

TO: Regional Transportation Commission – Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies

FROM: Grace Blakeslee, Transportation Planner

RE: SAFE Call Box Program TTY (teletypewriter) and Digital Upgrades

RECOMMENDATION

The joint SCCRTC, MTC and CHP staff selection committee and staff SCCRTC recommend that the Regional Transportation Commission serving as the Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE):

1. Approve the attached resolution (Attachment 3) authorizing the Executive Director to award and enter into a contract with Comarco Wireless Technology to:
 - a. Add TTYs (teletypewriters) to the Santa Cruz County call box system in order to improve accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing call box users;
 - b. Convert call boxes from analog to digital technology; and
 - c. Produce a site survey and recommended improvements to make the system fully accessible for the mobility impaired.
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BACKGROUND

Acting as the Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE) for Santa Cruz County, the Regional Transportation Commission owns and operates a system of 124 solar powered, cellular telephone service call boxes in Santa Cruz County along Highways 1, 9, 17, 129, and 152. Motorists may use call boxes to request assistance or report incidents. Call box calls are answered by a private call answering center that coordinates with the California Highway Patrol (CHP) as necessary.

As the SAFE, the SCCRTC levies a \$1 annual fee on all vehicles registered in Santa Cruz County. The funds raised are used to develop and maintain a motorist aid system consisting primarily of roadside call boxes along state highways and freeways. The funds may also be used for other motorist aid components such as Freeway Service Patrol (FSP), changeable message signs, and related programs. SCCRTC SAFE projects and programs are implemented in partnership with the CHP, Caltrans and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) SAFE.

In 2003 and 2004, staff worked with the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&D TAC) and the local deaf and hard of hearing community to consider options for call box accessibility improvements. The E&D TAC recommended adding TTY's (teletypewriters) to the call boxes along with a conversion to digital cellular

service technology. In March 2005, the RTC directed staff to work with MTC SAFE on a joint request for proposals (RFP) for improvements to the call box system to include TTY's, digital conversion and site surveys for other call box accessibility upgrades.

DISCUSSION

On April 22, 2005, MTC SAFE released an RFP for the installation of TTY's, upgrade to digital cellular communications and replacement of some concrete pads. On May 19, 2005, MTC SAFE released Addendum #1 to the RFP, which added the equipment purchase and installation of TTY and digital improvements to the Santa Cruz County call box system. Due to MTC's workload and the aggressive timeframe for the release of the RFP and subsequent addendums, the site survey of Santa Cruz County call boxes was not included in the RFP. However, before making any improvements, the selected firm will need to visit each call box site to inventory each location and this can be augmented to include a survey for other accessibility upgrades.

Proposal Evaluation

MTC SAFE received three proposals in response to the RFP. A selection committee composed of two RTC staff members, three MTC staff members, and a CHP representative employed MTC's standard process to evaluate the proposals and make a recommendation. The selection committee reviewed and evaluated each proposal based on the set criteria shown in Attachment 1, Call Box System Evaluation Forms A and B. Based on this evaluation the selection committee invited two firms for interviews and requested from each of the two firms a best and final offer (BAFO). After the interviews and after receiving the BAFO's the selection committee rated and compared the final proposals using the same criteria employed at the beginning of the process.

The selection committee determined that ASCI did not meet the proposal requirements. Both Comarco Wireless Technology and Republic Electric offered the required TTY and digital cellular communications board equipment at a competitive price and have experience on call box projects. Therefore, both Comarco Wireless and Republic Electric were invited for interviews. Both vendors TTY keyboard designs are similarly mounted to the inside faceplate of the call box (see Attachment 2 for photos). Although the site survey of Santa Cruz call boxes was not included in the RFP, both vendors indicated that the survey could be accomplished concurrently with the site retrofits and upgrades.

After the July 14th interviews, both vendors were asked to submit a Best and Final Offer (BAFO). In the Best and Final Offers, the vendors were asked to address the general and individual questions raised prior to and during the interview and discussions. Proposers were allowed to change any provision of their original proposal in their BAFO or re-submit their original proposal. BAFO's were received by MTC and SCCRTC on August 16th, 2005.

