



February 13, 2025

To: Transit Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Agreement for the Paratransit and Microtransit Software

Overview

On July 8, 2024, the Board of Directors approved the release of a request for proposals to select a firm to provide the paratransit and microtransit software. Proposals were received in accordance with the Orange County Transportation Authority's procurement procedures for professional and technical services. Board of Directors' approval is requested to execute an agreement for this system.

Recommendations

- A. Approve the selection of Spare Labs Inc. as the firm to provide the paratransit and microtransit software.
- B. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Agreement No. C-4-2258 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Spare Labs Inc., in the amount of \$1,166,555, for a two-year initial term with one, five-year option term to provide the paratransit and microtransit software.

Discussion

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires agencies that operate fixed-route operations to provide complementary paratransit service for individuals who are unable to use the fixed-route service. To comply with the ADA, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) implemented the OC ACCESS service in 1993. OC ACCESS service is different from traditional fixed-route service, as it offers door-to-door transportation and requires trip reservations to be made at least one day in advance. Additionally, passengers must complete an in-person, functional assessment for eligibility prior to riding OC ACCESS.

OCTA has been using software provided by Trapeze Group (Trapeze) for OC ACCESS trip scheduling, route optimization, and dispatching since 1999. Since that time, different products with more robust and integrated capabilities that would better meet the mobility needs of OC ACCESS riders have become available. The current legacy software products consist of several modules, installed across 25 application servers that are maintained by OCTA staff and require multiple software licenses per server and user, which require annual renewal. The Trapeze software allows for reservations to be made and attempts to batch trips together for the best productivity; however, much of the scheduling and optimization of service is performed manually.

OCTA also uses two other software products to track and manage the status of OC ACCESS eligibility and support trip reservation and delivery for OC FLEX. OC ACCESS eligibility is performed by MTM Transit, LLC (MTM), OCTA's eligibility determination contractor, who provides the system that tracks the process of applications for OC ACCESS eligibility and monitors the eligibility status for input into the Trapeze system. The current agreement with MTM will expire in June 2025, requiring a new contractor and software. The OC Flex service is offered and operated through a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) that is provided directly by the contractor for OC ACCESS and OC FLEX.

OCTA desires to procure a SaaS to replace these three products with a single integrated product that will provide heavily automated scheduling and dispatching capabilities to replace current manual processes, an integrated eligibility management platform, and the ability for customers to see all services that are available to them based on their eligibility determination.

The proposed SaaS solution will provide faster deployment time and lower upfront costs than onsite software solutions. In addition, SaaS offers automatic updates, scalability, and accessibility from various devices via a web browser including lower costs of maintenance over onsite software. Additionally, it is anticipated that the annual cost of the proposed SaaS system will be lower than the combined current cost of Trapeze software licenses, additional software licenses needed to enable Trapeze access by multiple users, and the other two software applications currently in use for eligibility tracking and OC Flex. The proposed SaaS system will also offer a reduction in the number of onsite servers needed.

The primary objects of the integrated approach are:

- Provide a SaaS solution that will bring all services available to OC ACCESS eligible riders under one application while integrating with the existing OC Bus app and vendor Transit App.
- Provide flexibility for other service types, such as Same-Day Taxi and the Senior Mobility Programs, to use the software at an individual service scheduling level.

- Allow riders the ability to book a trip using a website, app, or by calling the OC ACCESS reservation number, and the ability to see all services available to them (OC ACCESS, Same-Day Taxi, Senior Mobility Program, etc.) based on their unique eligibility profile.
- Automate the scheduling and dispatching process to improve accuracy while continuously optimizing demand-response services.

Procurement Approach

This procurement was handled in accordance with OCTA’s Board of Directors (Board)-approved procedures for professional and technical services. Various factors are considered in the award for professional and technical services. Award is recommended to the firm offering the most comprehensive overall proposal considering such factors as prior experience with similar projects, staffing and project organization, work plan, as well as cost and price.

On July 8, 2024, the Board authorized the release of Request for Proposals (RFP) 4-2258 and the proposed evaluation criteria and weightings, which was issued electronically on CAMM NET. The RFP was advertised in a newspaper of general circulation on July 9 and July 15, 2024. A pre-proposal conference was held on July 16, 2024, with six attendees representing six firms. One addendum was issued to make available the pre-proposal conference presentation and registration sheets, provide responses to questions received, and handle administrative issues related to the RFP.

