

Advertised: March 30, 2020

Southwestern Commission
REQUEST for LETTERS OF INTEREST (RFLOI)
Economic Analysis of a Potential Freight Rail Transload Facility
in Southwestern North Carolina

TITLE: Economic Analysis of a Potential Freight Rail Transload Facility in Southwestern North Carolina

ISSUE DATE: March 30, 2020

SUBMITTAL DEADLINE: April 30, 2020

ISSUING AGENCY: Southwestern Commission Council of Governments

SYNOPSIS

Subconsultants are permitted under this contract.

This contract shall be partially reimbursed with Federal-aid funding through the North Carolina Department of Transportation (hereinafter referred to as the Department). The solicitation, selection, and negotiation of a contract shall be conducted in accordance with all Department requirements and guidelines and those of the Southwestern Commission Council of Governments (Southwestern Commission).

The primary and any/all subconsultant firm(s) shall be pre-qualified to perform **any** of the work codes listed below for the Department:

- 234 – Studies of Economic and Fiscal Impact of Rail-Related Activities
- 437 – Viability Analysis & Support Work for Railroad-Related Projects
- 394 – Industrial and Yard Track Design and Layout
- 141 – Multimodal Transportation Planning
- 75 – Freight Forecasting
- 45 – Corridor Planning

WORK CODES for each primary and/or subconsultant firms(s) SHALL be listed on the respective RS-2 FORMS (see section 'SUBMISSION ORGANIZATION AND INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS').

This RFLOI is to solicit responses (LETTERS OF INTEREST, or LOIs) from qualified firms to provide professional consulting services to:

PROPOSED CONTRACT SCOPE SUMMARY

The Southwestern Commission will work with the selected consultant to study the economics of locating a freight rail transload facility in Southwestern North Carolina. The study area includes Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties. Task elements shall include:

- Identify industries and businesses with significant freight transportation needs that could be shipped by rail.
- Identify existing freight transport patterns and potential opportunities for improved efficiency.
- Determine the potential demand for a freight rail transload facility and the economic impact of a facility.
- Evaluate existing and potential capacity of rail providers GSMR and BLU to expand freight service.

Pending the outcomes of this study, a second RFLOI and contract may be issued to evaluate the physical site and infrastructure requirements of constructing a transload facility.

Projects costs shall not exceed \$75,000.

Electronic LOIs should be submitted in pdf format using Adobe.pdf.

LOIs SHALL be received ELECTRONICALLY, BY MAIL, OR HAND-DELIVERED no later than April 30, 2020. LOIs received after this deadline will not be considered.

The address for electronic deliveries is rose@regiona.org

The address for mailings and hand deliveries is:

Southwestern Commission

Attn: Rose Bauguess

125 Bonnie Lane

Sylva, NC 28779

Except as provided below any firm wishing to be considered must be properly registered with the Office of the Secretary of State and with the North Carolina Board of Examiners for Engineers and Surveyors. Any firm proposing to use corporate subsidiaries or subcontractors must include a statement that these companies are properly registered with the North Carolina Board of Examiners for Engineers and surveyors and/or the NC Board for Licensing of Geologists. The Engineers performing the work and in responsible charge of the work must be registered Professional Engineers in the State of North Carolina and must have a good ethical and professional standing. It will be the responsibility of the selected private firm to verify the registration of any corporate subsidiary or subcontractor prior to submitting a Letter of Interest. Firms which are not providing engineering services need not be registered with the North Carolina Board of Examiners for Engineers and Surveyors. Some of the services being

solicited may not require a license. It is the responsibility of each firm to adhere to all laws of the State of North Carolina.

The firm must have the financial ability to undertake the work and assume the liability. The selected firm(s) will be required to furnish proof of Professional Liability insurance coverage in the minimum amount of \$1,000,000.00. The firm(s) must have an adequate accounting system to identify costs chargeable to the project.

SCOPE OF WORK

The Southwestern Commission is soliciting proposals for the services of a firm/team for the following contract scope of work:

Proposed Contract Scope

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PROPOSED STUDY PROCESS AND DELIVERABLES

Start-up Review and Preparation:

- Review of existing data sources and literature.
- Interviews with major stakeholders, including business owners, rail companies, freight providers, economic development professionals and logistics professionals.

