

## Minutes

### RTA External & Stakeholder Relations & Advocacy Committee

9:02 a.m. November 5, 2024

**Committee Members:** Welch (Vice Chair), Love, McPherson

**Other Board Members:** Elder, Koomar, Pacetti, Sleasman

**Not present:** Biasiotta, Lucas, Weiss

**Staff/Other:** Blaze, Caver, Cottrell, Dangelo, Davidson, Dimmick, Feke, Fesler, Fields, Fleig, Freilich, Garofoli, Harris, Hudson, Jenkins, Jones, Kirkland, Laule, Martin, Meinke, Metcalf, Miller, Moore, Reed, Rusnov, Schipper, Schnear, Sulik, Sutula, Talley, Togher, Walker-Minor, Young

**Public:** Loh, Pesta

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 a.m. Three (3) committee members were present. Mr. Sleasman was added to the committee to establish a quorum. Ms. McPherson arrived after the roll call. Ms. Welch mentioned that RTA is offering free rides today for Election Day courtesy of a grant from the Cleveland Foundation.

#### RFP Procurement for Federal Advocacy Services

Natoya Walker Minor, Deputy General Manager, Administration and External Affairs and Sharon Cottrell-Pepper, Procurement Team Manager gave the presentation. RTA prepares a Legislative Update each year. It is used to work with our federal and state advocacy firms.

#### *Scope of Services*

- Three-year contract with two one-year options for renewal.
- Will represent GCRTA at the federal level with Congressional members, staffers, and industry leaders to advance the GCRTA Legislative Agenda.
- Will provide expert council and strategic leadership to prioritize the GCRTA Legislative Agenda and our approach to federal funding opportunities.
- Will engage members of Congress, and federal administrators, to increase awareness and support for GCRTA federal legislative agenda.
- Monitor federal legislative process, influence policy and transportation research, provide legislative developments and advise of federal funding opportunities to support the GCRTA legislative priorities.
- Draft proposed legislation, prepare briefings, research and draft/review GCRTA responses to legislation and administrative actions.
- Will assist GCRTA staff as needed on federal grant applications.
- Attend hearings and write policy briefings on critical issues that could impact GCRTA's legislative agenda.
- Schedule congressional meetings with key administrative and agency staffers and industry partners.
- Coordinate opportunities for legislators and relevant staff to visit GCRTA facilities to experience our facilities and better educate them on major issues affecting GCRTA.

#### *Examples of the importance of federal level advocacy include:*

- Advocacy and education on the importance of Railcar Replacement for legacy systems. This resulted in GCRTA securing \$130M.

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- Coordinated and scheduled opportunities to testify before the Senate Banking and Finance Committee, March 2023.
- Secured \$24M for the All Stations Accessibility Program (ASAP Grants) to make our stations ADA accessible.

### *Procurement Overview*

The RFP was issued on July 14, 2024. It was accessed on the GCRTA website by eight (8) interested parties. Proposals were due August 14, 2024. Four (4) firms proposed. The evaluation panel consisted of various RTA departments. The recommended firm is Van Scoyoc Assoc., Inc. located in Washington, D.C. They have been our Federal Advocacy Consultant since 2019. Other clients include: Dallas Area Rapid Transit, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, Pinellas Sun Coast Transit Authority, Ohio University, San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission, California. The DBE Goal is 0% due to lack of certified DBE firms.

Recommended Firm: Van Scoyoc Assoc., Inc.

- Access: ability to reach senior DOT, FTA and White House officials
- Knowledge: understand & advocate on the federal budget, appropriations, tax bills and financial mechanisms
- Transit Experience: understand the importance of preserving State of Good Repair and aggressively seek funding for GCRTA
- Relationships: work closely with Ohio congressional delegation and congressional transportation leaders
- Resources: large firm that will enhance GCRTA presence and secure funding and policy objectives

### *Recommendation*

Staff requests that the External & Stakeholder Relations & Advocacy Committee recommend to the Board of Trustees the award of federal advocacy consulting services to Van Scoyoc Associates, Inc. in an amount NTE \$324,000 for the base three years, and in an amount NTE \$108,000 for options years one and two, for a total contract amount NTE \$540,000.

