



## **Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency**

### **NOACA**

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## **Request for Proposals (RFP) for Engineering & Feasibility Study for Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (CVSR) Extension**

This RFP includes a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Goal of 5%

**Issue Date: September 29, 2023**  
**Closing Date: November 13, 2023**

NOACA is seeking a qualified consultant to perform an engineering and feasibility study to guide the proposed extension of the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad from its current terminus at Rockside Rd. into Downtown Cleveland. The deadline for submittals is **Monday, November 13, 2023, 5:00 PM.**

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## Table of Contents

1. NORTHEAST OHIO AREAWIDE COORDINATING AGENCY (NOACA).....	1
2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	2
3. SCOPE OF WORK .....	3
4. QUALIFICATIONS.....	10
5. PROCUREMENT TIMELINE .....	11
7. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES.....	13
8. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND CONDITIONS.....	16
9. QUESTIONS .....	17
Exhibit A - Example Table of Deliverables.....	18
Exhibit B - Pricing Proposal .....	19
Exhibit C – Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension & Other Responsibility Matters.....	20
Exhibit D – Internal Charrette Snapshot Summary.....	22

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## 1. NORTHEAST OHIO AREAWIDE COORDINATING AGENCY (NOACA)

The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) is a Cleveland-based transportation and environmental planning organization that serves as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and designated areawide water quality management agency for the counties of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina in Ohio.

In these capacities it:

- Works with other organizations to help address northeast Ohio's transportation, air quality, and water quality needs.
- Conducts metropolitan planning for various modes of transportation, including vehicles, freight, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, etc., while considering the transportation system's impact on the environment and land use
- Prepares the region's long-range transportation plan and short-range transportation improvement program, which is the region's capital budget for federally funded transportation projects.
- Conducts studies that address congestion, improve safety and strengthen community livability.

The vision of NOACA is as follows: NOACA will **STRENGTHEN** regional cohesion, **PRESERVE** existing infrastructure, and **BUILD** a sustainable multimodal transportation system to **SUPPORT** economic development and **ENHANCE** quality of life in Northeast Ohio.

NOACA is directed by a 48-member Board of Directors, representing the City of Cleveland and all five NOACA counties and their communities, plus transit agencies, the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS), the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA), the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), and the Ohio Turnpike Infrastructure Commission.

The NOACA region is home to 2.1 million people and over 150 units of government. The region is anchored by several urban core cities with the largest being Cleveland.

More information about NOACA is available on our website at [www.noaca.org](http://www.noaca.org) .

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (CVSR) is a tourist/excursion railroad that is operated by the Cuyahoga Valley Preservation & Scenic Railway Association, a 501 c(3) non-profit corporation organized in 1972. The CVSR operates scheduled excursion train service between Independence, Ohio through the Cuyahoga Valley National Park to Downtown Akron with an intermediate station in Peninsula. The tracks between Rockside Road in Independence, Ohio (suburban Cleveland) and Akron were once owned by the legacy Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (B&O) of CSX but are now owned and maintained by the National Park Service (NPS). The Akron - Independence segment of this line was acquired by the NPS in 1987.

The CVSR has operated tourist train service in partnership with the NPS since 1989, four years after CSX discontinued freight service on this segment of its national network. NPS ownership of the track extends north of the boundaries of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park to milepost 63.36, a location known as Willow, where it connects with tracks currently owned and operated by CSX Transportation. Today, CSX operates limited freight service serving two industrial customers on excepted track over the line between Willow and Clark Yard in Cleveland line is known as the Willow Industrial Track, which is a spur of the CSX Cleveland Subdivision.

The CVSR and the NPS desire to extend CVSR operations 10.8-miles from the Rockside Station in Independence into Downtown Cleveland on the Willow Industrial Track. Engineering investigations of that opportunity were completed several years ago. The prior engineering report is available for review.

NOACA has engaged with the following Partners to explore the engineering, feasibility and cost of extending the CVSR into Downtown Cleveland.

### LIST OF PARTNERS

- CVSR
- Cleveland Metroparks
- Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP)
- National Park Service
- Canalway Partners
- Port of Cleveland
- City of Cleveland
- Cuyahoga County
- Greater Cleveland RTA

The work product of the engagement will be utilized by NOACA and its Partners to determine:

1. Whether to extend the rail line
2. The most appropriate route and related technical considerations
3. The approximate cost of the extension
4. Sources of funding for the extension
5. The structure of the entity(s) to be tasked with the design and construction of the actual extension.