Existing Freight Transport Dynamics:

- Identify a representative collection of businesses representing various sizes and industries to conduct detailed analysis on freight transport dynamics.
- Quantify regional freight volumes, origins and destinations.
- Quantify existing freight transport costs.

Rail Freight Potential:

- Quantify potential freight rail costs.
- Determine the area of potential rail use (size of the “bubble”) and compare to truck transport.
- Determine quantities of product/rail cars needed to make economic sense.

Market Demand for Transload Facility:

- Development of full report;
- Economic impact on the region (jobs created, increased private investments, etc).

PROPOSED CONTRACT TIME: Project should be completed by March 31, 2021.

PROPOSED CONTRACT PAYMENT TYPE: Quarterly Invoices.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

All LOIs are limited to fifteen (15) pages (RS-2 forms are not included in the page count) inclusive of the cover sheet and shall be typed on 8½ x 11 sheets, single-space, one-sided.

Fold out pages are not allowed. In order to reduce costs and to facilitate recycling; binders, dividers, tabs, etc. are prohibited. One staple in the upper left-hand corner is preferred.

LOIs containing more than fifteen (15) pages will not be considered.

Firms submitting Statements are encouraged to carefully check them for conformance to the requirements stated above. If LOIs do not meet ALL of these requirements they will be disqualified. No exception will be granted.

SELECTION PROCESS

Following is a general description of the selection process:

- The Selection Committee will review all qualifying LOI submittals.
- The Selection Committee MAY, at its discretion, shortlist a minimum of three (3) firms to be interviewed. IF APPLICABLE, dates of shortlisting and dates for interviews are shown in the section SUBMISSION SCHEDULE AND KEY DATES at the end of this RFLOI.
- In order to be considered for selection, consultants must submit a complete response to the RFLOI prior to the specified deadlines. Failure to submit all information in a timely manner will result in disqualification.

SMALL PROFESSIONAL SERVICE FIRM (SPSF) PARTICIPATION

The Department encourages the use of Small Professional Services Firms (SPSF). Small businesses determined to be eligible for participation in the SPSF program are those meeting size standards defined by Small Business Administration (SBA) regulations, 13 CFR Part 121 in

Sector 54 under the North American Industrial Classification system (NAICS). The SPSF program is a race, ethnicity, and gender-neutral program designed to increase the availability of contracting opportunities for small businesses on federal, state or locally funded contracts. SPSF participation is not contingent upon the funding source.

The Firm, at the time the Letter of Interest is submitted, shall submit a listing of all known SPSF firms that will participate in the performance of the identified work. The participation shall be submitted on the Department's Subconsultant Form RS-2. RS-2 forms may be accessed on the Department's website at [NCDOT Connect Guidelines & Forms](#). The SPSF must be qualified with the Department to perform the work for which they are listed.

Real-time information about firms doing business with the Department and firms that are SPSF certified through the Contractual Services Unit is available in the Directory of Transportation Firms. The Directory can be accessed on the Department's website at [Directory of Firms](#) – Complete listing of certified and prequalified firms. The listing of an individual firm in the Department's directory shall not be construed as an endorsement of the firm.

PREQUALIFICATION

The Department maintains on file the qualifications and key personnel for each approved discipline, as well as any required samples of work. Each year on the anniversary date of the company, the firm shall renew their prequalified disciplines. If your firm has not renewed its application as required by your anniversary date or if your firm is not currently prequalified, please submit an application to the Department prior to submittal of your LOI. An application may be accessed on the Department's website at [Prequalifying Private Consulting Firms](#) – Learn how to become Prequalified as a Private Consulting Firm with NCDOT. Having this data on file with NCDOT eliminates the need to resubmit this data with each letter of interest.

Even though specific DBE/MBE/WBE goals are not required for this project, the Department is committed to providing opportunity for small and disadvantage businesses to perform on its contracts through established Department goals. The Firm, subconsultant and subfirm shall not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, age, disability or sex in the performance of this contract.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

The Southwestern Commission Council of Governments does not discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, sex stereotyping, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, disability, citizenship status, political affiliation or belief.

SELECTION CRITERIA

All prequalified firms who submit responsive letters of interest will be considered.

