REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
TO CONDUCT A PLANNING PROCESS TO HELP THE NORTH TEXAS REGION PREPARE
FOR AUTOMATED TRANSPORTATION AND RELATED TECHNOLOGIES

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Question #1: In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, would NCTCOG waive the requirement for hard copy proposal submittals?

Response: NCTCOG will accept hard copy submissions as outlined in the instructions. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and associated challenges, NCTCOG is providing an alternate method for electronic submission, if proposers so choose. If submitting electronically, proposers should mail a flash drive that contains one file preferably with indexed sections. Whether submitting a hard copy or electronic submission, proposal responses must be received in-hand by 5:00 p.m., August 7, 2020 at NCTCOG offices. Responses received after the deadline will not be considered. Flash drives that are unreadable or contain corrupted files will be considered non-responsive.

Question #2: In the first numbered paragraph of the Instructions for Proposals Planning Services, it states “Proposals containing signatures and notary seals should be labeled “Original.” Given the current COVID situation, will an electronic signature be acceptable?

Response: NCTCOG will accept wet and electronic signatures. Additionally, NCTCOG will waive the requirement for a notary seal on Appendix D.2 – Affidavit of Intended Entrepreneurship.

Question #3: Did the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) have a contractor/consultant that helped create the “Mobility 2045” report?

Response: No, NCTCOG staff developed the Mobility 2045 report.

Question #4: If so, who is that consultant and will they be precluded from proposing on this Request for Proposals (RFP)?

Response: No consultant was hired to help develop the Mobility 2045 report.

Question #5: Will the consultant(s) selected for the planning effort be precluded from bidding on the following phases?

Response: No, proposing on this RFP is not expected to preclude participation in future phases of the project.

Question #6: Would it be acceptable to propose on only a portion of the RFP?

Response: It is highly unlikely that such a partial proposal will garner a high enough score to prevail. NCTCOG expects that proposals will be fully responsive to the RFP.

Question #7: If Consultant interviews are needed, will they be conducted online via Microsoft Teams?
Response: Yes, interviews will be conducted via Microsoft Teams. For such meetings, a telephone call-in number for the Teams meeting will also be provided.

Question #8: If we submit questions well in advance of the July 24 deadline for questions, will you go ahead and post the responses? Or will you wait until the response deadline of July 29?

Response: No, NCTCOG will answer all questions at one time. All responses will be posted on www.nctcog.org/rfp.

Question #9: On page 1 of the Instruction for proposals, under bullet 2, Proposal Formatting – Proposals should be printed double-sided and include a footer containing consultant firm name, page number, and total pages in proposal (e.g. Planning firm 1 of 20). Please confirm if there is a page limit? If there is a page limit, would the cover, cover letter, resumes, project descriptions, and/or forms count in the page limit?

Response: There is no page limit. Our focus is on the content of the proposal not the page count. That said, submissions with large page counts will not receive special consideration, for or against them.

Question #10: On page 10 of the RFP, under the “Consultant Selection Criteria and Award”, bullet 4, Project Cost: 15%. Since there was no information regarding a cost proposal was included in the Instruction for Proposals document, please confirm if we need to include this with our proposal? And if so, would you prefer it as a separate document?

Response: Yes, a cost proposal should be submitted with the Request for Proposal. A budget template has been uploaded to www.nctcog.org/rfp.

Question #11: After reading through the Instructions for Proposers PDF, it is unclear if there are page limits, font size requirements, margin limits, etc. Can you please advise or confirm that there are no formatting requirements besides including the firm name, page number, total pages in proposal in the footer?

Response: Please see the response to Question #9. Additionally, NCTCOG does not have specific requirements for formatting (e.g. font size requirements, margin limits) above and beyond including the firm name, page number, total pages in proposal in the footer.

Question #12: Will NCTCOG respond to the questions on a rolling basis or only after the July 24 deadline for question submittals?

Response: Please see the response to Question #8.

Question #13: Good morning. I wanted to ask whether a firm needs to hold a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification at the time of submission for an RFP or if they could obtain it after the procurement win was announced and before contracting?

Response: A firm can secure a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification after submission of the RFP. After contract award, in order for a firm’s activities and/or expenses to be counted toward the DBE goal for the project the certification process would need to be completed.