On August 8, 2024, seven proposals were received. An evaluation committee consisting of members from OCTA’s Contracts Administration and Materials Management, Information Systems, Specialized Transit Services, and Scheduling and Bus Operations Support departments met to review all submitted proposals. The proposals were evaluated based on the following Board-approved evaluation criteria and weightings:

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| • Qualifications of the Firm | 25 percent |
| • Staffing and Project Organization | 20 percent |
| • Work Plan | 30 percent |
| • Cost and Price | 25 percent |

Several factors were considered in developing the criteria weightings. Qualifications of the firm was weighted at 25 percent to emphasize the importance of the proposing firms having relevant experience in developing, implementing, maintaining, and supporting paratransit and microtransit scheduling software. Staffing and project organization was weighted at 20 percent to ensure that the proposed staff possess the necessary expertise for completing a project of similar size. Work plan was weighted at 30 percent to allow firms to demonstrate their understanding and approach in the proposed software, ensuring it meets OCTA’s requirements and successfully

accomplishes the tasks specified in the scope of work. Cost and price was weighted at 25 percent to ensure that OCTA receives value for the services provided.

The evaluation committee reviewed all proposals based on the Board-approved evaluation criteria and shortlisted the three most qualified firms listed below in alphabetical order:

Firm and Location

Ecolane USA, Inc. (Ecolane)
Headquarters: Wayne, Pennsylvania
Project Office: Wayne, Pennsylvania

RideCo US Inc. (RideCo)
Headquarters: Los Angeles, California
Project Office: Los Angeles, California

Spare Labs Inc. (Spare Labs)
Headquarters: Vancouver, BC, Canada
Project Office: Vancouver, BC, Canada

On September 4, 2024, the evaluation committee interviewed the short-listed firms. During the interview, each firm had the opportunity to present its approach for delivering the required system, project team qualifications, and respond to evaluation committee questions. Questions were focused on the functionalities of the proposed software, such as managing on-time performance for pick-ups and drop-offs, addressing no-shows, and ensuring that trips comply with required regulations and OCTA's contract performance standards. All three firms were asked specific clarification questions related to OCTA's requirements outlined in the scope of work and were asked to conduct a demonstration of their proposed software during the interviews.

At the conclusion of the interviews, the firms were asked to submit a Best and Final Offer (BAFO), which required them to provide a firm-fixed price for project implementation, as well as a total cost based on a per-trip rate for three projected trip volume ranges.

After considering the responses to the questions asked during the interviews and the information provided in the BAFOs, the evaluation committee reviewed the preliminary ranking and adjusted individual scores. However, the overall ranking remained unchanged. Spare Labs remained the top-ranked firm with the highest score.

Based on the evaluation of the written proposals, responses from the interviews, and BAFO information, the evaluation committee recommends Spare Labs for consideration of the award. The following is a brief summary of the proposal evaluation results.

Qualifications of the Firm

Spare Labs was founded in 2015 and has its headquarters and project office in Vancouver, British Columbia. It has 112 employees and has implemented over 400 transit services across microtransit, paratransit, and on-demand transit platforms. This includes facilitating transitions from the Trapeze system for agencies like the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (CapMetro), which, like OCTA, currently operates on this platform. Spare Labs' customers include CapMetro, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, and Dallas Area Rapid. Its proven track record, as detailed in its proposal, includes emerging firms and well-established transit agencies. This range of experience demonstrates its adaptability and capability to meet a broad spectrum of service demands, ensuring the successful delivery of the required solution. Positive references were received for the firm.

RideCo was founded in 2013 with its headquarters and project office in Los Angeles, California. It launched its first app-based on-demand public transit service in 2015. It has since implemented over 85 on-demand paratransit and microtransit services in more than 65 cities across North America and has 124 employees. The firm has experience working with large service providers and developing features for transit agencies in on-demand transit services. RideCo did not demonstrate experience with transitioning from the Trapeze platform. RideCo's customers include the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Positive references were received for the firm.

Ecolane has its headquarters and project office in Wayne, Pennsylvania. It has been in the business of delivering paratransit software solutions since 2008 and has 55 employees. It operates on a global scale and possesses relevant experience in managing on-demand transit services. Ecolane did not demonstrate experience with transitioning from the Trapeze platform. Its customers include Link Transit, Shoreline Metro, and Detroit Department of Transportation. Positive references were received for the firm.

Staffing and Project Organization

Spare Labs proposed a highly experienced team with a strong background in both microtransit and paratransit systems. The project team's involvement in the CapMetro implementation, a project comparable in size to that of OCTA, illustrates their capability to manage projects of this scope and scale. The proposed project manager has over ten years of related project experience. During the interview, the team demonstrated its experience in project transition and integration, highlighting its ability to facilitate a smooth transition and ensure the successful delivery of the project for OCTA.

