



City of Racine, Wisconsin
AGENDA BRIEFING MEMORADUM

AGENDA DATE: Finance and Personnel Committee, January 29th, 2024

SUBJECT: Communication sponsored by Mayor Mason, on behalf of the Transit & Mobility Director, requesting permission to enter into a professional services agreement with HDR, Engineering Inc. to complete a Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) Regional Rail Corridor Planning and Federal Funding Program Application project. Contract #2024008

PREPARED BY: Trevor Jung, Transit & Mobility Director

PROJECT PURPOSE:

Commuter rail service has long been planned and desired by the City of Racine and other communities along Lake Michigan between the City of Milwaukee and the Illinois State Line. As part of a Consolidated Appropriations Act, Congress provided \$5 million to the City of Racine for the “Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) Regional Rail Corridor.” Federal Transit Administration (FTA) staff have indicated that this funding should be used to advance passenger rail service. In response to the Congressional funding and direction provided by FTA staff, the City of Racine issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for regional rail corridor planning and federal funding program application consulting services.

Through the project, the City seeks to:

- Explore the KRM corridor context and develop preliminary passenger rail service concepts
- Qualitatively evaluate preliminary passenger rail service concepts and identify alternatives
- Prepare a KRM application for entry into an FTA or FRA discretionary funding program to advance to environmental review and preliminary engineering
- Work with a regional representative steering committee and project partners to identify a project sponsor and funding strategy necessary to apply for entry into a federal funding program

The selected consultant will assist in developing answers to these questions through completing the tasks identified in the project scope of work included as Attachment 1 of Request for Qualifications (RFQ) #2024008.

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

The Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) Regional Passenger Rail project would significantly enhance travel between Milwaukee and Chicago. The development of passenger rail in the corridor would provide access to jobs, care, recreation, and educational opportunities by providing a fast, frequent, and high-quality transit service in the corridor. The KRM corridor is not near existing freeways, and therefore passenger rail as an alternative mode of transportation would be an effective way to encourage economic development in historic urban centers that have long struggled with disinvestment.

In the absence of any funds available to advance the KRM Rail project since 2010, no progress has been made to get this vital service closer to connecting the communities along the corridor. The historic centers of the communities that would be primarily served by the KRM are typically four to nine miles

from the nearest interstate highway (I-94), which has hampered their ability to attract development and improve the quality of life for residents.

The value of building transit infrastructure and implementing passenger rail service in this corridor is evident. Within a mile of the ten previously planned KRM stations, there are 130,000 jobs and 120,000 residents; 22% of residents experience poverty, and 39% are people of color. Of the 48,000 households in the corridor, 13% do not have access to a car, and 43% have only one car. Nearly 50% of households in the corridor have incomes less than \$50,000. It is also significant to note that KRM passenger rail would provide increased access to over 400,000 jobs, all within 30 minutes by transit. (WisDOT & SEWRPC, 2021)

A KRM regional passenger rail line would:

- Provide a necessary and desirable transportation alternative in a heavily traveled corridor that has limited opportunities for additional roadway capacity
- Spur private investment and promote transit-oriented development
- Contribute to efficiency in the transportation system, including reduced highway traffic, congestion, air pollution, and energy consumption
- Provide travel-time competitive service along the corridor, as most stations are several miles from the nearest limited-access highway
- Help meet the travel needs of a significant portion of the population without access to a vehicle
- Enhance economic development by improving regional access
- Enhance quality of life by providing choice of travel mode and allow households to reduce expenditures on transportation
- Better connect Southeastern Wisconsin with Northeastern Illinois
- Promote economic and population growth in the KRM corridor and Southeastern Wisconsin
- Attract and retain a skilled workforce
- Improve accessibility to and enhance Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport; arts, culture, and entertainment venues; and colleges and universities

The Racine Common Council adopted *Resolution 0429-21: Support for Federal Investment in the Construction of the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Commuter Rail Line*. This resolution formally endorsed the KRM Commuter Rail Line and instructed the Office of the Mayor and other relevant departments to lead and participate in efforts related to the construction of this project.

RFP RESPONSES AND EVALUATION:

A total of three consultant teams submitted proposals for this project, as follows:

- HDR Engineering, Inc.
- DB E.C.O. North America Inc.
- Solomon Cordwell Buenz

Based on the City of Racine's published RFQ process, the individual selection committee members evaluated and scored each qualifications submittal based on the following factors:

- Project manager and team structure
- Overall team experience with similar rail projects
- Rail corridor, station facility, and station area planning and urban design
- Business case development
- Organizational management and facilitation

- Financial analysis and project funding management
- Public involvement and branding
- Railroad engineering and operations planning
- Federal program applications and environmental planning

With the support and ratification of this decision by the City of Racine Finance & Personnel Committee and the Racine Common Council, HDR Engineering Inc. will be engaged via a letter of intent. Discussions will immediately commence to negotiate an applicable professional services contract.

The tentative project schedule is provided below for reference and may be subject to change based on the final scope of work.

- Contract Negotiations/Award February 2024
- Study Begins February 2024
- Study Ends December 2024

BUDGETARY IMPACT: Cost not to exceed \$2,000,000 from funding available in Federal Congressionally Directed Spending with no local match required. Account Number: 60282011 57110 82010

RECOMMENDED ACTION: That the purchasing agent be directed to negotiate, and the Mayor and City Clerk be granted permission to enter into a professional services contract with HDR Engineering Inc. to complete a Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) Regional Rail Corridor Planning and Federal Funding Program Application project. Contract #2024008