



## Transportation Committee

Meeting Date: October 3, 2019

Agenda Item No. 3

### Next Generation Transit Strategies Request for Qualifications

Action

**Prepared by:** Michael Rosson

**Approved by:** Matt Carpenter

**Attachments:** Yes

#### 1. Issue:

Staff is seeking authorization to release a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for hiring a consultant/team to help develop next generation transit strategies for the region.

#### 2. Recommendation:

That the Transportation Committee recommend that the Board: (1) approve the release of an RFQ for consulting support to develop next generation transit strategies; and (2) authorize the executive director to negotiate and execute a contract with the selected consultant/team.

#### 3. Background/Analysis:

A vital and robust transit system is a key foundation to realizing the performance outcomes of the region's draft 2020 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS). Increases in transit services and the associated trips generated are needed to help the region meet its 19 percent state greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction target by 2035.

At the same time performance targets are increasing, most of the region's transit agencies are experiencing declining ridership and not contemplating significant service expansions. Volatile funding sources, disruptive technologies, and costs increasing while productivity lags, are among the challenges to realizing the MTP/SCS vision of a vital and robust transit system.

Staff released an RFQ for consulting services in 2018, but the response was very limited due to the small budget of \$100,000 available at that time. Since then, staff has secured an additional \$330,000 from California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) for the initiative.

#### 4. Discussion/Analysis:

Staff sees value in hiring a well-qualified consultant/team to collaborate with the board and stakeholders to assess opportunities and challenges that result in strategies to implement the next generation of transit and related mobility services for the region. The project work will be guided by a Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) of business and economic development leaders and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) with a broader range of stakeholders, including transit service providers and experts for specific topic areas.

Attachment A includes a draft scope for the Next Generation Transit RFQ. Transportation Committee input

will inform any refinements to the scope before it is released. With board approval in late October, the RFQ will be released thereafter.

A selection committee will review the proposals and make a recommendation for which consultant/team to hire. The final work scope and contract will be negotiated as an agreement between the selected consultant/team and SACOG as the contract administrator, with input over the course of the project from the board of directors, local agency staff, the Transit Coordinating Committee, and other stakeholders.

**5. Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:**

Funding for the effort is included in SACOG's Overall Work Program. Funding sources include \$100,000 in SACOG core funds and a CalSTA/Caltrans transit planning grant of \$330,000.

**6. This staff report aligns with the following SACOG Work Plan Goals:**

6 - Help the Region Advance a Vision for "Next Generation Transit"

***Draft Scope: Next Generation Transit Strategy Request for Qualifications (RFQ)*****PROJECT SUMMARY AND DESCRIPTION**

Through this RFQ, SACOG is seeking a consultant/team to analyze and recommend strategies for developing a more robust public transportation and mobility system in the SACOG region, given changes in service demand, financial challenges, and advances in technology. The contract for the Next Generation Transit Strategy will be an agreement between SACOG and the consultant, with funding and contract administration to be provided by SACOG. The consultant will invoice SACOG for services rendered and SACOG will compensate the consultant for these services as set forth in the agreement.

Based on the transit challenges that are specific and unique to our six county region, we are seeking a consultant team that can help us articulate a vision for next generation transit and a roadmap to help us get there. Thus SACOG is looking for the following two main deliverables:

**A. Strategic Plan Framework for Next Generation Transit**

Under the direction of a Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the consultant will develop this framework for the six-county SACOG region. SACOG staff will provide background data and analysis support to the advisory committees and the selected consultant on the preparation of this deliverable.

The focus will be on a longer-term vision that describes where our region should aim to go, and a set of shorter-term implementation strategies describing how our region should get there. Timeframes can be flexible and are open to negotiation, but generally the long-term vision should be for 15-20 years, and the short-term implementation strategies should be for 1-5 years. This work will include a definition statement for how the region should define public transit looking forward in an adaptable manner that complements related initiatives by SACOG and regional stakeholders represented on the PAC. Complementary SACOG initiatives include the Innovative Mobility Program and the Economic Prosperity Partnership.

As part of the strategic plan framework, the consultant will develop a brief summary of where traditional public transit is going, and what the future looks like for the success of traditional public transit services given regional changes in technology, land use, demographics, and employment.