Vendor Selection

In summary, both vendors have experience on call box projects as reflected in the BAFO's and offered their services at a competitive price.

	Comarco	Republic Electric	Difference
Digital Cellular Upgrades	\$144,749	\$139,500	\$5,249
TTY Upgrades	\$111,600	\$80,600	\$31,000
TOTAL	\$256,349	\$220,100	\$36,249

Comarco Wireless Technology's BAFO package answered or clarified the concerns raised in the interview, demonstrated their ability to effectively manage the project, and lowered the price slightly.

On the other hand, in its BAFO package, Republic Electric failed to address the concerns raised during the interview process. Republic did not clarify whether their TTY system supported Hearing- and Voice- Carry Over (HCO/VCO) and whether the quoted price included the required illumination of the keypad in their, despite stating it in the interview. Additionally, they did not submit a detailed management plan as requested in Addendum 2, which requests an organizational chart showing all team members including subcontractors. It was still unclear to the selection committee how the project would be managed and who would be responsible for what. The selection committee did not have any personal interaction with the proposed project manager who did not attend the interview. Mr. Jim Wagner attended the interview on his behalf, but was not shown as a team member according to the management plan and organization chart submitted in the proposal.

Despite Republic's price being less than Comarco Wireless Technology, the selection committee felt the risk of Republic's proposal given the above weaknesses justified recommending Comarco Wireless Technology for the call box TTY and upgrade project. **Therefore the joint MTC SAFE, SCCRTC SAFE and CHP call box upgrade selection committee and staff recommend that the Commission approve the attached resolution (Attachment 3) authorizing the Executive Director to enter into an agreement with Comarco Wireless Technologies not to exceed \$260,000 in budgeted monies to complete call box upgrades including the installation of TTY's and digital cellular boards in Santa Cruz County call boxes and complete a site survey of all Santa Cruz County call boxes for mobility access.**

There are adequate funds in the RTC's approved FY 04/05 budget for this project. These funds will be carried over to the FY05/06 RTC budget in the next budget amendment, due next month.

Next Steps

RTC staff will communicate the selection of the consultant and the program timeline to the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee and request their input if any issues in their jurisdictions arise.

Cingular Wireless is currently the analogue cellular service provider for Santa Cruz County call boxes. Staff is investigating options for continuing the existing contract with the current provider for digital cellular service or working with a new digital cellular service provider. Staff will return to a future meeting with any necessary contract amendments or approval for a new contract for cellular service.

Comarco Wireless Technologies is currently the call box maintenance provider for Santa Cruz County SAFE. Once the upgrades are complete, staff will negotiate a new maintenance contract with Comarco Wireless Technologies in response to the demands of the upgraded equipment and new equipment warranties.

SUMMARY

As the Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (SAFE) for Santa Cruz County the Regional Transportation Commission owns and operates a system of 124 solar powered cellular telephone service call boxes in Santa Cruz County along Highways 1, 9, 17, 129, and 152. The SCCRTC SAFE and MTC SAFE participated in a joint procurement process for digital cellular board upgrades and TTY upgrades for Santa Cruz County and Bay Area call boxes. In response to the RFP and subsequent addendums released in May 2005, three vendors submitted proposals. A selection committee comprised of SCCRTC, MTC, and CHP staff, used MTC's evaluation process to rate the proposals. Two vendors were interviewed. Based on all the information available, the selection committee and RTC staff recommend that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to award and enter into a contract with Comarco Wireless Technologies for digital cellular and TTY upgrades and a site survey of Santa Cruz County call boxes.

Attachment 1: Call Box System Upgrade Evaluation Form A & B

Attachment 2: Pictures of the Proposed TTY Call Box Equipment

Attachment 3: Resolution Authorizing the Executive Director to enter into an agreement with Comarco Wireless Technologies