



Council Communication

Office of the City Manager

Date July 27, 2009

Agenda Item No. 44C
Roll Call No. 09-
Communication No. 09-520
Submitted by: Jeb E. Brewer, P.E.
City Engineer

AGENDA HEADING:

Authorizing the purchase of four Changeable Message Signs (CMS's) from the lowest compliant bidders, at a total cost of \$68,840.

SYNOPSIS:

Recommend approval of the purchase of four CMS's. Two full-size CMS's would be purchased from Iowa Plains Signing, Inc., Randall Miller, President, 1110 West 6th Ave., Slater, Iowa 50244. Two smaller "mini" CMS's would be purchased from Roadsafe Traffic Systems, Michael Catalonello, CEO, 1805 NE 58th Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50313.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: \$68,840

Funding Source: 2009-2010 Operating Budget, Engineering Department, Fund SP360, ENG100422, Traffic Engineering, page 96.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The Traffic and Transportation Division has requested the Finance Department, Procurement Division, to purchase four new CMS's. Two of these units would be replacements for existing full-size CMS's that are past the age of their useful life. Two additional smaller CMS's, or "mini's," were also requested to be used to supplement the larger boards.

These CMS's are trailer-mounted large electronic message signs, and are used throughout the City and by various departments. They assist in notifying the motorists of upcoming street closures and traffic pattern changes, along with recommended traffic routes to large special events. They have also been used to identify street closures and detours during flooding situations. These signs are critical in maintaining traffic flow during these situations, and a high priority in citizen surveys.

On June 30, 2009, bids were opened by the City Procurement Administrator for the purchase of two full-size CMS's and two "mini" CMS's. Nine bids were solicited, and four were received. The lowest overall bidder, Ver-Mac, Inc., from Quebec, Canada, did not meet the specifications for the units requested. The next two overall low bidders, Roadsafe Traffic Systems from Des Moines, Iowa, and Iowa Plains Signing, Inc., from Slater, Iowa, fully meet and comply with the bidding requirements and are recommended for approval to provide the equipment.

Ver-Mac, Inc., submitted a low bid of \$62,000 for their CMS's. However, their proposed units are substantially below the City's specification requirements. A number of these would negatively affect the future costs for operation and maintenance of their units. Several of these are summarized below:

1. The Ver-Mac CMS units do not meet the required ground clearance, or have a torsion axle. These units must frequently be pulled over rough or uneven terrain, which necessitates both of these requirements.
2. The Ver-Mac units do not meet the requirement that the sign be constructed of individual modules that are sealed, interchangeable and easily replaced. Their units require additional periodic cleaning, and sign repair would generally involve servicing by an outside source.
3. The Ver-Mac units are not fully National Transportation Communications for Intelligent Transportation Systems (NTCIP) compatible, which is an industry standard for uniformity in communications to the sign units. For instance, this standard allows an operator to control all CMS units with the same software, regardless of the manufacturer.

In addition to this, staff contacted representatives from the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT), who have approximately 80 CMS's throughout Iowa. They are in the process of phasing out all of their Ver-Mac brand CMS's over the next 5 years, replacing them with CMS's that would be similar to the City's recommended units. None of the IDOT's current CMS's located within the Des Moines metropolitan area are Ver-Mac units. It is desirable that IDOT's signs and the City's proposed signs have the ability to be operated by either entity, as may occur during major planned or unplanned events.

It is very important from an operational standpoint that all four units be manufactured by the same company. This will ensure software compatibility, consistent operational processes when used by various City departments and uniform maintenance requirements and replacement parts. The recommendation is to purchase four Addco CMS units that are made by the same manufacturer by accepting the bids for two full sized Addco CMS units from Iowa Plains Signing and two small Addco units from Roadsafe Traffic Systems. If the City was willing to accept different manufacturers, there could be a savings of \$540; however, this savings would be quickly lost due to the additional ongoing operational and maintenance costs because of the software incompatibility, inconsistent operational processes and the need to train staff for maintenance and stock replacement parts from two different manufacturers. Therefore, staff recommends purchase of the Addco CMS units from Iowa Plains Signing and Roadsafe Traffic Systems.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S): NONE

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS: NONE

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