**B. Action Plans for Specific Focus Areas**

The strategic plan framework will identify the topics for the consultant to investigate in greater detail. As with the first deliverable, the consultant will receive support from SACOG staff and the work will be directed by the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Initial outreach to stakeholders has identified primary and secondary topics for the consultant to potentially address for this deliverable.

### **Request for Qualifications**

SACOG has chosen to release this RFQ rather than a Request for Proposals (RFP) because of an interest in an iterative process to develop the final project scope. We are seeking a consultant or consultant team with extensive knowledge and experience in analyzing a broad range of transit topics, who can work with us to refine a final scope to provide a strong vision and set of strategies for the region within the project budget.

### **FOCUS AREA TOPICS**

Note that many of the secondary topics closely relate to the two primary ones. We are not expecting the consultant to address all of the identified topics through this project. Instead, we are looking for the consultant to propose priorities for investigation based on the available budget, their expertise, and their knowledge of the industry.

#### **Primary Focus Area Topics:**

- 1. Future customer market segments to pursue and business models to use that support more stable and sustainable funding.** The current mode share for many transit systems in the Sacramento region is small and ridership is either flat or declining. Furthermore, funding outlooks for many transit operators are challenging. That said, the Sacramento region is experimenting with new services including: microtransit; the new Connect Card universal fare card has opened up the convenience of interoperable transit routing to more customers; and new housing developments may get designed with integrated and “built in” transit passes or mobility services. We want to know whether a fundamental part of next generation transit will be developing new passenger markets as well as new business models that can generate more diverse and sustainable streams of funding. Strategies identified should be specific enough for the Sacramento region to be considered for implementation.
- 2. A high-quality bus transit system of regional routes and local services that embrace new technologies, governance models, and public-private partnerships.** The Sacramento region has some fixed rail transit through the light rail system operated by SacRT and heavy rail services along the Capitol Corridor and San Joaquin lines. The region, though, is currently dominated by bus transit routes, many of which are operated on infrequent headways (30 minutes or more). There are some proposals to extend light rail to various parts of the region including the Sacramento International Airport. At the same time, there also seems to be tremendous potential and promise

from a strategy that maximizes bus service using dedicated rights of way, prepaid fares, ITS, and possibly autonomous transit vehicles. New and upcoming tests of the microtransit model also suggest an enthusiasm to try different on-demand models despite concerns over the long-term cost to provide such service. We are looking for the consultant team to provide us a thoughtful and data-driven analysis of the regional bus transit system in the MTP/SCS under development. The objective is to develop refined strategies for realizing a high quality bus transit system for the region's future. Recommendations are sought on the types and frequency of bus transit services we should be providing based on a longer-term vision for next generation transit in the Sacramento region.

**Secondary Focus Area Topics** (budget permitting):

3. **Integrated approaches to regional commute markets.** Commute patterns are increasingly shifting in the SACOG region with the movement to, and growth of jobs in, areas outside of Downtown Sacramento, the region's traditional employment center. Natomas, Roseville, Rancho Cordova, Davis, and Folsom are other large job centers in the core of the region, while Sacramento, Roseville, Rancho Cordova, Folsom, West Sacramento, Elk Grove, and Yuba City/Marysville are all growing employment and population centers. These areas are served by numerous transit systems: SacRT, Roseville Transit, El Dorado Transit, Placer County Transit, Folsom Stage Line, South County Transit Link, Yolobus, Yuba-Sutter Transit, and E-Tran. There is interest among the SACOG Board in looking at new approaches to serving transit markets that may provide for more cost-effective and efficient service delivery options across existing operator's service areas. Policy interests include how to:
  - Create a more seamless regional system for travel between population and job centers where there is sufficient potential ridership.
  - Find the best balance between providing peak or commute service versus off-peak/evening/weekend service.
  - Identify a high-frequency, high-capacity core "regional" transit network and set performance goals for it.
  - Respond in an optimal way to demands for transit services that cross jurisdictions and operator boundaries.
  - Use regional transportation funding programs to encourage the development of a more cohesive regional transit network.
  - Plan transit hubs that support multiple operators, facilitate riders making more seamless transfers, and offer other mobility connections (e.g., local shuttles/circulators, bikeshare, carshare).
  - Capitalize on infrastructure-related opportunities to support faster, more seamless travel, e.g., managed lanes, bus on shoulder, transit signal priority.

