

GVMC TDM Communications and Outreach Plan RFP

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC), the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Grand Rapids, MI metropolitan area, is currently accepting proposals from firms interested in being selected to develop a **communications and outreach plan for the regional TDM (Transportation Demand Management) program**. The GVMC transportation planning area is designated as a Transportation Management Area (TMA) and includes all of Kent County and the eastern portion of Ottawa County.

GVMC intends to select one firm or team to provide services as outlined below. GVMC receives federal and state grant funding and other funding from local participating governments.

This contract is contingent upon the continued availability of funding from the federal transportation planning grant awarded to GVMC. In the event that such funding is reduced, delayed, or terminated for any reason, GVMC reserves the right to modify, suspend, or terminate this contract, in whole or in part, without penalty or further obligation.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

This Request for Proposals (RFP) represents the requirements for an open and competitive process.

Proposals will be accepted until 5pm EST on Friday August 15, 2025. Any proposals received after this date and time will be returned to the sender. All proposals must be signed (ink or digital) by an official agent or representative of the company submitting the proposal.

If the organization submitting a proposal must outsource or subcontract any work to meet the requirements contained herein, this must be clearly stated in the proposal. Additionally, all costs included in proposals must be all-inclusive to include any outsourced or subcontracted work. Any proposals which call for outsourcing or subcontracting work must include a name and description of the organization(s) being subcontracted.

All costs must be itemized to include an explanation of all fees and costs. Work items with associated hours and fee/hr must be clearly delineated.

Firms, or teams of firms, must respond to the RFP with proposals in PDF format. Firms must email an electronic copy to Laurel Joseph and Clover Brown at laurel.joseph@gvmc.org and clover.brown@gvmc.org. Electronic submissions shall be titled with the firm's name as part of the document label.

Proposals shall not exceed a total of 30 pages (8.5 x 11, front and back of sheet counted as two pages), inclusive of resumes and firm experience. Covers, end sheets, proposed budget, and an introductory letter shall not count against this maximum. Font size shall be a minimum of 11point in all cases.

The firm certifies the response submitted has not been made or prepared in collusion with any other respondent and the fees, terms or conditions thereof have not been communicated by, or on

behalf of, the respondent to any other respondent prior to the official opening of this request. This certification may be treated for all purposes as if it were a sworn statement made under oath, subject to the penalties for perjury. Moreover, it is made subject to the provisions of 18 U.S.C. Section 1001, relating to the making of false statements.

Submissions may be withdrawn by written request only if the request is received on or before the opening date and time.

Submissions not meeting these criteria may be deemed non-responsive.

GVMC is not liable for any costs incurred by any prospective firm prior to the awarding of a contract, including any costs incurred in addressing this solicitation.

Each submission must be signed by a person authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the firm. The name of the person signing must be followed by their title.

Proposal evaluation will focus initially on the written proposals. Should it be determined that interviews are required, a “short-list” of firms will be selected from the proposals received. The short-listed firms will be invited to participate in an interview process with the evaluation committee. GVMC will confirm interview times with those firms selected for an interview. GVMC reserves the right to award this contract based on initial proposals received without formal interviews. If interviews are conducted, selection will be based on both written proposals and interviews.

Contract terms and conditions will be negotiated upon selection of the winning consultant for this RFP. All contractual terms and conditions will be subject to review by GVMC’s Legal Consultant and will include scope, budget, schedule, and other necessary items pertaining to the project.

Grand Valley Metro Council, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 78 Stat. 252, 42 U.S.C 2000d to 2000d-4 and Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, Department of Transportation, Subtitle A, Office of the Secretary, Part 21, Nondiscrimination in Federally assisted programs of the Department of Transportation issued pursuant to such Act, hereby notifies all bidders that it will affirmatively ensure that in any contract entered into, pursuant to this advertisement, all business enterprises will be afforded full opportunity to submit bids in response to this invitation and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, or national origin in consideration for an award.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION

In 2023, GVMC developed its first [Transportation Demand Management \(TDM\) Plan](#) for the region based on a collaborative process that involved discussions with employers, transportation agencies, and communities. TDM strives to reduce the demand on roadway systems (and need for roadway expansions) by influencing travel behavior and decision-making. The plan includes a set of recommendations for ways to unify existing and new TDM programs across the region; integrate TDM into transportation and land use decision-making; build resources and relationships with employer partners; and generally, help people who live and work in the region get around without a car.

The TDM Plan is organized around GVMC's TDM vision and core objectives, which are outlined below:

The Grand Rapids region supports transportation options that advance mobility for all people and all trips in an affordable, safe, and efficient manner. Regional partners are working together to advance and prioritize TDM strategies that impact travel behavior to mitigate severe congestion and air quality issues while supporting sustainable growth and economic prosperity.

- **Objective 1:** Foster regional coordination to unify TDM messaging and programming
- **Objective 2:** Help people who live and work in the region get around without a car.
 - Subobjective: Use TDM programming to increase transit and vanpool ridership
- **Objective 3:** Integrate TDM into infrastructure investments, land use policy, and parking decision
 - Subobjective: Educate key decision-makers on the benefits of TDM (government, large employers, funders, etc.)
- **Objective 4:** Build relationships with employer partners to maintain the trip reduction benefits of flexible work locations and hours

A core objective of the Regional TDM Plan is to foster regional coordination to align TDM messaging and programming. To achieve this, a key step will be the development of a comprehensive Communications and Outreach Plan aimed at cultivating regional awareness of and use of TDM solutions.

