



BOWLING GREEN & WARREN COUNTY

**Metropolitan Planning
Organization**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY & MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS

for

Western Kentucky University Topper Transit & GO bg Transit

September 26, 2018

PROJECT PURPOSE

Topper Transit is a public transit provider for Western Kentucky University (WKU) operating through WKU Parking & Transportation Services. Topper Transit provides approximately 700,000 annual rides on three daily fixed routes, ADA, and Complimentary Services for WKU.

GO bg Transit is Bowling Green's public transit provider, operated by Community Action of Southern Kentucky on contract administered by the City of Bowling Green. GO bg Transit operates six fixed routes primarily serving the populations who do not have access to a personal vehicle, providing approximately 100,000 annual rides.

The MPO is requesting a three-phased study to improve operational efficiencies for Topper Transit, explore alternative management structures for GO bg, and investigate the possibility of combining the two systems to leverage available resources to better serve both WKU and the Bowling Green community. The MPO is very interested in studying successful case studies in operations of similar size for communities that are similar in size.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

As Bowling Green continues to grow and expand, the need for transit becomes more demanding and both the City and WKU want to provide their services in the most effective and efficient manner possible. The GObg Transit System and WKU's Topper Transit have operated separately since their inceptions. Each has evolved over a period of time and changes related to funding and efficiency have led both organizations to look for operational efficiencies that would provide better transit services to all members of our community.

TOPPER TRANSIT

The WKU Parking and Transportation Services department was formed in July of 2005 to place both parking and transit operations within a single department. This allowed transit services to complement parking services when providing access to campus for faculty, staff, students and visitors. The transit operation has grown considerably over that time period as campus parking was moved to the perimeter of campus and as campus development placed greater need on park and ride services.

Topper Transit currently provides service from 7:15 AM until 10:00PM weekdays through 2 daytime and 1 evening fixed routes during the week and carries over 700,000 passengers annually. The White Line serves the Main and South campuses, the Red Line serves Main campus and downtown, and the Green Line serves Main Campus, South Campus and off-campus retail destinations. On Saturday afternoons, the Green Line operates for 4 hours. We provided complimentary ADA para-transit service as well. All Topper Transit services are fare free.

Three factors will directly affect Topper Transit ridership during FY19: opening of Parking Structure 3 on Main Campus, \$30M University budget cut, and changing enrollment. In November 2017, Parking Structure 3 opened, adding a net of 500 parking spaces to the Main Campus inventory. This will move residents and many commuters back to Main Campus and reduce demand for park and ride service from South Campus. In addition, as part of the University's budget cut, the University College was dissolved and associated classes

previously scheduled on South Campus have moved to Main Campus. Combined, these two items will decrease demand for service between Main Campus and South Campus. Topper Transit ridership peaked in FY16, but has declined since then by 9%, due largely to decreased enrollment, particularly among international students.

Looking ahead, campus will continue to evolve. In the near term (within one year), development of new residential buildings in the Residential Commons on Main Campus will decrease parking availability and increase demand for commuter park and ride services. As part of this project, additional parking will be created near campus that will require limited park and ride service. Looking further into the future (several years), a new parking deck will be included in the construction of a new College of Business. This project will displace parking and again increase demand for park and ride service for the duration of the project.

It is in this context, a declining budget and changing demand for service, that the University is seeking a Comprehensive Operational Analysis. Our goal is to match service levels with demand with the intention of increasing operational efficiencies and reducing costs while maintaining a strong service to campus.

WKU is also interested in evaluating the costs of moving from the current Management Contract, in which management staff run the Topper Transit system, to a hybrid Operating Contract, in which the vendor provides all personnel and WKU continues to provide the fleet equipment and maintenance facility. WKU is interested in learning about case studies with a similar hybrid Operating Contract and those costs/hour.

GO BG TRANSIT

Public transit service in Bowling Green began in 1993 when Community Action of Southern KY obtained a pilot grant from the United Way to provide a deviated-route, demand response type service known as GO bg Transit. By 2001, GO bg Transit grew to three fixed routes and in 2003 the City of Bowling Green became eligible to receive Section 5307 funding for transit. The KY Transportation Cabinet served as the direct grant recipient with the City as Subrecipient until 2012 when the City became the direct grant recipient. The City currently and has since inception contracted with Community Action of Southern KY to provide all transit services.

