Project Description

MnDOT’s Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT), is responsible for the financial and technical support of transit services in Greater Minnesota, in partnership with the federal government and local communities. In serving this role, OTAT administers the federal Section 5311(f) grant program in Minnesota, which supports intercity bus transportation serving non-urbanized communities.

Intercity transportation has been defined in numerous ways, depending upon the purpose and agency developing the definition. In Minnesota, intercity bus is defined as:

“...regularly scheduled bus service for the general public, which operates with limited stops over fixed routes connecting two or more urban areas not in close proximity, which has the capacity for transporting baggage carried by passengers, and which makes meaningful connections with scheduled intercity bus service to more distant points.”

The Minnesota Intercity Bus Network Study, last published in April 2014, outlines the state’s vision and policy with regard to support of intercity bus. The primary objectives of the study include:
1. Enhancing coordination and connectivity between various transportation services,
2. Identifying service gaps,
3. Developing strategies to meet service needs efficiently and effectively,
4. Improving the interface between transportation modes, and
5. Measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of Minnesota’s intercity bus program.

As economic, geographic, demographic, and political conditions change, the study requires periodic updates and revisions to remain useful and relevant.

With that in mind, the following will be considered the minimum scope of work for the Minnesota Intercity Bus Network Study Update:

I. Project Management

No later than 2 weeks after contract award, the successful responder will deliver to OTAT a project management plan, to be developed in consultation with OTAT staff, incorporating, at a minimum, the elements below:

a. Project milestones, including those specifically referenced in this Scope of Work, as well as intermediate steps and deliverables that serve to advance the project. To include deadlines and target dates associated with each milestone.
b. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be formed to provide input and guidance to this study and to identify local preferences for service, including recommended composition, role, and meeting schedule. In addition to the project kickoff meeting and industry consultation (see below), the successful responder will be present on-site to facilitate at least two meetings with the TAC – once during the development of the draft revised study, and once prior to the final completion of the document. The following agencies will be invited to serve on the TAC and provide input:
   1. MnDOT, Met Council, airport shuttle providers, Amtrak
   2. Intercity Bus Providers/Subrecipients such as Greyhound, Jefferson Lines, Blue Earth Blue Sky, Mega Bus and other recommended providers.
   3. Private intercity shuttles

The successful responder will work with the TAC to determine a method of gathering general public input as to the need and support for regional and intercity bus services in and through the state.

c. Project kickoff meeting, to be held no later than 2 months after contract award, at a location of the OTAT’s choosing. To include the physical presence of the successful responder, as well as the TAC and relevant OTAT staff.
d. A communications plan, establishing expectations and methods of communications between the successful responder, OTAT staff, and the TAC.
e. The successful responder’s presentation at the intercity bus industry consultation, planned for early spring 2020, at a location of OTAT staff choosing or via skype. The successful responder will present a summary of the findings and recommendations of the revised study.
II. **Project Substance**

The successful responder will deliver to OTAT a revised Minnesota Intercity Bus Network Study incorporating all of the elements below. By no later than **February 2021**, the successful responder will deliver a complete draft revision (in Microsoft Office and Adobe PDF formats) for review and comment by OTAT staff and the TAC. By no later than **April 2021**, the successful responder will deliver the final version (in Microsoft Office and Adobe PDF formats), having addressed the comments received. The final version will be fully formatted and acceptable for public distribution. The revision must include a modernization of the document design, with attention to visual attractiveness and consistency, along with a report cover illustrating MnDOT’s pursuit of a more diverse and broader-scope intercity bus program.

At a minimum, the revision will incorporate the following elements:

**Task 1.0: Review and Update of Intercity Bus Information**

The successful responder will conduct a complete review of the existing study, including all narrative text, tables, graphics, and maps; identify any outdated, incomplete, or unclear information; and revise, correct, update, or supplement the content, as needed, to correct those deficiencies. This process will be conducted with attention to the following aspects:

a. Demographic, geographic, and economic data, including, but not limited to, any data available from the United States Census, American Community Survey, National Household Travel Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Reports, and other professional or academic studies.

b. Federal law, guidance, and practice affecting intercity bus planning, funding, and operations. This will include attention to FAST Act authorizing legislation, as well as any other relevant changes in policy and funding under Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), and other agencies.

c. Changes to any intercity bus or related services, and their associated operating entities, as referenced in the study. To include services that have been introduced, cancelled, increased, reduced, realigned, or otherwise changed.

