure that in a "worst case" scenario, the FAX Department could still absorb the additional operating costs of BRT as well as enhanced service along Shaw Avenue once the initial grant funds are expended.

It should be noted though that the construction of housing units at Campus Pointe/CSUF is already underway. The Department is also in discussions with representatives from CSUF to implement a student pass program that takes advantage of a new farebox system recently installed in all FAX buses. It is anticipated that both of these variables, in conjunction with other land use changes, will also provide opportunities that will result in an increase in ridership and operating revenues.

In the interim, staff is also pursuing Federal grant funds that would be used to fund the operating cost of this service for three years and expects to know if the Department is successful within the next 30 days.

REVISED FAX Q BRT Project: Project Description

The original FAX Q BRT Project operated along a 15.7-mile BRT line connecting the major north-south corridor (Blackstone Avenue) and a major east-west corridor (Ventura Avenue and Kings Canyon Road). Staff has evaluated the scope of work and associated capital cost originally contemplated for the project and has identified revisions that would reduce the cost of the project without compromising the ability to improve service levels as well as operational efficiencies. These revisions, and subsequent savings, could be used to fund a comparable level of service along a five mile segment of Shaw Avenue that would operate between Campus Pointe/CSUF and West Avenue.

The revised FAX Q BRT Project is expected to continue to qualify for the \$3 million grant approved by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District under its Public Benefit Grants Program. As discussed, while staff has taken a conservative approach with respect to ridership estimates for fiscal purposes (to demonstrate economic viability of project without projected increased ridership), it is anticipated that the revised project will lead to a significant increase in ridership and associated emissions reductions, along with reduced transit bus emissions, which are consistent with estimates provided to the SJVAPCD as part of the previous grant application process. In fact, by adding the new Shaw Avenue component to this project, emissions reductions are expected to be even greater than previously estimated.

Frequencies/Vehicles

Service frequencies in the morning peak period, from 6:30 to 9:00 a.m., and the afternoon peak period, from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m., are 10-minutes in each direction. Midday service frequency will be reduced to 15-minutes, and late evening service frequency will be 30-minutes. These proposed

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service levels would apply to the Blackstone and Kings Canyon/Ventura BRT corridors as well as the new service along Shaw Avenue. Weekend service levels for all three corridors would be based on 30 minute frequencies.

All three corridors will operate using standard length (40-foot) coaches rather than 60 foot articulated coaches as originally envisioned. **The change in vehicle use will result in a savings of approximately \$7.5 million.** The buses will still utilize special BRT styling and branding and other features designed to accommodate BRT operations.

BRT Stops/Stations

In addition to using 40 foot buses, the revised FAX Q BRT Project will use "at grade" minor bus stations rather than elevated minor stations. This revision will help reduce capital costs and provide flexibility in the event that travel patterns warrant changes to the proposed alignments and station locations. In addition to constructing stations at grade, the Revised FAX Q BRT Project will include minor stations that utilize bus shelters that are readily available from different manufacturers that can be relocated if needed. **The changes in the minor station design and construction are projected to reduce the overall cost of the Revised FAX Q BRT Project by another \$6 million (Attachment B).**

Even with the changes noted above, the Revised FAX Q BRT Project will result in improvements required to increase bus speeds and ensure high schedule adherence. Although the type of vehicle and minor station design has been changed, the Revised FAX Q BRT Project will still include the following features:

- Queue jump lanes at five locations along the alignment (Blackstone and Shields, Blackstone and Stanislaus, Fresno and N Streets, Van Ness Avenue BRT Station, and Abby and Belmont)
- Transit signal priority treatments and signal coordination throughout the BRT corridors
- Station features including: Shelters, boarding platforms, benches, fare machines, and other passenger amenities
- Pre-paid ticketing and proof-of-payment fare verification
- Low-floor, multi-door, low-emission BRT vehicles
- Real time passenger information (information display signs)
- Branding of the service to create a unique identity and image

All of the above features are designed to provide a higher level of service on these transit-intense corridors and create more convenience for the rider by getting them to their destination faster than is possible with the current fixed-route system. The proposed BRT service will be supported by the existing local bus network.

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ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

Council approved the Supplemental Mitigated Negative Declaration (SMND) on January 30, 2014. The SMND is the California environmental Quality Act (CEQA) approval.

LOCAL PREFERENCE

Not applicable as due to the use of Federal funds.

FISCAL IMPACT

Capital funding for the attached contract as well as the revised FAX Q BRT Project is provided through a \$38 million Federal Transit Administration Very Small Starts grant, which is matched using funding from the State of California Proposition IB grant funds. The amount needed to fund the revised scope of work will reduce both the amount of Federal and state funds needed to complete the project.

The annual cost of operating the Blackstone and Kings Canyon/Ventura BRT service is estimated to be approximately \$2.28 million. This is the net difference between the cost of providing BRT service and existing fixed route services. The revised pro forma, which includes the cost of improved service levels along Shaw Avenue, will increase the FAX's operating expenses by \$1.27 million for a total annual increase of approximately \$3.6 million beginning in Fiscal Year 2017. It is projected that prior to the implementation of BRT and Shaw Avenue services the Department will fund a \$9 million operating reserve.

Because FAX operates as an "enterprise" department, meaning that General Fund dollars are not used to provide public transit services, it is essential that an operating reserve is established in order to ensure that the General Fund is not affected by implementation of BRT. As the attached pro forma indicates, FAX services are primarily funded by Federal and state transit funds, and a portion of local Measure C funds that are specifically earmarked to fund public transportation services and cannot be used on other transportation projects.

Attachments: Revised Pro Forma
Letter from Kimley-Horn
Contract