In selecting a firm/team, the selection committee will take into consideration qualification information including such factors as:

1. 40% = Qualifications, relevant experience, and availability of key personnel
2. 30% = Project Approach
3. 20% = Local Knowledge
4. 10% = References

After reviewing qualifications, if firms are equal on the evaluation review, then those qualified firms with proposed SPSF participation will be given priority consideration.

SUBMISSION ORGANIZATION AND INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

The LOI should be addressed to **Rose Bauguess, Senior Planner**, and must include the name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address of the prime consultant's contact person for this RFLOI. The LOI must also include the information outlined below:

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The Introduction should demonstrate the consultant's overall qualifications to fulfill the requirements of the scope of work and should contain the following elements of information:

- Expression of firm's interest in the work;
- Statement of whether firm is on register;
- Date of most recent private engineering firm qualification;
- Statement regarding possible conflict of interest for the work; and
- Summation of information contained in the letter of interest.

Chapter 2 - Team Qualifications

This chapter should elaborate on the general information presented in the introduction, to establish the credentials and experience of the consultant to undertake this type of effort. The following must be included:

1. Identify recent, similar projects the firm, acting as the prime contractor, has conducted which demonstrates its ability to conduct and manage the project. Provide a synopsis of each project and include the date completed, and contact person.
2. If subconsultants are involved, provide corresponding information describing their qualifications as requested in bullet number 1 above.

Chapter 3 - Team Experience

This chapter must provide the names, classifications, and location of the firm's North Carolina employees and resources to be assigned to the advertised work; and the professional credentials and experience of the persons assigned to the project, along with any unique qualifications of key personnel and knowledge of the local area. Although standard personnel resumes may be included, identify pertinent team experience to be applied to this project. Specifically, the Department is interested in the experience, expertise, and total quality of the consultant's proposed team. If principals of the firm will not be actively involved in the study/contract/project, do not list them. The submittal shall clearly indicate the Consultant's Project Manager, other key Team

Members and his/her qualifications for the proposed work. Also, include the team's organization chart for the Project/Plan. A Capacity Chart/Graph (available work force) should also be included. Any other pertinent information should also be listed in this section.

Note: If a project team or subconsultant encounters personnel changes, or any other changes of significance dealing with the company, the Southwestern Commission should be notified immediately.

Chapter 4 - Technical Approach

The consultant shall provide information on its understanding of, and approach to accomplish, this project, including their envisioned scope for the work and any innovative ideas/approaches, and a schedule to achieve the dates outlined in this RFLOI (if any project-specific dates are outlined below).

APPENDICES -

CONSULTANT CERTIFICATION Form RS-2

Completed Form RS-2 forms SHALL be submitted with the firm's letter of interest. This section is limited to the number of pages required to provide the requested information.

Submit Form RS-2 for the following:

- **Prime Consultant firm**
 - Prime Consultant Form RS-2 Rev 1/14/08; and
- **ANY/ALL Subconsultant firms** to be, or anticipated to be, utilized by your firm.
 - Subconsultant Form RS-2 Rev 1/15/08
 - **In the event the firm has no subconsultant**, it is required that this be indicated on the Subconsultant Form RS-2 by entering the word "None" or the number "ZERO" and signing the form.

Complete and sign each Form RS-2 (instruction are listed on the form).

The required forms are available on the NCDOT's website at:

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/business/consultants/Pages/Guidelines-Forms.aspx>

[Prime Consultant Form RS-2](#)

[Subconsultant Form RS-2](#)

All submissions, correspondence, and questions concerning this RFLOI should be directed to **Rose Bauguess** at rose@regiona.org.

Questions may be submitted electronically only, to the contact above. Responses will be issued in the form of an addendum available to all interested parties. Interested parties should also send a request, by email only, to the person listed above to be placed on a public

correspondence list to ensure future updates regarding the RFLOI or other project information can be conveyed. Questions must be submitted to the person listed above no later than **April 11, 2020**. The addendum will be issued no later than **April 18, 2020**.

SUBMISSION SCHEDULE AND KEY DATES

RFLOI Release:	March 30, 2020
Deadline for Questions:	April 11, 2020
Issue Final Addendum:	April 18, 2020
Deadline for LOI Submission:	April 30, 2020
*Anticipated Firm Selection and Notification:	May 15, 2020
Anticipated Notice to Proceed:	June 15, 2020
Project Completion Deadline:	Match 31, 2021

* Notification will ONLY be sent to selected firm(s).