The City has become more involved in the transit system over the past few years but generally all management, planning and operations have been under the discretion of Community Action. The City is taking a more active role in the system and desires to see what other models are effective at service delivery.

The GO bg system operates Monday through Friday 6:30 am to 6:00 pm. Two routes run the 2nd Saturday of each month; Route 2 operates from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm and Route 4 operates from 8:50 am to 2:35 pm.

The bus fare is \$2.00. The fare for elderly persons, persons with disabilities, Medicare cardholders, and students is \$1.00. Transfers are free. The complementary paratransit fare is \$4.00. Several pre-paid fare options are available for fixed route service.

The system operates a fleet of fifteen (15) FTA-funded medium-duty buses and eight (8) vans for fixed-route and complementary paratransit service.

Ridership peaked in 2013 at just over 121,000 trips; more recently in 2017 the system provided 113,000 trips. Additionally the City's cash contribution to the transit system went from \$206,000 in FY12 to a high of

\$430,000 for FY19 or a 108% increase. The City provides approximately \$170,000 of in-kind services related to maintenance at the City service center and fuel.

Bowling Green continues to grow and expand and those expansions have created new demands for transit service expansion and contributed to the increase of the City's local transit contribution. The City wants to ensure that the annual investment in the transit system is maximized to the benefit of the residents of Bowling Green. The City is open to changes to its service delivery model and desires to know what the best structure for services based on our community and the challenges presented in our local environment.

PROJECT SCOPE & OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE

The objectives of the current study are to (1) identify operational efficiencies for Topper Transit, (2) evaluate management structures for GO bg, and (3) investigate potential for merging the two systems.

SCOPE

The scope of this study will analyze several components related to the public transit providers operating in Bowling Green and on the campus of WKU.

Phase I

Phase I seeks to find operational efficiencies in the Topper Transit transit system. It should include, but not be limited to, the assessment and inclusion of the following items:

- Review Transit Service levels including transit service frequencies by route, time of day, and by stop;
- Analyze historical NextBus ridership data to identify peak demands;
- Identify causes of problems in meeting on-time performance standards and expectations;
- Identify under-performing bus stops with a recommendation for realignment and/or elimination of stops;
- Match route designs and schedules (including number of buses on the routes) to meet peak passenger demand;
- Restructure staff levels to compliment proposed new transit service levels;
- Identify appropriate staffing levels and recommend the proper ratio between full-time and part-time positions; and
- Conduct a high level cost-benefit analysis comparison of the existing Management Contract to an Operating Contract by comparing other transit systems comparable in size. The Operating Contract would include a Third Party agency providing all labor, including management, supervision and training of drivers, and a mechanic. WKU would continue to provide equipment and a light maintenance facility.

Phase II

The City of Bowling Green desires to provide improved management and oversight of the federally funded transit system. Phase II of this study should include, but is not limited to, the assessment and inclusion of the following items:

- Describe and evaluate different management structures that have been used for transit agencies similar in size to GO bg Transit.
- Benefit and cost analysis comparison to transition from current contract model to other successful models for service delivery, including city service, transit authority, city management with third party operations, or other models to consider from best management practices.
- What steps would be involved in transitioning to a new management model?
- Describe 3-5 representative case studies in similar sized university/community settings.

Phase III

The final phase of this study will evaluate the potential of merging WKU’s Topper Transit and GObg Transit. The findings will provide, but should not be limited to, the assessment and determination of the following items:

- What could the governance structure look like?
- What could the funding structure look like?
- Clearly state the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and potential obstacles to each entity as a combined system.
- What steps would be involved in moving towards a combined system?
- Describe 3-5 case studies that have successfully integrated systems in similar sized university/community settings.

BUDGET

The study shall not exceed the cost of \$125,000. The MPO is awarded \$100,000 of federal transit agency section 5303 planning funds, with local matches from WKU and the City of Bowling Green.

