



September 22, 2017

Regional Transit Board of Directors
Henry Li, General Manager/CEO
1400 29th Street
Sacramento, CA 95816

Re: Board Item 7 – General Planning Support Services

Dear Board of Directors and Mr. Li:

The Sacramento Transit Riders Union (SacTRU) is writing to oppose the contracting out of planning services to various planning consultant teams without additional clarification. While we appreciate the need for specialized technical expertise throughout the planning process, SacTRU believes that overall system design and rider experience will benefit from having a well-trained in-house staff capable of planning in a coherent and comprehensive manner.

The staff recommendation states that, “SacRT Planning has a need for technical support where there currently is not the necessary in-house expertise and/or there is a need to supplement staff resources.” The Strategic Planning & System Development Department had 47 funded positions in the 2018 Budget. It is not clear why it is felt that this department does not have the planning expertise required. Are a large number of these positions unfilled? Could the deficiency be solved by filling vacant positions with employees who have the required training? Does the department need additional positions funded in the future, and would this reduce the need for contracting out planning work? Is there additional training that could be provided to current employees so that they can gain the needed technical expertise? We believe that developing a highly skilled workforce, increasing employee satisfaction and work product, and reducing the need to repeatedly outsource work should be a goal of RT management.

We believe that the planning department should be equipped with the training and expertise needed to complete the general planning work of a Transit Agency. The staff proposal identifies the following general planning services that need to be supplemented by hiring outside consultants: corridor planning; statistics; service planning/service assessments; transit service planning guidelines; policies and performance measures; transit and other related plan drafting, grant management and grant writing; analyzing and reporting; project oversight and management; and public information services. These appear to us to be basic responsibilities in line with what the department should already be capable of doing. If the goal is truly to have “readily-available, specialized technical expertise as needed,” then we believe that our system would be better served in the long run by investing in employee training or hiring technical experts to fill positions, rather than repeatedly contracting out basic work to consultants who may not have a comprehensive understanding of our transit system and rider needs.

Additionally, the specific projects eligible for this solicitation of consultant contracts have not been identified. Work done by employees of the public agency is subject to greater access, disclosure, and public oversight than work done by outside consultants. Projects already funded in budget include Regional Bike Share Program (\$100,000), Folsom Streetscape (\$42,316),

Route Optimization (\$212,370), Watt/I-80 Transit Center Master Plan (\$209,357). Are these the projects being considered or are there others? Is this proposal directed at specific projects or any and all planning project within the agency? Will this 5 year term be extended or adjusted as new projects are considered, or are all projects being included in this proposal planned to conclude within the 5 year term? SacTRU would like additional information on what projects would fall within the scope of consultant work and what projects would be excluded from consideration.

We are concerned that contracting out work to different consultants will result in discontinuity within our transit system's design and function, similar to how contracting SacRT App development has resulted in riders having to download and use several different disconnected Apps to access basic system information from their phones. We find the possibility of decreasing the coherence and uniformity between projects especially concerning as RT begins the bus system route optimization. What is the intended duration and role of consultants, regardless of project specifics? What is the intended bid process, sole source contract or competitive bid? Is the ultimate goal of this process to hire contract workers to be on staff? Or is it to supplement staff while additional training and hiring is underway? The staff proposal appears to us to be unreasonably vague. SacTRU members would appreciate more insight into the long-term vision on the development of the planning department and long-term intention of contracting out planning projects.

SacTRU opposes the contracting out of planning services to various planning consultant teams on projects at Regional Transit. Please include this letter in the public record.

Sincerely,

SacTRU