4. **Public-Private Partnerships with emerging mobility providers.** As noted, a number of operators are experiencing declining ridership, and the region is also seeing a lack of growth in carpooling and vanpooling. Increasingly, there is interest in the region in additional partnerships with emerging mobility services, such as with on-demand transit, transportation network companies (TNCs), bikeshare, and carshare operators, to provide more transportation options for customers to choose from. Interests include how the region can:
  - Ensure equity considerations are integrated into public/private partnership agreements, e.g. for riders who have disabilities, are low-income, unbanked, or do not use smart phones.
  - Form partnerships to reinforce the strengths of transit agencies.
  - Leverage vehicles controlled by transit agencies and supplementary service providers to fill available seats.
  - Plan for appealing and efficient user experiences.
5. **Serving suburban and rural areas and the future role of land use.** The six-county region has nearly two dozen jurisdictions that were originally developed as cities and towns with walkable 19<sup>th</sup> century grids. However, most of the region grew in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century with a more suburban development pattern, and a large part of the region is currently more rural and lower-density agricultural land. Many jurisdictions are looking to revitalize their older suburbs, areas around existing light rail stations, and older commercial and retail corridors. We would want to know from a consultant team how important land use and population density will be for successfully implementing our vision for next generation transit.
6. **Autonomous vehicles (AVs) for transit fleets and shared mobility pooling.** With new legislation enacted in California to support the testing of fully autonomous AVs, there is growing interest in the SACOG region for how to incorporate autonomous vehicles into the transit fleet. This is a large and technically complex topic that is one of focuses of the aforementioned Smart Region ITS plan. Interests include:
  - Implementation strategies for near-term opportunities to test and pilot transit Avs.
  - Identification of the most effective opportunities in the longer term for autonomous buses and shuttles in the region.
7. **Governance.** With 13 transit operators serving the SACOG region, there are additional opportunities for coordination, consolidation, joint operations, contracting, or other governance and operations structures to provide more cost-effective services and expand transit's appeal. Increasingly, transit operators in the region and elsewhere in the country are interested in new contracting models that may improve service quality for riders and help a transit agency become more financially nimble. Topics of interest include how to:

- Evaluate the most effective long-term agency governance, financial, and operational structures for delivering service in the public's interest.
  - Cultivate shared business practices that improve collaboration and operational efficiencies.
  - Identify regional service delivery collaborations (such as the recent SacRT-YCTD partnership on a UC Davis-Sacramento shuttle) as a means for providing cross-jurisdictional and productive new transit services.
  - Structure regional funding to incentivize system coordination, collaborations, or consolidations where they make sense.
  - Organize regional efforts to forge sustained transit agency partnerships that are built on trust and strong leadership.
  - Create symbiotic agency-contractor relationships that can improve operations and foster innovation, and that avoid contracting out the public interest.
  - Align private contractors' profit motives with public transit agency goals.
8. **Fares.** Integrated fare payment systems can more easily offer mobile ticketing options and support other transportation services, such as bike share and car share. In some peer regions, there is a coordinated effort to develop integrated regional transit passes and other fare products that maximize regional ridership. Development of the Connect Card led to some alignment in fare policies across transit operators, but there may be opportunities for further improvement. These may become a focus for the Connect Card Consortium. Topics of interest include whether and how to:
- Develop consistent fare policies that favor regional coordination.
  - Design and implement regional, integrated fare products and payment systems beyond the first generation of the Connect Card, potentially building on SacRT's ZipPass mobile ticketing app.
  - Ensure that regional fare payment is convenient and reliable.
  - Develop a regional fund to facilitate new regional fare products and adopt revenue-sharing agreements.
9. **Traveler information tools.** There may also be opportunities to develop integrated trip planning applications, with or without fare payment options, that help travelers make better use of available transit services. Efforts in other regions aim for greater consistency in how transit services are marketed and communicated so that the value of the transit system is clearer and easier to use for the rider. Policy interests include when and how to:
- Provide ample, clear, and consistent transit information regionally.
  - Support third-party providers of transit information and tools.
  - Better coordinate marketing materials and campaigns among the different transit operators.