PROPOSAL INFORMATION

PROPOSAL CONTENTS

- (1) *Letter of Transmittal.* This letter will summarize in a brief and concise manner, the Proposer’s understanding of the Scope of Work. The letter must name all persons authorized to make representations for the Proposer, such as sub consultants, and include the titles, addresses and telephone numbers of such persons. An official authorized to negotiate for the Proposer must sign the Letter of Transmittal.
- (2) *Organizational Profile and Qualifications.* This section of the proposal must describe the Proposer, including the size and range of its activities. The proposal must identify the primary individuals responsible for supervising the work involved in the proposal. Qualification statements shall include but not be limited to: (a) firm profile, (b) relevant project experience, (c) team organization, and (d) key staff bios.
- (3) *Project Approach.* This section of the proposal should outline major tasks to be performed and accomplished by the Proposer. Explanation of work, activities, phases, draft and final work products, and delivery dates should be included.
- (4) *Additional Data or Information.* Any additional information, which the Proposer considers pertinent, should be included in a separate section of the proposal.

- (5) *References.* Minimum of three references for whom you have performed similar work, including client, address, phone number and name of contact person who can provide a reference.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

The Bowling Green-Warren County MPO will identify a Selection Committee that will select the proposal best fitting the criteria and needs of the MPO for this study. The selection criteria will be based on the following:

- Professional expertise with similar projects (10 points);
- Project approach, methodology, creativity, presentation (10 points);
- Ability to meet required timeline (10 points); and
- References and relevant qualifications (10 points).

Total possible points: 40 points

The proposals will be reviewed by a Selection Committee composed of, but not limited to, the MPO Coordinator, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, City of Bowling Green, Western Kentucky University, and the City-County Planning Commission. The Selection Committee will rank the top three candidates. All candidates will be notified once the final candidate has been approved. If the MPO is unable to negotiate a satisfactory contract with the selected Proposer, negotiations with the firm shall be formally terminated and negotiation with the second ranked firm will be undertaken. Following successful negotiation and issuance of a Notice to Proceed by the MPO, the MPO Coordinator with assistance from the MPO Technical Advisory Committee, will monitor progress and review all work products for the duration of the study.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

Six (6) bound copies and one (1) electronic media copy (CDs/DVD or USB) in PDF format of the proposal should be submitted to the contact listed in the section titled Contact Information.

PROPOSAL AND PROJECT TIMELINE

Proposals Due Friday, October 19, 2018

All proposals should be bound and delivered **no later than 4:30 p.m. (CST)** to the contact listed in the section titled Contact Information.

Deadline for Questions Tuesday, October 9, 2018

Questions must be submitted in writing (no phone calls) no later than **12:00 p.m. (CST)** on **October 9, 2018**, to karissa.lemon@bgky.org or mailed to the MPO office at the address in the Contact Information section below. Questions and responses will be posted on the MPO website, www.warrenpc.org/mpo. The MPO will ensure all answers and/or clarifications to questions submitted by the abovementioned deadline will be posted on the MPO website by **4:30 p.m. (CST)** on **Wednesday, October 10, 2018**.

Contact Information

The City-County Planning Commission (CCPC) is the staff agency for the Bowling Green-Warren County MPO. Please direct all questions and proposals regarding this RFP to:

Karissa Lemon
MPO Coordinator
BG-WC Metropolitan Planning Organization
1141 State Street
Bowling Green, KY 42101
karissa.lemon@bgky.org

Candidate Selection: Week of October 29, 2018

Approval & Contract Negotiation: Week of October 29, 2018

Anticipated Notice to Proceed: November 6, 2018

Project Completion: The Proposer will have until January 15, 2019 to complete Phase I; March 1, 2019 to complete Phase II; and May 15, 2019 to complete Phase III and the final report.

DELIVERABLES

Phase I and Phase II deliverables must be provided in two (2) bound hard copies, including all compatible digital files. All phases must be included in the final product report and deliverables. The final project deliverables must be provided in five (5) camera-ready/reproducible, unbound hard copies, Adobe Acrobat *.pdf format and Adobe InDesign format (compatible with CS5, CS6 and CC). GIS shapefiles and CAD files must also be provided for all maps/data used in the final deliverables. Also, any tables included in the final deliverable must be provided in Excel (.xls) format. Finally, any images contained within the final deliverables must be provided in .jpg and .pdf format. A final presentation to the Bowling Green-Warren County MPO Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Committee will also be incorporated.

CONTRACT AWARDS

By virtue of submitting a proposal, the Proposer acknowledges that this RFP does not constitute an agreement or a contract with the proposer. An official contract or agreement is not binding until proposals are reviewed and accepted by the MPO. The MPO reserves the right to reject all proposals, to waive any informality and to solicit and re-advertise for other proposals.