Question #14: Hello, we are at the University of Texas at Austin Center for Transportation Research and are considering joining a team to apply to the Automated Transportation and Related Technologies – Questions and Responses
Related Technologies RFP. We wanted to double check to see if there is any reason why a public university could not join as a partner on a proposal?

**Response:** This project is funded with Federal Highway Administration funds. Under 23 Code of Federal Regulations 635.112(e), public agencies are prohibited from submitting a bid in competition or to enter into subcontracts with private contractors to submit a bid. As such, and consistent with this requirement, public sector agencies are unable to compete as a prime or participate as a partner/subcontractor on this project.

**Question #15:** I wanted to check in regarding this below RFP- is this considered more for consultants as a planning product or is it open to academia as more of a study? TTI abides by the consultant agreement within Texas and have been approached by a potential partner.

**Response:** Please see the response to Question #14.

**Question #16:** Should bidders include Appendix B (Budget) in the Compliance Requirements section, or would NCTCOG prefer we provide our pricing proposal as a separate document?

**Response:** Appendix B – Budget should be included in the Compliance Requirements.

**Question #17:** Could NCTCOG provide an Excel version of Appendix B (Form 60)?

**Response:** An excel version of Appendix B has been uploaded to www.nctcog.org/rfp.

**Question #18:** Should bidders provide a separate Appendix B form for each subcontractor, or 1 form for our entire team?

**Response:** The prime and each subcontractor should complete a separate Appendix B – Budget document. The Prime’s form should include reference to each of the subcontractors. The Excel file included at www.nctcog.org/rfp includes a tab for the Prime consultant and then should have individual tabs for subconsultants. Two subconsultant tabs are included in the template file, additional tabs should be added as needed.

**Question #19:** Should subcontractors complete any forms (specifically Appendices G-H or the CIQ)?

**Response:** Subconsultants are required to complete Appendix B – Budget, Appendix G.1 – Lower Tier Participant Debarment Certification, Appendix H – Restrictions on Lobbying and Appendix H.2 Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, if applicable; and the Conflict of Interest Questionnaire.

**Question #20:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our offices remain closed and our staff are working remotely. This situation makes it difficult to obtain original signatures on documents, to collect hard copies and original signatures from subcontractors who may also be working remotely, and to print and sign large volumes of documentation. Given the important public health concerns, as well as concerns of at risk individuals, and the current remote working environment for many consultants, would NCTCOG allow (1) digital, scanned, or electronic signatures in place of original signatures, and (2) electronic submittal of proposals in place of 8 hard copies?

**Response:** Please see the responses to Question #1 and Question #2.
Question #21: Are cost proposals submitted by proponents required to comply with federal acquisition regulation (FAR) part 31 (federal cost principles for for-profit entities)?

Response: Federal cost principles under 2 CFR 200 are applicable for contractors procured by NCTCOG. However, NCTCOG does review overhead rates for consistency with FAR Part 31.

Question #22: Do rates need to be based on raw direct pay rate times overhead?

Response: Proposers should identify the raw labor rate by positions. There is a separate field in the excel file for identification of the overhead rate.

Question #23: Can profit be applied to rate inclusive of overhead?

Response: Yes, profit should be applied to labor and overhead.

Question #24: Is there a fillable excel file you can provide for the Form 60 Budget?

Response: An excel version of the Form 60 budget has been added to the website.

Question #25: Are subconsultants required to fill out their own Form 60/Budget?

Response: Please see the response to Question #19.

Question #26: Is Attachment D.2 - Affidavit of Intended Entrepreneurship required for submission for subconsultants with proposal response or when contract is awarded?

Response: The prime consultant should complete Appendix D.2 as part of the proposal submission. This form will also be reviewed and updated, as applicable, at contract award.

Question #27: When will the project commence?

Response: The proposed start date for the project is November 2020.

Question #28: What will the Public Opening of Proposals meeting include, what is the meeting agenda?

Response: The Public Opening of Proposals will include a reading aloud of the names of firm’s who have submitted a proposal.

Question #29: Are subconsultants required to fill out the following forms?