### 3. SCOPE OF WORK

#### OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this feasibility study are:

- To prepare an updated engineering report and capital cost estimate
- To provide an environmental screening review to determine the appropriate class of action for future environmental impact assessments
- To determine the market reach of the CVSR and potential future ridership
- To examine the economic impacts and benefits of tourist railroad operations in Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP)
- To assess the benefits/costs and the economic and financial feasibility of extending the route to Downtown Cleveland.

There have been two prior studies performed for the proposed extension. These will be made available to the Consultant and should provide useful background information. In addition, the Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) has been engaged in a “visioning” exercise to consider the impact that the proposed extension to Cleveland would have on the rail system as a whole. This exercise includes representatives of the Federal Highway Administration and the National Office of the Park Service. A snapshot summary of the initial charette is attached to this RFP. The selected candidate will be provided additional documentation by CVNP.

The study is intended to provide an overview of the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, its operations as well as direct and indirect economic impact and benefits to Northeast Ohio. In addition to the identification of economic impacts of the railroad, the feasibility study must consider accessibility to the CVNP and its unique features and attractions from disadvantaged communities in Cleveland area.

Results of the study will be used for multiple purposes, which would include educating public and private partners of the economic benefits of the CVSR Cleveland Extension. The study will also provide benefit/cost analysis to be used in seeking federal grant assistance to fund the acquisition, design and construction of the Cleveland Extension, along with additional general operating support to provide direct alternate transportation access to Cuyahoga Valley National Park from Downtown Cleveland.

Following principles advanced by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad heritage excursion rail program is based on principles that should be considered in developing a measurement model and assessing economic benefit:

- The utilization of vintage railroad equipment such as early era diesel-electric locomotives, and period railcars and occasional use of steam locomotives, heritage local commercial and industrial buildings, and other structures for traditional and new emerging uses which can help retain jobs, attract new residents, and provide sustainable economic bases, especially in station areas.
- The revitalization of historic downtown areas near tourist rail stations provides attractive and unique commercial environments, improves property values, and offers quality of life amenities to tourists and residents.

The Ohio Department of Transportation and the Ohio Department of Development have a set of demographic and business economic data and base year and forecasted data that may be used in this study. Regional Economic Models (REMI) may also have data and forecasts that can be purchased for this study.

## **WORK TASKS**

The selected consultant shall undertake the following work tasks. All work must be undertaken in a manner consistent with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) corridor planning guidance for the purposes of future federal grant assistance.

### **1. Project Management Plan**

The project management plan will define the methodology, schedule, and approach of this feasibility study. It shall be a written document delivered within 30 days of Notice to Proceed (NTP) and will provide further guidance into the specific work plan elements. The plan must include:

- Organization chart and management plan of the project inclusive of an outline of responsibilities and communication protocols of consultant team members and NOACA. The plan will detail how the consultant intends to work with CVNP to insure the goal of overall sustainability for the rail facility in the Park.
- Narrative description and list of each task/sub-task to be completed, that identifies the consultant's intended approach, methods, practices, personnel and other resources that will be used achieve the desired project outcomes
- Identify key milestone and dates inclusive of a detailed implementation schedule that identifies how project activities will be sequenced, when key milestones will be reached, and when deliverables will be submitted.
- Quality assurance / quality control plan
- Include other information as required.

### **2. Stakeholder Outreach**

Specific outreach will need to be conducted by the consultant with the CVSR, NFS, CSX, Willow Industrial Track freight rail customers, along with the City of Cleveland Planning Commission, Cuyahoga County Planning Department, and other local municipalities / agencies and private sector interests. The consultant shall identify and arrange individual or group meetings as required during the Project. The consultant shall prepare an outreach plan and provide an outline of the plan as part of its proposal identifying number of individual and group meetings. NOACA shall review and approve the stakeholder outreach plan.

### **3. Conceptual Engineering/Alignment Analysis**

The consultant will review prior reports and update and refresh the information contained in the reports. The conceptual engineering effort will generally follow the controlling standards of the host railroad and/or American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way (AREMA) guidelines. This is not intended to be a preliminary engineering study, but conceptual engineering and general assessment of current conditions including posts and bridges to develop a priority list of the areas needing upgrades and a program of capital projects needed to allow safe

excursion train operation. The consultant will coordinate with CSX for this conceptual engineering work and seek permission to inspect tracks and structures for engineering assessments. The consultant is expected to work closely with CSX for track condition data and cost estimation.

