

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: March 25, 2013

For the Metropolitan Council meeting: N/A

Subject: Potential SouthWest Transit Double Decker Bus Procurement

District(s), Member(s): 3 – Munt; 4 – Van Eyll; 5 – Elkins

Policy/Legal Reference:

Procurement Policy 3-4-3
Regional Fleet Management Procedures

Staff Prepared/Presented:

Arlene McCarthy, Director MTS (651-602-1754)
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Division/Department: Transportation/Metropolitan Transportation Services (MTS)

Proposed Action

No action; information only.

Background

SouthWest Transit (SWT) is considering procuring one double-decker transit bus for purposes of demonstration and evaluation. This bus will replace a regional fleet bus operated by SWT that has reached the end of its useful life. The 14-foot high, two-door double-decker bus has the ability to carry 100 ambulatory passengers, 80 of which are seated, compared to a MCI coach bus with 57 ambulatory seats. The new bus will be part of the Council's regional fleet.

The available double-decker bus was manufactured by Alexander/Dennis based in the United Kingdom (UK). It does not meet federal Buy America standards and would be a sole source procurement. Because the Council has programmed Regional Transit Capital (RTC) bonds for this replacement bus, federal requirements would not apply. The Council's past practice has been to purchase all buses under federally-compliant contracts in the event that federal funds may be used for a subsequent purchase.

Alexander/Dennis built this one demonstration bus specifically for the 2012 American Public Transportation Association (APTA) annual conference/expo and is now offering it at a discounted price of \$535,000. This compares favorably to the standard retail price near \$800,000. It also compares favorably to the \$550,000 cost of a coach bus.

With the exception of Buy America, SWT has committed to comply with all federal requirements and Fleet Management Procedures (such as a minimum 12-year useful life; maintenance, ADA compliant, safety and emission standards, etc.).

Rationale

If the bus is acquired, SWT intends to maximize its use in various services including express routes operating on Marquette and 2nd Avenue in Minneapolis, State Fair service, Twins games and service to/from the University of Minnesota.

Acquiring this double-decker bus would be consistent with the Council's Fleet Management Procedures which allow for procurement of demonstration buses. The significantly

discounted price and the acquisition of a single bus for demonstration purposes justify the sole source procurement.

SWT has committed to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the double-decker bus in regional operations and work with other providers in conducting the evaluation. At a minimum, the evaluation will include how the bus performs in this climate, maintenance costs, customer satisfaction and operational effectiveness. SWT will also be responsible for securing MnDOT operating permits due to the vehicle height and any modifications to the bus necessary for transit operations.

If SWT decides to proceed with the procurement after further evaluating the bus, a business item requesting authority for the Regional Administrator to execute a subrecipient agreement with SWT will be prepared.

Funding

Excluding maintenance costs, the \$535,000 Alexander/Dennis bus has an annualized capital cost of \$44,600 (12-year useful life) compared to \$39,500 for a \$550,000 coach bus (14-year useful life). The Council has budgeted \$560,000 for a replacement bus.

Known Support / Opposition

No known opposition.