d. Changes to policies and practices implemented in Minnesota with respect to intercity bus.

e. Notable changes to policies and practices implemented in other states with respect to intercity bus.

f. Prevailing trends, program administrative practices, and developments within the intercity bus industry in other states.

g. Research information on each corridor as needed to develop general routing, days and hours of service, ridership, costs and benefits of establishing service, and capital requirements. This will be done through research and by talking with existing providers or lead agencies in each corridor. Document existing schedules, ridership, and funding. Through conversations gauge demand for additional services, and the interest in development of essential services routes in each corridor.

h. Assess the impact of the potential corridor services on other services (e.g., Inner City Bus [ICB] and IX routes and the need for last-mile services in urban centers for distributing riders to their final destinations), opportunities to strengthen the overall ICB network, any in-kind match opportunities?

i. The successful responder will make recommendations on how MnDOT can possibly maximize the existing operations of the current transit agencies to potentially meet some of those needs and suggest possible connectivity between rural towns and the existing Intercity Bus Service already in Minnesota.

j. The successful responder will clearly demonstrate what the accountability measures are and how they are currently being used and also demonstrate how to use them to enhance the program.

**Task 2.0: Intercity Bus Network Policies and Proposed Network**

The successful responder will thoroughly reexamine, revise, and enhance the recommended policies and network corridors discussed in the existing study, meeting the following requirements:

a. The revised Study will include a recommended intercity bus network in three phases: 2020, 2025, and 2030.

b. Demand estimation modeling will be used to identify and prioritize corridors for development.

c. Corridors in the recommended network will include mapped routes, accompanied by quantitative estimates of operating cost, capital cost, and performance.

d. Frequency and quality of service (existing and recommended) will be considered in addition to service coverage.

e. The successful responder will conduct in-depth market analysis with respect to the most feasible corridors identified for development and/or enhancement. The successful responder will work closely with the TAC on this element, so as to produce a result that is relevant and useful to potential service providers. The revised study will include:
i. Geographic and demographic profiles of the communities to be served.
ii. Identification and description of the submarkets most likely to utilize the recommended service.
iii. Analysis of travel behavior characteristics of those submarkets.
iv. Estimates of cost, revenue, and ridership, resulting from the factors above.

f. Recommendations (and preceding background information) will include a more in-depth examination of local public transit services and their potential role as feeders to intercity bus. At a minimum, this includes looking at geographic proximity and layover time between the services.

Task 3.0: Passenger and Community Surveys
The successful responder will conduct at a minimum of two statistically valid surveys, seeking the input of current and potential users of intercity bus. The surveys must have, at a minimum, a sample size to provide at least a 95 percent level of confidence. (Proposals should itemize the cost of each survey separately in the project budget).

Task 3.1: The successful responder will conduct a survey of the general public in Minnesota, assessing the public’s familiarity with and perceptions of intercity bus service, incidence of usage in comparison with other intercity travel modes, and recommendations for attracting more riders to intercity bus. To the extent possible, this survey should replicate the long-distance travel data formerly collected as part of the National Household Travel Survey. Results from the survey of the general public should be accompanied by an analysis and written discussion of trends and observations.

Task 3.2: The successful responder will conduct a survey of other states that currently have intercity bus programs. Assessing other states intercity bus programs and how they currently manage their program and grant along with any best practices, lessons learned, recommendations for attracting more riders to intercity bus and techniques they have used to enhance the states programs.

Task 4.0: Performance Indicators
The successful responder will use and enhance the performance measures from the 2014 study, integrate the performance measures from the 2017 Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan and compare the performance indicators using results-based accountability methods. Results should include actual data available to date to provide a baseline and historical context. Indicators should be designed such that OTAT staff can track performance indefinitely into the future at modest cost or no cost. Performance indicators should address these realms of analysis:

a. Population: Broad-scale measures of the availability, usage, quality, and success of intercity bus in comparison with other modes of travel, as applicable to Minnesota.

b. Program: Indicators measuring the success of MnDOT’s program to enhance intercity bus. This may include measures of access (coverage), cost effectiveness, productivity (ridership), quality, administration of grant, etc.

c. Methodology: Provide methodology that can be used by MnDOT to determine if ICB service needs are being adequately met; and if not, a process to identify potential new routes, services, and recommendations for funding allocations to establish new services. Deterrents to intercity bus service in Minnesota should also be identified.