- Appendix B – Budget (Form 60)
- Appendix D – DBE
  - Attachment D.1 – Compliance Assurance
  - Attachment D.2 - Affidavit of Intended Entrepreneurship
- Appendix G.1 – Lower Tier Participant Debarment Certification
- Appendix H – Restrictions on Lobbying
  - Appendix H.1 – Lobbying Certification
  - Appendix H.2 – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- Conflict of Interest Questionnaire

Response: Please see the response to Question #19.
Question #30: Is NCTCOG planning to establish engagement requirements as a result of COVID. For example, many cities are establishing new public engagement requirements like longer lead time for surveys, being more prescriptive about engagement metrics, etc.

Response: Revised requirements have not been developed, yet, but as the situation with COVID19 continues to develop, our policies may be revised at some point. Consultants will receive notification in advance of any possible changes, furthermore, we are looking for the proposer's ideas and best professional judgment on this topic.

Question #31: What is the expectation for both client and public in person meetings for 2021?

Response: NCTCOG welcomes ideas and solutions that both (1) meet the intent of AV2.1, and (2) adapt to the new situation we find ourselves in with COVID-19 and the need to take public health and safety seriously.

Question #32: In consideration of work site restrictions associated with the COVID-19 outbreak and the rise in recent cases, (and challenges associated with printing and mailing) would NCTCOG consider allowing electronic PDF submission of the proposal via email and waive the requirement of printed copies? Please let us know if there are any alternatives to submitting printed responses.

Response: Please see the response to Question #1.

Question #33: Does NCTCOG have a standard Overhead and profit rate percentage they want subconsultants to use if they do not have audited rates?

Response: NCTCOG does not have a standard overhead or profit rate. Firm’s should include in their budget proposal their standard overhead rate. Proposed profit rates will be analyzed based on the complexity of the work to be performed, the risk borne by the consultant, the amount of subcontractors, the quality/record of past performance on NCTCOG contracts, and industry profit rates in the surrounding geographical area for similar work.

Question #34: Please verify whether you will be considering the use of Microsoft Teams, WebEx or other virtual method to conduct interviews, if required.

Response: Please see the response to Question #7.

Question #35: In our proposal, is it acceptable to acknowledge DBE participation for a proposed subconsultant that recently submitted an application with NCTCOG and still awaiting approval?

Response: Yes, DBE participation for a subconsultant that is still pending certification is acceptable in the proposal response. Documentation should be included to show certification is in process.

Question #36: The RFP does not include a total page count. Can you confirm that there is not a page requirement for the proposal?

Response: Correct, there is not a page requirement. NCTCOG’s focus is on the content of the proposal not the page count. That said, submissions with large page counts will not receive special consideration, for or against them.
Question #37: Can firms certified by Women Owned Small Business from WBENC and Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) qualify for DBE through TUCP?


Question #38: Is NCTCOG planning to establish engagement requirements as a result of COVID. For example, many cities are establishing new public engagement requirements like longer lead time for surveys, being more prescriptive about engagement metrics, etc.

Response: Please see the responses to Question #30 and Question #31.

Question #39: What is the expectation for in-person client and public meetings for 2021?

Response: Please see the response to Question #31.

Question #40: Are resumes required for submittal for each key senior staff provided? If they are required, where should we place those in the proposal response? Would and appendix section be acceptable?

Response: Proposal responses should include resumes for key senior staff. Resumes should be provided in a separate section.

Question #41: On page 11 of the RFP, the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Participation section states, "Respondents should also include an Affirmative Action Plan in the proposal. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in finding the proposal non-responsive." Title 41, Subpart B, Chapter 60, Part 60-2 of the Code of Federal Regulations indicates companies with less than 50 employees are not required to have an Affirmative Action Plan.

QUESTION: May prime contractors proposing who have less than 50 employees submit an Equal Employment Opportunity policy as an alternative?

Response: Yes, proposers with less than 50 employees may submit an Equal Employment Opportunity plan. Proposers should include a statement regarding their firm size with the EEO plan.

Question #42: For Task 4, are any scenarios already scoped with NCTCOG or are all scenarios yet to be scoped as part of this project?

Response: NCTCOG has not scoped any scenarios.

Question #43: Can you confirm that this contract is Cost Plus Fixed Fee?

Response: NCTCOG expects the awarded contract will be a Cost Plus Fixed Fee.