Ms. Elder asked who the current contractor is and what distinguishes them as the firm to move forward with. Ms. Cottrell Peffer said that Van Scoyoc has been the current contractor since 2019. All firms are evaluated against the criteria. Van Scoyoc ranked the highest. They had one of the best prices and value for the Authority. Dr. Walker Minor added that their connection to Congress and access to the White House is a major advantage. Jennifer LaTourette has been accessible and personally vested in RTA and Ohio. Prior to receiving the Rail Car grant, staff worked with Van Scoyoc to get a seat at the table.

It was moved by Mr. Love, seconded by Ms. McPherson and approved to move this to the full Board.

### RFP Procurement for State Advocacy Services

Natoya Walker Minor, Deputy General Manager, Administration and External Affairs and Drew Dimmick, Contract Administrator II gave the presentation.

### *Project Overview*

- Three-year contract with two one-year options for renewal
- Provide advice on the biennial budget

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- Provide strategic leadership with relationship with Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), the Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC), and other funding streams available through the State of Ohio

### *Scope of Services*

- Represent GCRTA at the State Capital with elected officials, their staffers, the Ohio Public Transit Association (OPTA), and industry leaders
- Assist GCRTA staff as needed on grant applications
- Engage transit leaders to advance awareness and schedule site visits
- Monitor State legislative process, influence policy and transportation research, provide legislative developments on transit infrastructure policy and funding.
- Prepare briefings, research and draft/review GCRTA responses to legislation and administrative actions.
- Attend hearings and policy briefings on critical issues that could impact GCRTA
- Schedule meetings with elected officials, staffers, and/or key administrative and agency staffers and industry partners
- Coordinate opportunities for legislators and relevant staff to visit GCRTA facilities to experience our facilities and better educate them on major issues affecting GCRTA

### *Examples of the importance of state level advocacy include*

- Continuity with sustaining \$70M in the State of Ohio budget for public transit
- Securing funding for community-based programs: Baby on Board and Microtransit
- Coordinating site visits for the State of Ohio delegation and TRAC members

### *Procurement Overview*

The RFP was issued July 28, 2024. Eight (8) interested parties downloaded the package. Proposals were due August 27, 2024. One (1) vendor proposed. The evaluation panel consisted of various RTA departments. The recommended team is JB Hadden of Murray Murphy Moul + Basil LLP and Terrence O'Donnell of Dickinson Wright PLLC located in Columbus, OH. A 0% DBE goal was assigned to this procurement due to lack of certified DBE firms.

### *Experience*

- Relationships – Executive and Legislative
- Knowledge – Current on the issues which keeps them on top of trends in transportation
- Diversity & Inclusion – Firms reflect a diversity of background, viewpoint, political ideology, race and gender. Able to see issues from all sides
- Proven Success – Advocated for Railcar Replacement funding through the ODOT Ohio Transit Preservation Partnership Program (“OTP2”) - \$41M
- Collaboration – Collaboration and team-oriented leveraging of the relationships within the executive branch and having the legislative and legal resources of a national law firm

Other clients include American Electric Power, American Express, Cleveland Foundation, Columbus Museum of Art, Minutemen of Cleveland, St. Edward High School, Ohio Association of Career Technical Education and YWCA Council of Ohio.

### *Recommendation*


Staff requests that the External and Stakeholder Relations & Advocacy Committee recommend to the Board of Trustees the award of a contract to JB Hadden of Murray Murphy Moul + Basil LLP and Terrence O'Donnell of Dickinson Wright PLLC to provide State Advocacy Services in an amount NTE

\$255,000.00 for the three-year base contract, and in an amount NTE \$85,000.00 for each of the two option years, for a total contract amount NTE \$425,000.00 for the five-year period.

Ms. Elder asked how long we have worked with this contractor and what are some of their achievements. Dr. Walker Minor added that three years ago this group helped to keep State funding at \$70 M and not the proposed decrease to \$7 M. Securing these funds helps to align RTA with the goals and projects in the Strategic Plan. We've had a relationship with them over the last four years.

It was moved by Ms. McPherson, seconded by Mr. Love and approved to move to the full Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:38 a.m.

  
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Rajan D. Gautam  
Secretary/Treasurer  
*acting for  
Rajan Gautam*

  
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Theresa A. Burrage  
Executive Assistant