The consultant will develop a general description and assessment of existing track conditions and evaluate and determine general estimates of upgrade costs. It is intended to estimate the cost of upgrading the Willow Industrial Track from its current state to FRA Class II track permitting passenger train speeds of up to 30 mph. The Consultant should be prepared to provide information necessary to further upgrade to Class III.

The consultant will use these estimates to develop associated estimates of train speed and expected travel times. Using this data, the consultant will develop a proposed improvement schedule, with a sequence of projects and associated train speed/ travel time estimates and estimates of probable capital costs used for benefit/cost analysis.

- **Alignment:** Plan view drawings will be created. The recommended alignment will be determined by a combination of site visits; review of aerial photos, host railroad track charts, and right-of-way (ROW) documentation; coordination with CSX and other tracks owners; and other available data. Problem areas and specific needs to be addressed will be noted, including pinch points, host railroad specific issues, areas of added safety concerns, etc. Alignments may use single track with passing sidings, super sidings (i.e., stretching over more than one station stop), and double track.

Plan views of the alignment(s) will be developed to a 5 to 10 percent conceptual design level, sufficient to complete the NEPA analysis. Profile drawings will only be developed for critical areas such as operations or clearance pinch points, areas of host railroad concerns, station areas, and freight interchange, or customer service special trackwork.

In other areas, smaller scale aerials (covering larger areas) will be used to show the alignments by combinations of tangent and curves and notes to address profile issues.

- **Track Systems:** The plan view drawings will note the purpose of any special trackwork, such as serving freight customers, reaching station platforms or maintenance facility access, and providing alternatives for equipment failure or other unanticipated abnormal operations.
- **Signal Systems:** Signaling will be assumed to comply with FRA requirements for secondary lines with shared-use operations. Control points and block spacings for expected speeds, headways, and shared track movements will be identified at a very general level by knowledgeable signal engineers for equipment counts for the capital costing effort.
- **Stations:** Station locations and facilities will be identified for the Downtown Cleveland terminus and at least two intermediate stations located at/near Harvard Road with access to the trails leading to the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo and at Steelyard Commons. Estimates of station construction costs will be developed, including costs for accessibility compliant with ADA standards.
- **Grade Crossings:** The consultant will examine the conditions of any grade-crossings with respect to active warning devices and clear sight distances in accordance with AASHTO A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, 7th Edition. Costs for improvements will be determined.

- Level crossings: The level crossing at Harvard Road with active NS and CSX tracks near RD Tower should be evaluated in terms of future excursion passenger train operations. The consultant will examine options to improve signaling or build a grade separation. Costs of options will be evaluated.
- Yard and Maintenance Facilities: Assess adequacy of existing facilities to accommodate extension service.
- Rolling Stock: Assess CVSR current fleet to accommodate extension service and determine proper train consist.
- Dispatch: Review and make recommendations as to any changes to dispatch software, hardware, procedures and/or support systems; relative to recommendations around the track, structure, and signals

#### **4. Capital and Operating and Maintenance Cost Estimates**

Estimates of probable capital cost shall be developed for the program of projects needed to upgrade track, structure and signals for the safe operation of excursion trains along the alignment of the proposed Cleveland Extension. Station costs also will be estimated.

Estimates shall be developed using the FRA standardized cost categories and procedures and presented using the most current spreadsheets and breakdowns. The estimate should also include and separately identify a significant contingency.

Utilizing operating statistics developed from operations plans, the consultant will prepare operations and maintenance (O&M) cost estimates. Costs will be based on the level of service provided (e.g., train hours and train miles of service). The cost estimate will be based on methods and model consistent with FTA and FRA accepted practice.

#### **5. Environmental Screening**

The consultant will prepare an Environmental Screening Report for the CVSR Cleveland Extension that provides documentation for each of the regulated categories of environmental concern:

- Air Quality
- Endangered Species
- Environmental Justice
- Floodplains
- Hazardous Materials & Brownfields
- Historic, Archeological, and Cultural Resources (Section 106)
- Navigable Waterways and Coastal Zones
- Noise and Vibration
- Parklands
- Social & Economic Impacts
- Transportation Impacts
- Water Quality
- Wetlands

The screening report will examine the anticipated class of action that would be required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Although Section 106 of the National Historic

Preservation Act is not covered under NEPA, all its requirements should also be included in this task. This includes identification of historic districts within the study area, listing of all NRHP-registered or eligible sites, identification of all buildings in corridor for historic significance, and determination of effects on any existing or identified resources.