Question #44: Is NCTCOG willing to negotiate certain terms in its Sample Contract? Specifically the Indemnification clause.

Response: NCTCOG would only consider modifications to its standard contract provisions in the event of fatal flaws. NCTCOG will not entertain wording or syntax preferences.
**Question #45:** Appendix B states that Form 60 is required when "substitution for the Optional Form 59 is authorized by the contracting officer," though the solicitation documents do not explicitly state that Form 60 is authorized to be substituted for Form 59 by the contracting officer. Could you confirm that the contracting officer has authorized the substitution of Form 59 with Form 60?

**Response:** NCTCOG will not be utilizing the Form 60 for this contract. An excel version of the Budget file for this project has been uploaded to [www.nctcog.org/rfp](http://www.nctcog.org/rfp).

**Question #46:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our company has shifted to remote operations to ensure the safety of its employees. The hard copy and notarization requirements cannot be completed without risking exposure to employees and our office space. Would NCTCOG consider waiving the hard copy and notarization requirements in light of the pandemic and the extenuating circumstances surrounding it? We would happily provide electronic signatures and submission documents in lieu of the hard copy and notarization requirements.

**Response:** Please see the responses to Questions #1 and Questions #2.

**Question #47:** If the hard copy and notarization requirements are maintained, would NCTCOG consider accepting proposals with a postmark date of August 5, 2020 due to courier delays that have been observed in Texas?

**Response:** Please see the responses to Questions #1 and Questions #2.

**Question #48:** On page 3 of the Instruction to Proposers, Section 7 states, "Overhead rates will be subject to approval and must be based on audited financial records; copies of support data for the overhead rate will be requested." In the event that the Proposer does not have audited financial records, may the Proposer use the Texas Department of Transportations’ Indirect Cost Rate of 120%?

**Response:** No, NCTCOG has not adopted safe harbor rates for overhead costs.

**Question #49:** Are you willing and able to share the list of current members (or volunteers) for the Project Advisory Committee (PAC)? If no, can you tell us the types of agencies who are engaged (ie. Toll authorities, counties, airport, DOT, etc.)?

**Response:** The Advisory Committee is not yet formed. Our intent is to bring together a wide range of expertise to inform and guide this project. We welcome recommendations in your proposal and anticipate discussing the composition of the Advisory Committee with the selected consultant.

**Question #50:** In paragraph 1 of task 2.1 Stakeholder Engagement of the RFP; It is not clear whether "community representatives" should be included in the PAC. Can that be clarified?

**Response:** Please see the response to Question #49.

**Question #51:** Are small firms who do not have a federal audit permitted to use a safe harbor rate and if so, what rate is acceptable?

**Response:** Please see the response to Question #48.
Question #52: Do the compliance forms (Appendices C-I) need to be completed by the prime consultant only, or do subconsultants need to complete all of them, as well?

Response: The prime and subconsultants should complete compliance requirements. See additional information in response to Question #19.

Question #53: In researching the Form 60 (which was a GSA form) it seems to be retired or obsolete. Can we confirm this is the most updated form and ask for clarification on Footnotes 1-4?

Response: Please see the response to Question #45.

Question #54: Is there a page limit on submittal?

Response: Please see the response to Question #9.

Question #55: Are manual (wet) signatures required on forms or can electronic signatures suffice?

Response: Please see the response to Question #2.

Question #56: Will participation by the prime or subcontractors in this AV 2.1 planning process prohibit or limit involvement in future NCTCOG efforts specific to AV 2.2 and AV 2.3?

Response: Please see the response to Question #5.

Question #57: Reference is made to Form 60 which asks for overhead rates. Our accounting procedures, regulations and systems do not produce an audited overhead rate. Can NCTCOG advise how to complete the form with market-based rates?

Response: Please see the response to Question #33.

Question #58: For Task 2, does NCTCOG wish to use the established approach outlined in the “Public Participation Plan for the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolitan Area” (November 2018) or is latitude provided to the proposer to develop a comprehensive approach that meets NCTCOG’s requirements?

Response: The Public Participation Plan (PPP) does not directly affect the public engagement process associated with the AV2.1 RFP; it will directly affect the process for assigning funds to the project following the Executive Board’s approval of the recommended consultant selection. As for the AV2.1 RFP’s public engagement plan, we are looking for the proposer’s ideas and best professional judgment.