RideCo presented a comprehensive staffing plan in its proposal. The proposed project team has experience in delivering on-demand microtransit and paratransit services to transit agencies. The proposed project manager has four years of relevant experience. Its staffing plan includes a breakdown of the minimum hours allocated to each task, enabling improved accountability and progress measurements against the proposed timeline. Additionally, the project team provided thorough responses to the interview questions.

Ecolane proposed an experienced and knowledgeable project team. The proposed project manager has over eight years of related project experience. Ecolane conducts monthly training webinars and maintains an online platform for staff development. However, the proposal lacked details on key personnel availability and commitment, and the team did not clearly demonstrate relevant experience meeting the eligibility requirements during the interview.

Work Plan

Spare Labs' proposed platform is a cloud-based solution designed for paratransit, microtransit, and shared-ride demand-response services. It offers a cohesive system with a single, unified interface where users log in once to access all functionalities. Spare Labs presented a comprehensive work plan that fulfills OCTA's requirements while also anticipating future enhancement on business requirements specified in the scope of work. Its integrated platform includes advanced capabilities, such as artificial intelligence-driven real-time fleet management, third-party provider integration, and predictive tools that enhance operational efficiency. Spare Labs demonstrated its system's ability to effectively manage challenges, including vehicle breakdowns and eligibility management, through innovative tools such as the "Breakdown Wizard" and "Duty Time Travel" features. The clarity and precision of the proposed timeline, along with the support for change management, provide assurance to OCTA regarding the successful and timely transition and execution of the project.

During the interview, Spare Labs provided a real-time demonstration of the proposed system across all services, including OC ACCESS, same-day service, the Senior Mobility Program, and OC Flex. This integration allows for operations and eligibility assessment to be managed on a single platform and enables multiple booking methods for riders.

RideCo's proposed platform is a comprehensive web-based cloud solution that includes core dispatching software, profile management, reservation portal, operations center dashboards, a data repository, data visualization tools, customer support ticketing, and data export capabilities. While the work plan meets several of OCTA's requirements, 11 features are identified in its proposal as future enhancements based on OCTA's business requirements, which may potentially affect immediate operational effectiveness. The work plan addresses the majority of OCTA's requirements; however, the short implementation timeline raised concerns among the evaluation committee, even after requests for

clarification were asked during the interview. Additionally, RideCo did not fully address the integration with other service types, such as the Senior Mobility Program.

Ecolane's proposed platform is web-based reservation, scheduling, and dispatch software. Its work plan includes functionalities that are still in development, such as eligibility determination and rider-driver communications, which poses a potential risk to on-time project delivery. Additionally, the implementation timeline of 77 days is relatively short, and there may be extra costs associated with features that extend beyond the initial proposal. Overall, the current level of readiness related to eligibility requirements may present challenges for OCTA. During the interview and system demonstration, the evaluation committee's concerns were confirmed regarding Ecolane's project readiness with several functionalities remaining under development, which may affect the firm's capacity to meet OCTA's immediate operational needs.

Cost and Price

Firms were required to submit a firm-fixed price for project implementation, along with a total cost based on a per-trip rate for three projected trip volume ranges. As per the BAFO, the cost evaluation is based on the assumption that completed trips will range between one million and 1.5 million during fiscal year 2023-24, based on actual completed trips. Therefore, this range was used for calculating the price and cost score.

Pricing scores were based on a formula, which assigned the highest score to the firm with the lowest total pricing and scored the other proposals' total pricing based on the relation to the lowest total pricing. Although Spare Labs did not propose the lowest total price, it is lower than the OCTA project manager's independent cost estimate of \$1,575,990 and is therefore considered fair and reasonable.

Procurement Summary

Based on the evaluation of the written proposals, the firms' qualifications, work plan approach, the information obtained from the interviews, as well as BAFO, the evaluation committee recommends the selection of Spare Labs as the top-ranked firm to provide paratransit and microtransit scheduling system. The firm demonstrated a thorough understanding of OCTA's requirements for the requested system and submitted a comprehensive proposal that is responsive to all requirements of the RFP.

Fiscal Impact

The costs associated with this project were included in OCTA's Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget, Finance and Administration Division, Account No. 1286-7669-IT109-N5N.

Summary

Staff is recommending the Board of Directors authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Agreement No. C-4-2258 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Spare Labs Inc., in the amount of \$1,166,555, for a two-year initial term with one, five-year option term to provide the paratransit and microtransit scheduling system.

Attachments

- A. Review of Proposals, RFP 4-2258, Paratransit and Microtransit Software
- B. Proposal Evaluation Matrix (Short-Listed Firms), RFP 4-2258, Paratransit and Microtransit Software
- C. Contract History for the Past Two Years, RFP 4-2258, Paratransit and Microtransit Software

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