The report will provide a brief overview of the existing environmental conditions and a table of the potential impacts of the CVSR Cleveland Extension. The level of analysis completed in this task should be sufficient to determine the level of environmental documentation that will be required if the CVSR Cleveland Extension enters into the Project Development phase of the FTA New Starts process or FRA Corridor ID program. The development of a Purpose and Need Statement and a Baseline Conditions Report will become the basis for this effort.

All GIS data and shapefiles will be assembled by the consultant and provided to NOACA at the end of this task. Anticipated data includes: CVSR Cleveland Extension alignment and station locations as well as project area wetlands, floodplain, land uses, contaminated sites, parks and other data as needed.

## **6. Market Assessment**

The consultant will summarize and interpret available demographic and economic data, including recent data to be provided by NOACA. The consultant will provide a summary of the population by county in Northeast Ohio, how it has changed over the past 10 years and is projected to change. Projections should be in five-year increments to 2040. An analysis of age distribution, education levels, and household income should be included.

Provide a description of Ohio's economy by county, as it has changed over the last 10 years and is projected to change to 2040, as described above. Include an analysis of major sectors (NAICS level to be determined). Identify growth industries and key clusters of growth industries and how this could impact heritage tourism in the region including attendance at the national park and use of the tourist railroad and other regional attractions.

Use a 16-county region for Northeast Ohio as the basis for the regional economy, which is based upon a 50-mile population catchment area centered on Peninsula, Ohio, headquarters of railroad operations.

This would include the Ohio counties of Ashland, Ashtabula, Carroll, Columbiana, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Huron, Lorain, Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Richland, Stark, Summit, Trumbull, and Wayne. The market reach of the railroad could also include the counties of Erie, Huron and Tuscarawas.

Collect and summarize other tourist railroad initiatives, projects, and plans that have implications of competitive significance for the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad. This would include opportunities to cluster with other railroad themed attractions in the Northern Ohio study area including the Midwest Railway Preservation Society and other nearby tourist railroads belonging to the Ohio Rail Tourism Association. Identify the challenges to clustering and analyze the competitive nature of the tourist railroad industry in Ohio. Attention should also be paid to recent additions to the Lake Erie and Great Lake excursion industry/facilities.

Incorporate the data/information interpretation and analysis described in the tasks above into a mapping environment if such incorporation is applicable and useful for follow-on planning efforts and public presentations.

## **7. Ridership**

The consultant will estimate potential ridership increases resulting from the CVSR Cleveland Extension using methods to be agreed upon.

Use information provided by CVSR to summarize historic ridership trends by station boarding area, type of trip (special event or scheduled excursion), value of ticket sold, and trip length, then project the ridership trends to 2040 to determine future demand for tourist railroad services based on per capita usage in the study area region. It will be important to include educational ridership and partnerships with schools and other institutions.

Identify and describe national and regional trends likely to have direct and significant impact on tourist railroad usage. Examine the substitution effect of disposable income for the counties examined and the growth of heritage tourism and use of local national parks, local parks and recreation areas, as well as historic sites.

## **8. Regional Economic Impact Analysis**

Enhanced economic analysis will focus on identifying specific linkages between economic growth and development opportunities, national park visitation and tourist railroad ridership.

The goal is the identification and evaluation of strategies and actions that will allow the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad to grow and enable the study area to realize economic growth potentials through heritage tourism and a connection to Downtown Cleveland.

The selected consultant will be expected to use an appropriate econometric model that can evaluate the economic benefits from a statewide and regional perspective. This should allow evaluation of tourist railroad expansion and investment strategies and actions on the basis of total economic benefit.

Identify the potential for diversion of potential customers by other entertainment and recreational activities competing for disposable income, including those other tourist attractions with a potential for diversion from within the study area. This analysis should address service or jurisdictional issues that limit or divert tourist choices.

Determine if the Cleveland Extension project is a cost-effective action in support of regional economic development goals, including potential tie-ins with other attractions., e.g., sporting events, cruise ship excursions, etc.

Consider potentials to foster economic growth, nurture declining sectors, develop new services, capture latent or unrealized demand for heritage tourism and convention and visitor opportunities in Canton, Akron and Cleveland. Identify those economic potentials that are strongly linked to heritage tourism services and national park and tourist railroad infrastructure.

Evaluate strategies and actions, qualitatively and quantitatively, based on expected economic benefits and planning level cost estimates. Develop an estimation of the geographic scope of expected benefits (local vs. regional vs. statewide).

