

TITLE: Circulator Study – City of Billings Planning

COMMITTEE: Development Committee

PRESENTED BY: DBP Staff

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT: A downtown trolley and or circulator has been a part of the Framework Plan and the Urban Renewal plans of the N. 27th District as well as the old TIF District since the development of the Framework.

A new committee has been formed to evaluate the project, and it includes: The City of Billings (Planning and MET); the downtown Alliance; property owners; merchants; and other involved citizens. The City of Billings has offered to fund 60% of the cost of a study to evaluate and establish a “trial/test” plan to operate a program that could lead to a permanent circulator system. The project will:

TASK 1: PROJECT ADMINISTRATION AND COORDINATION

LSC Transport Consultants, Inc. (LSC) will meet with the local working group to develop specific goals for the pilot project. This will build on previous discussions and local efforts. LSC will provide monthly updates to the working group regarding the project progress.

TASK 2: DEVELOP OPERATIONS PLAN

LSC will refine the proposed route based on operating parameters such as stop locations, traffic control devices, and running times. The operations plan will focus on developing a system with a minimum frequency of 30 minutes with recommendations for possible different frequencies during peak time periods. We will prepare a draft schedule showing times at key stops.

TASK 3: RESEARCH VEHICLE AND OPERATOR AVAILABILITY

Based on the operations plan we will research the availability of vehicles. We will look at several types of vehicles, but will constrain the research to vehicles which would be appropriate to this service. There are several possible operators in the Billings area. We will contact the operators to determine the possible level of interest in operating the service and possible costs. Other considerations such as driver qualifications will be incorporated into the assessment of possible operators.

TASK 4: OUTLINE MARKETING PLAN

Marketing of the pilot service will be very important. To have a successful test, potential users must be made aware of the service and encouraged to use it. We will outline marketing activities which should be undertaken as part of the pilot project. LSC will not develop specific marketing materials. Cost of marketing pieces will be included in the cost estimates for the pilot project.

TASK 5: DEVELOP MONITORING PROGRAM

Performance of the pilot service should be monitored to provide information regarding the results of the pilot service and to determine the feasibility of starting a permanent service. Recommendations will be provided for collection of operational and ridership data and for reporting of service performance.

TASK 6: PREPARE DRAFT AND FINAL REPORTS

We will prepare a Draft Plan for review by the local working group. We will attend a meeting of the working group to present the recommendations, to answer questions, and to receive input. The Plan will include specific steps for implementing the pilot program based on the service plan, availability of vehicles, potential operators, and marketing activity. The operations plan and a financial plan will be included. We will then prepare a Final Plan for use by the local working group to initiate the pilot program.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: The study will cost \$20,000 with the TIFD contributing \$8,000. Fund 203 can sustain this expense in FY 2012. City Council approval will be required.

Resolution:

The Board approved the request.