The Communications and Outreach plan should complement the Regional TDM plan, covering strategic actions that can be implemented over a five-year span. Central to this plan is establishing a unified regional TDM brand that uses language the public will understand (such as transportation options), encompasses focused messaging and a visual framework for the TDM program's identity, as well as regional campaigns and promotions. It will also provide the bones for what will be the digital clearinghouse outlined as a separate strategy.

GVMC and the TDM working group will oversee this process; however, this approach must involve close collaboration with West Michigan Rides, as the existing TDM service provider.

PROJECT SCOPE

- **Stakeholder and Public Outreach and Engagement**
 - Conduct market research, including focus groups, as a basis for engaging audiences and developing messages for behavior change campaigns.
 - Identify and develop pathways to reaching and engaging varying audiences and to support outreach goals, including a mix of traditional and digital marketing and communications methods. This will include the development of a dedicated regional TDM program website and supporting communication channels (e.g., social media, email marketing, etc.)
 - Coordinate with, gather input from, and amplify existing transportation options communications campaigns with entities like the City of Grand Rapids, Grand

Rapids Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc., West Michigan Rides, The Rapid, Vanpool, Grand Rapids's Public Library, Fulton Street Farmer's Market, and other community, governmental, and agency partners.

- Utilize a project management system to keep track of different user/target audiences.
- **Regional TDM Communications/Outreach Needs Assessment and Program Evaluation**
 - Conduct an audit of the region's TDM campaigns and communications, with key equity considerations given to:
 - Language variances
 - Representation of varying abilities (e.g., messaging that addresses wheelchair users, people with visual impairments, etc.)
 - Communications methods (e.g., non-digital materials and digital materials; email and SMS; etc.)
 - Focus should be given to what could be done in future messaging and gaps in messaging, over auditing previous efforts.
- **Regional TDM Communication and Outreach Strategies Development**
 - Create a unified regional TDM brand and style guide for all TDM communications and outreach materials.
 - Develop key TDM messages individualized to potential user groups.
 - Establish context sensitive short term and permanent key regional TDM campaigns, initiatives, and strategic actions for the region's commuters and employers, that can be implemented over a 5-year span.
 - Develop an ongoing communication strategy that showcases the demonstrated successes of TDM initiatives within the region.
- **Final report**
 - Final report with appendices and a shorter, easier-to-digest report format.
 - Executive Summary
 - Presentation of final plan
 - Invite or visit with regional stakeholders' communications staff/specialists to present final plan and build collective buy-in for communication strategies, messaging, target audiences, campaigns, etc.
 - Provide opportunities for all communities of GVMC to comment on the plan before it is finalized, including those who cannot attend meetings.
 - All report elements should be developed and formatted in a way that is easily digestible for stakeholders and the public.
 - All delivered documents should be easy to translate into multiple languages and incorporate other accessibility features, e.g. alt text, compatibility with screen readers, etc.

DELIVERABLES

1. Stakeholder and public engagement strategy

2. Monthly progress reports
3. Draft Final Report addressing each of the scope items within the RFP
4. Final Report and presentation

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL TIMELINE

Questions regarding this solicitation are to be submitted in writing to laurel.joseph@gvmc.org and clover.brown@gvmc.org prior to 5pm EST on Friday July 18. GVMC will post answers to questions on the GVMC website by 5pm EST on Friday July 25.

All proposals in response to this RFP are due no later than 5pm EST Friday, August 15.

Evaluation of proposals will be conducted from Monday, August 18, to Friday, August 22. If additional information or discussions are needed with any consultants during this window, the consultants will be notified.

If interviews are needed, they will be scheduled between Monday, August 25 and Thursday, September 4.

The selection decision for the winning bidder will be made no later than Monday, September 8. Upon notification, the contract negotiation with the winning consultant will begin immediately.

Contract negotiations should be complete by Friday, September 19.

PROJECT TIMELINE

Project initiation date: October 1, 2025.

The project should be complete by September 30, 2026.

BUDGET

All proposals must include proposed work items and associated fees, and fit within the overall budget of **\$70,000.00**, to complete the tasks described in the project scope. Staff hours and fees should be listed for each task.

CONSULTANT QUALIFICATIONS

- Description of experience in developing similar plans
- Examples of three or more applicable plans completed in the past
- Examples of work with regional governmental organizations
- References/testimonials from past clients on related work

- Anticipated resources (key personnel) that will be assigned to this project (total number, role, title, experience) including partners and subcontractors, if applicable
- Detailed description of the technical approach proposed for accomplishing the work
- Proposed schedule and work plan, which should include estimated hours by category for each identified task
- Project management methodology

PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

To ensure consideration for this RFP, GVMC will evaluate all proposals based on their completeness. Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Overall proposal suitability: proposed work must meet the scope and needs included herein and be presented in a clear and organized manner
- Organizational experience and value: consultants will be evaluated on their experience and cost as it pertains to the scope of this project
- Previous work: consultants will be evaluated on examples of their work pertaining to the project scope and testimonials and references
- Technical expertise and experience: consultants must provide descriptions and documentation of staff technical expertise and experience
- Qualifications of subcontractors, if applicable, and diversity of team: the team should be well-rounded covering all aspects of the project.