
REPORT TITLE: Extension of TransHelp Service Contracts – Document 2016-061T

FROM: Kealy Dedman, Commissioner of Public Works

RECOMMENDATION

That the current TransHelp Service Contracts (Document 2016-061T) for the supply of Accessible Transportation Services, between the Region of Peel and A Black Cab, All Star Taxi, Brampton Accessible Taxi, Blue & White Taxi, Burt Transportation Service, CANES Community Care, Supertrans Logistics Ltd., Tor Taxi, and Wheelchair Accessible, be extended 12 months beginning June 20, 2021, in the estimated amount of \$7,500,000 (excluding applicable taxes), in accordance with Procurement By-law 30-2018, as amended;

And further, that approval be granted to extend the contract for one additional 12-month period in 2022 to 2023, based on satisfactory services, performance, and pricing, in accordance with Procurement By-law 30-2018, as amended;

And further, that authority be given to increase quantities on an as required basis to the extent of approved budget availability for this and subsequent contract periods, to satisfy the passenger demand needs of TransHelp, based on satisfactory price, performance and service.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The current vendors supplying Accessible Transportation Services to the Region are well versed in TransHelp policies and procedures and have invested in personal protective equipment in compliance with health protocols to ensure the safety of our passengers during the pandemic.
- TransHelp passengers have a strong rapport with current vendors and will experience less stress knowing a consistent level of service will continue to be maintained during these unprecedented times.
- Under current COVID-19 restrictions, it may not be practicable to appropriately onboard and train new vendors at this time.
- Extending the current contract with existing vendors makes sense until a post-pandemic recovery phase begins.
- In accordance with Procurement By-law 30-2018, as amended, Section 5.5.2, and approval authorities outlined in Procurement Procedure F35-05 Purchase Orders and Vendor Contracts, the process to extend the service contract requires Regional Council approval.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

TransHelp provides services to residents using a combination of its own buses and contracted vehicles. Contracted services make up approximately 70 per cent of TransHelp's overall trip delivery. The Region of Peel issued a Request for Tender Document 2016-061T, where all vendors who met the mandatory requirements were subsequently awarded the contract. The Contract successfully secured a roster of qualified vendors to provide accessible transportation services, on an as required basis, based on the needs of TransHelp passengers.

The following nine vendors are currently active and providing accessible transportation services under this contract:

- A Black Cab
- All Star Taxi
- Brampton Accessible Taxi
- Blue & White Taxi
- Burt Transportation Service
- CANES Community Care
- Supertrans Logistics Ltd
- Tor Taxi
- Wheelchair Accessible

A significant portion of the TransHelp operating budget is allocated to contracted services. In 2019 the total amount paid to vendors was \$12.8M. In 2020, due to a sharp decline in trip demand, related to COVID-19, spending on contracts totaled just \$5.4M. It is expected that TransHelp will continue to rely on contracted vendors to deliver the largest share of TransHelp trips once demand rebounds. As a result, spending on these contracts will also increase.

This is the final year of the contract which ends June 19, 2021. Under normal circumstances a new competitive procurement process would be initiated to contract the accessible transportation services to a roster of qualified vendors. Upon award of a new contract, the onboarding and training of new vendors would begin.

2. Service Delivery During the Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, TransHelp like many transit services, has experienced a reduction in passenger volumes. In 2020, TransHelp trips decreased by approximately 65 per cent. Although much remains uncertain, it is expected the lower demand for trips will continue through 2021 but will likely rebound in 2022.

At the onset of the pandemic many changes were made to prioritize the health and safety of our staff and passengers who continued using the service. These changes include implementation of:

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Increased cleaning of equipment and vehicles
- Active passenger screening protocols when booking and before boarding
- Reduced passenger capacity on vehicles to ensure social distancing

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The vendors who provide service to the passengers under this contract have played a vital role in ensuring that TransHelp continued delivering high quality services during the pandemic. Throughout these unprecedented times, the vendors have continued their commitment to providing safe transportation despite significantly reduced trip volumes and revenues. The vendors have taken extra precautions to guarantee the safety of their own employees and TransHelp passengers. Extending the current contract to these vendors will allow the Region to continue providing uninterrupted service to TransHelp passengers while reducing stress and disruption during the pandemic.

Current vendors are well versed in TransHelp policies and procedures and have invested in PPE in compliance with health protocols to ensure the safety of TransHelp passengers. Training new vendors with current safety measures would be difficult and would require significantly more time. The onboarding of new vendors requires in-person training and orientation. Current COVID-19 restrictions would make the process of onboarding new vendors difficult to manage safely in addition to risking service quality for our passengers.

3. Proposed Direction

The learning curve for new vendors can be several months to more than a year. Under the current COVID-19 restrictions, the amount of in-person training that is necessary for new vendors would be difficult to complete while ensuring the high-quality service TransHelp passengers have come to expect and deserve. As such, extending the current contract with existing vendors makes sense until a post-pandemic recovery phase begins.

In accordance with Procurement By-law 30-2018, Section 5.5.2, and approval authorities outlined in Procurement Procedure F35-05 Purchase Orders and Vendor Contracts, the process to extend the service contract requires Regional Council approval.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

Although vendors currently under contract are not obligated to agree to an extension, TransHelp management met with them during the month of March to discuss the possibility of an extension, should the recommendation be approved by Regional Council. All the vendors indicated a willingness to continue with the current contract.

There is much uncertainty about when a post-pandemic recovery might occur. Issuing a new tender at a time when trip volumes are temporarily lower may result in higher pricing that could have unintended budget implications. Furthermore, onboarding new vendors during the pandemic could result in an increase of passenger dissatisfaction, stress, and anxiety.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding is available in the TransHelp services operating Budget.

For further information regarding this report, please contact Mark Castro, Director, TransHelp, Ext. 6850, mark.castro@peelregion.ca.

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