## **9. Benefit/Cost Analysis (BCA)**

Evaluate costs and benefits, qualitatively and quantitatively, based on updating the existing planning level cost estimates outlined in the Cleveland Extension Engineering Feasibility Study

and the prior CVSR Extension Studies previously referenced. Determine the expected economic and financial benefits and determine the benefit/cost ratio for the Cleveland Extension. The BCA represents the principal quantitative justification upon which federal grant applications will be assessed. Its aim is to show that the CVSR Cleveland Extension is economically feasible and will deliver a multifaceted basket of benefits which outstrip the costs associated with planning, constructing and operating the extension.

Benefits will be discussed quantitatively to the degree that existing information permits, and qualitatively where information cannot be quantitatively provided. Work in this task will include:

- Document approach to undertaking benefits assessment, including all assumptions and methodologies for estimating benefits generated by the CVSR Cleveland Extension project
- Document benefits, both actual and discounted
- Document costs
- Document benefit/cost ratio achieved by the CVSR Cleveland Extension

The consultant will also describe the potential equity impacts of the CVSR Cleveland Extension excursion passenger rail service.

The BCA will be drafted in accordance with DOT and FRA guidance and included as a chapter to the final report.

## **10. Financial Analysis and Funding Options**

The consultant will conduct a financial analysis at a sufficient level of detail to determine the fiscal impact of the proposed CVSR Cleveland Extension on its current financial condition. The financial analysis will focus on a comprehensive identification and evaluation of passenger revenues, existing Federal, State and local sources of funding for the Cleveland Extension, all other possible sources of revenue, identification of potential funding shortfalls, other alternative local funds and the development of a Financial Plan for the Cleveland Extension. The consultant also will examine what other tourist/heritage passenger rail systems do for funding capital projects and on-going operations.

### **Deliverables**

1. Market Assessment Report, which will convey information using data-rich charts, thematic maps, graphs, illustrations and accompanying narrative summaries
2. Plan views of track alignment and call-outs/legends indicating upgrade work to be accomplished. Lists of projects with estimation of probable capital costs
3. Economic impact reports outlining direct and indirect benefits of the CVSR Cleveland Extension. This should be presented in format and substance as agreed to with NOACA.
4. Environmental Screening Report to include purpose and need and baseline conditions
5. Financial Plan and Funding Strategy and Options Report
6. Draft report of the feasibility study, to include findings and recommendations incorporated from task reports for NOACA and Partner Agencies' review and comment. Study report outline to be determined by agreement between consultant and NOACA.
7. Final report of the feasibility study process, findings and recommendations, which will convey information using data-rich charts, thematic maps, graphs, illustrations and

accompanying narrative summaries. The report shall be presented in digital format easily replicable, expandable, and updateable for future reference.

8. A presentation will be made to the NOACA Board, CVSR and Cuyahoga Valley National Park staff and other Agency Partners. The presentation will be supplied to NOACA in original (read only) electronic format in a medium to be agreed to.

## 4. QUALIFICATIONS

The selected Vendor (or any of the selected Vendor's subcontractors) cannot currently, or at the time of contracting, be listed on any federal, state, or local government jurisdiction debarment or suspension lists.

Respondents to this RFP must be an engineering firm licensed in the State of Ohio with extensive qualifications and experience in and with the rail industry in Ohio. Such experience should include work with the Ohio Department of Transportation, the Ohio Rail Authority, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, the Federal Transportation Administration and the Federal Railroad Administration.

Experience in working with scenic and tourist railroads comparable to CVSR is preferred.

Experience working with the U.S. Department of Interior and the National Park Service is preferred.

Experience working with regional planning agencies such as NOACA is preferred.

Understanding of, and experience with, the environmental issues that will likely to be found in an eight-mile rail line extension is preferred, as is working with the Ohio and U.S. Environmental Protection Agencies.

Respondents may include teams of consultants, but each such team must include a registered engineering firm.

## 5. PROCUREMENT TIMELINE

NOACA's process and *estimated* timeline for the selection of a consultant are as follows:

**October 10, 2023, 11:00 a.m.** – Virtual pre-proposal conference for prospective consultants to review the RFP and its requirements. To register for the pre-proposal conference and obtain login information, please email [procurement@mpo.noaca.org](mailto:procurement@mpo.noaca.org).

**November 6, 2023, 5:00 p.m.** - Deadline for submittal of questions from prospective consultants [Note: NOACA may, at its sole discretion, choose to answer questions submitted after the deadline.]