Question #59: Given potential production and delivery complications posed by COVID-19, would NCTCOG be willing to accept electronic submissions of proposals in lieu of hard copies?

Response: Please see the response to Question #1.
Question #60: The RFP encourages “modifications” to the tasks and task sequencing to improve the effectiveness of the study effort (pg. 4 of RFP). Can NCTCOG describe how any such modifications will be evaluated in the context of the enumerated evaluation criteria on page 9-10 of the RFP? For example, if a proposed modification is otherwise inconsistent with the RFP requirements, but would improve the effectiveness of the study effort, how would such a modification be evaluated and scored?

Response: We encourage applications to creatively address the evaluation criteria. Modifications to the criteria are acceptable so long as the suggested modification is clearly identified, and a case is made as to how the modification(s) will help NCTCOG realize its goal of a high-quality regional AV study.

Question #61: If NCTCOG elects to conduct interviews prior to its final decision, does it expect the interviews to be in person or virtual?

Response: Please see the response to Question #7.

Question #62: We note the DBE requirement in Appendix D of the sample contract and the RFP notes a 31.3% DBE participation rate. The ITP notes a DBE % of 28.4%. Please clarify the DBE participation goal.

Response: NCTCOG Transportation Department has an overall DBE goal of 28.4%. This goal is achieved by identifying contract goals by project type. As a planning project, the specific DBE goal for this project is 31.3%.

Question #63: Can NCTCOG identify the funding partners for this project?

Response: The funding partners for this project include the Federal Highway Administration and the Texas Department of Transportation. There are no private funding partners at this time.

Question #64: Does NCTCOG anticipate using federal funds for this project?

Response: Yes, the contract awarded for this project will be funded using federal funds.

Question #65: Would you please provide any insurance requirements or related information?

Response: NCTCOG is not requiring insurance for this particular engagement. However, firms will have to agree to NCTCOG’s indemnification provisions.

Question #66: Budget: In regard to Schedule and Budget the RFP states that in light of budgetary challenges associated with COVID-19, NCTCOG encourages efficient work plans and cost-effective proposals. Given the other challenges associated with COVID-19, (1) does NCTCOG intend, and therefore the consultant, to host virtual or in-person meetings, or a combination thereof; and (2) how should this be addressed for purposes of budgeting?

Response: We invite those making proposals to use professional judgment when developing plans, but NCTCOG is not requiring in-person meetings.
Question #67: Should the financial impact analysis be confined to revenue impacts and potential associated cost savings or are you expecting the assessment to include a capital cost analysis?

Response: The consultant is invited to use their professional judgment on what makes the most sense for the project.

Question #68: Task 6 seeks a guide for AV deployment please confirm whether the focus is on ground transportation, inclusive of micromobility as opposed to drones (air to ground UAV)?

Response: Consultants are encouraged to use their professional judgment whether automated ground and aerial transportation should be covered together in this study or whether the scope should be limited to ground transportation and AV applications of micromobility at the surface transportation level. NCTCOG is looking to industry for its assessment of better approach.

Question #69: The budget spreadsheet requests direct labor rates and number of hours. Is it necessary to list the names and hours for each person who might work on the project or would billing rates for job categories suffice, particularly for non-key personnel?

Response: The budget may be completed using billing rates by positions.

Question #70: In the first numbered paragraph of the Instructions for Proposals Planning Services, it states “Proposals containing signatures and notary seals should be labeled “Original.” Is an original signature mandatory, or will you accept electronic signatures on all hardcopies?

Response: Please see the response to Question #2.

Question #71: In Task 2.2, does NCTCOG envision that the Consultant will host the project website and provide all development, testing, and production environments? Or will the project website be hosted on NCTCOG infrastructure?

Response: NCTCOG will host the website, our platform is Kentico MVC, and we will manage content after the contract is complete. NCTCOG will provide a development and production environment for the selected consultant, subject to NCTCOG’s Application Environment Criteria (posted on www.nctcog.org/rfp).

Question #72: For how long after completion of the plan will the Consultant be expected to support and enhance the project website?

Response: Please see the response to Question #71.