To: Transit Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Agreement for 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 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 software.

Recommendations

A.   Approve the selection of Spare Labs Inc. as the firm to provide paratransit and microtransit software.

B.   Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute Agreement No. C-5-3930 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Spare Labs Inc., in the amount of $969,524, for a two-year initial term with one, five-year option term to provide paratransit and microtransit software.

Discussion

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires public transportation agencies operating fixed-route services to also provide complementary paratransit services for individuals who are unable to use those fixed routes due to a disability. In response to this requirement, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) implemented OC ACCESS service in 1993. OC ACCESS differs from traditional fixed-route services by offering door-to-door transportation that must be reserved at least one day in advance. Additionally, individuals must complete an in-person functional assessment to determine their eligibility before using the service.

OCTA has used Trapeze Group software for OC ACCESS scheduling, route optimization, and dispatching since 1999. The software is composed of multiple modules installed on 25 application servers maintained by OCTA staff. These modules require numerous software licenses per server and user, all of which must be renewed annually.

Although Trapeze supports trip reservations and basic trip batching for productivity, scheduling and service optimization remain largely manual. Newer, more integrated solutions with enhanced capabilities are now available and better aligned with the evolving mobility needs of OC ACCESS riders.

In addition to Trapeze, OCTA currently utilizes two additional software: one for managing OC ACCESS eligibility and another for supporting the Same-Day Taxi service and other same-day transportation options provided through various Senior Mobility Programs. OC Flex trip reservations and service delivery.

On July 8, 202 the OCTA Board authorized to procure a single SaaS to replace three existing software**.** The new SaaS will offer:

- Unified Service Platform: Deliver a single SaaS solution that consolidates all services available to OC ACCESS-eligible riders into one application, with integration to the existing OC Bus app and the Transit App provided by vendors.
- Flexible Service Support: Enable individual service-level scheduling for programs like Same-Day Taxi and the Senior Mobility Programs.
- Multi-Channel Trip Booking: Allow riders to book trips via website, mobile app, or by calling the OC ACCESS reservation line, and view all transportation options available to them (e.g., OC ACCESS, Same-Day Taxi, Senior Mobility Program) based on their unique eligibility status.
- Automated Scheduling and Dispatching: Improve service efficiency and accuracy through automation and continuous optimization of demand-response operations.

The annual cost of the new SaaS will be lower than the combined costs of the existing three software systems used and will reduce the need for onsite servers, further lowering infrastructure and support demands.

Procurement Approach

This procurement was handled in accordance with OCTA's 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.

A pre-award protest was received and upon review by the Director of the Contracts Administration and Materials Management Department. The protest was upheld resulting in a re-procurement of this project under RFP 5-3930, which was issued on February 27, 2025.

The RFP 5-3930 was advertised in a newspaper of general circulation on February 27 and March 3, 2025. A pre-proposal conference was held on March 5, 2025, with 13 attendees representing seven firms. Two addenda were 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 April 7, 2025, six proposals were received. An evaluation committee consisting of members from Information Systems, Specialized Transit Services, and Program Management Office departments met to review all submitted proposals. The proposals were evaluated based on the following Board-approved evaluation criteria and weightings:

•	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 evaluation 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 two most qualified firms listed below in alphabetical order:

<u>Firm and Location</u>

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

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

On May 7, 2025, the evaluation committee interviewed the short-listed firms. During the interview, each firm had the opportunity to present its approach for delivering the required software, 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, addressing no-shows, and ensuring trips comply with regulatory requirements and OCTA's contract performance standards. Both 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.

Based on the evaluation of the written proposals and information obtained from the interviews, 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

Founded in 2015, Spare Labs is headquartered in Vancouver, British Columbia, where it also operates a project office and employs 167 staff members. The company specializes in providing microtransit, paratransit, and on-demand transit platforms and has successfully completed several service implementations for various transit agencies. Notably, Spare Labs has facilitated transitions from legacy systems such as Trapeze, which is currently used by OCTA, for transit agencies including the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (CapMetro), the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, and Dallas Area Rapid Transit. The firm demonstrated experience with both emerging operators and established transit agencies which demonstrates its flexibility and capacity to deliver scalable, effective solutions across varying operational contexts. Positive references were received for the firm.

Founded in 2013, RideCo provides modern cloud-based paratransit and microtransit software and services. The firm operates a project office in Los Angeles, California, with its headquarters located in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. RideCo launched its first application-based, on-demand public transit service in 2015 and has since implemented numerous paratransit and microtransit services across more than 65 cities in North America. RideCo

employs 124 staff members and has demonstrated strong capabilities in partnering with large service providers and developing custom features to meet the operational needs of transit agencies. The firm demonstrated experience with Trapeze Pass migrations for transit agencies including the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County for the City of Houston, and Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada in the City of Las Vegas, which operates same-day paratransit and microtransit services. Positive references were received for the firm.

Staffing and Project Organization

Spare Labs proposed a project team with extensive experience in both paratransit and microtransit operations, demonstrating a deep understanding of the complexities involved in these service models. The proposed project team played a key role in CapMetro's transition from Trapeze, a project comparable in size and scope to OCTA's. This experience highlights their capability to successfully manage large-scale transit system deployments. The proposed project manager has over ten years of relevant experience in overseeing transit technology projects. During the interview process, the team clearly articulated its expertise in system transition and integration, emphasizing its ability to manage platform migrations and operational continuity.

RideCo submitted a detailed staffing plan as part of its proposal, outlining a project team with direct experience in delivering on-demand microtransit and paratransit services to public transit agencies. The proposed project manager has 13 years of relevant experience, supporting the team's capability to manage service implementation within the public transportation sector. The staffing plan includes a clear breakdown of minimum hours allocated to each task, providing a framework for enhanced accountability and measurable progress throughout the project timeline. During the interview process, the project team delivered well-prepared and comprehensive responses, demonstrating a strong understanding of the operational and technical requirements necessary to support a successful deployment for OCTA.

Work Plan

Spare Labs proposed a cloud-based platform designed specifically for paratransit, microtransit, and demand-response services. The software provides a unified interface, allowing users to access all operational functionalities in one interface which leads to streamlining workflows and improving usability for transit agency staff. The company presented a comprehensive work plan that meets OCTA's current and future operational and technical requirements outlined in the scope of work. The platform incorporates advanced features, including artificial intelligence-driven real-time fleet management, third-party provider integration, and predictive tools designed to improve service reliability and operational efficiency. The firm demonstrated its software's capacity to address common transit agency challenges—such as vehicle breakdowns—using proprietary

tools like the "Breakdown Wizard" and "Duty Time Travel" functionalities. Also demonstrated was the platform's integration with Google Real-Time Traffic, enabling routing that will dynamically and proactively avoid traffic congestion to minimize delays. The proposal also included a well-defined timeline and robust support for change management, demonstrating the firm's capabilities to deliver a successful project, timely transition, implementation, and long-term sustainability. Spare Lab's platform is the only proposed solution that meets all OCTA's required software features as identified in the scope of work.

During the interview, Spare Labs conducted a real-time demonstration of its proposed software, showcasing its functionality across all service types, including OC ACCESS, Same-Day Taxi, and the Senior Mobility Program. The platform's integrated architecture enables the management of rider eligibility management workflows and service operations within a single, centralized system, streamlining administrative processes and improving service coordination. Additionally, the system supports multiple trip-booking methods, enhancing accessibility and convenience for a diverse rider base while meeting all of OCTA's business requirements.

RideCo proposed a comprehensive, web-based cloud platform that includes essential tools for transit operations, such as core dispatching software, rider profile management, a reservation portal, operations dashboards, a centralized data repository, data visualization tools, customer support ticketing, and data export capabilities. The platform is designed to support OCTA's on-demand transit services. However, RideCo's proposal identified four of OCTA's required software features as future enhancements not currently available as of proposal submission, which would make OCTA one of the first customers to utilize these new features. These business requirements identified as future enhancements include the ability for the driver to add additional passengers to a trip, ability for the driver to remove additional passengers from a trip, ability for the driver to add additional fares, and the ability to perform queries that would generate editable charts.

While the work plan addresses most of OCTA's service and technical requirements, concerns remain regarding the platform's flexibility – specifically its capabilities for trip data reconciliation and end-user-driven custom report generation.

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. The cost evaluation is based on the assumption that completed trips will range between one million and 1.5 million during fiscal year 2025-26 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. Spare Labs proposed the lower total price of the short-listed firms and 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, and the information obtained from the interviews, the evaluation committee recommends the selection of Spare Labs as the top-ranked firm to provide paratransit and microtransit software. 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 2025-26 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-5-3930 between the Orange County Transportation Authority and Spare Labs Inc., in the amount of $969,524, for a two-year initial term with one, five-year option term to provide paratransit and microtransit software.

Attachments

A. Review of Proposals, RFP 5-3930 Paratransit and Microtransit Software
B. Proposal Evaluation Criteria Matrix (Short-Listed Firms), RFP 5-3930 Paratransit and Microtransit Software
C. Contract History for the Past Two Years, RFP 5-3930 Paratransit and Microtransit Software

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