**November 13, 2023, 5:00 p.m.** - Deadline for proposal submittals  
Proposals shall be submitted in PDF via email to [procurement@mpo.noaca.org](mailto:procurement@mpo.noaca.org) by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, November 13, 2023. NOACA assumes no responsibility for formatting or transmission errors. Submittals received after the deadline will not be considered. Please reference "CVSR RFP Response" in the email subject line.

**November/December 2023** - Evaluation of Proposals

An evaluation team will select candidate vendor(s) from proposals received. This process will include review and scoring of proposals along with review of references and other information as necessary.

**February 2024** – NOACA Finance Committee review and approval

**March 2024** – NOACA Board of Directors review and approval

**March/April 2024** – Commence Work

## 6. REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPOSALS

### **A. General Instructions**

NOACA will not reimburse proposers for any costs incurred prior to execution of a contract, including, but not limited to the preparation and submittal of proposals or participation in the evaluation and negotiation process.

This procurement is conducted in accordance with the requirements of the federal Brooks Act (40 USC Ch. 11). Proposers shall submit a technical proposal, clearly addressing the evaluation criteria and information requested herein. Overly elaborate proposals and proposals containing only generalized marketing information are discouraged and may result in a lower evaluation score. No pricing or price-related information shall be included in the Technical Proposal.

Firms included on the current Excluded Parties List System maintained within the System for Award Management by the United States General Services Administration, or on comparable lists of suspended or debarred firms maintained by the State of Ohio or jurisdictions within NOACA's service area, are not eligible for selection.

### **B. Requirements for Technical Proposal**

The Technical Proposal shall include the following components:

1. A cover letter that identifies the prime consultant and any subcontractors known at the time of submittal. The cover letter shall identify the officer or other responsible executive of the organization authorized to negotiate and agree to a contract by name, title, address, telephone, and email. This individual, or a designee, shall serve as NOACA's point of contact for all communications regarding this solicitation. The letter should also contain a commitment that the proposal will be valid for not less than 120 days.
2. General information about the organization including location of office(s), number of years in operation and areas of service expertise. Similar information for all key subconsultants should be included.
3. Description of the proposer's approach to the project, including a detailed scope of services that reflects understanding of the objectives of the CVSR Extension Project. If appropriate, the proposer shall expand on the scope of work and provide suggestions that will enhance the outcomes of the project. This section should detail the tasks needed to accomplish all the objectives of the project, and an estimated timeline (in terms of weeks from contract execution) tied to the tasks in the scope of work. The project approach should highlight innovation and creativity, as appropriate. Provide a table, attached to the submission as Appendix A, which summarizes and breaks down the project's deliverables, percentage of work, and estimated time to complete. A table template is attached to this RFP as *Exhibit A*.
4. Identification of key staff to be assigned to this project and the deliverables for which each individual will be responsible. Attach resumes that describe the education, experience and any professional certifications for each key staff person. Highlight experience and education relevant to the project. NOACA reserves the right to approve or reject any personnel assigned by the Vendor or subcontractors to this project.

5. Description of the capacity of Vendor to perform the work in a timely manner, relative to the organization's present workload and the availability of the assigned staff.
6. Listing of prior work on other projects that are similar in scope to the CVSR Extension Project. Examples should describe the scope of work and demonstrate successful performance in project completion. The list of prior projects should include assignments undertaken in the past five (5) years and identify the duration of the project and the client. Provide contact information (name, title, organization, email, and telephone) for each client on prior work examples. NOACA may contact references as well as other resources to verify an organization's qualifications, experience, professionalism, and ability to perform the work. If any such projects were not satisfactorily completed, provide an explanation of the circumstances.
7. The Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Goal for this contract is 5%. This means that at least this percent of the project work (in US dollars) shall be performed by Ohio-certified DBE firms. DBE certification must be complete and current prior to proposal submission. Proposers are warned that the Ohio certification process may be lengthy, depending on the Office's workload and the quality of the information submitted. The goal committed to by the consultant will be enforced and monitored by NOACA for attainment. The link to the Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT) Unified Certification Program, which identifies certified DBE firms, can be found at the following location:

<http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/ODI/SDBE/Pages/DBE-Directory.aspx>

If the 5% DBE goal cannot be met, the consultant shall demonstrate and document good faith efforts to attain this goal prior to submittal of the proposal, in accordance with [49 CFR Part 26.53](#).

8. List of all known subcontractors, identifying those that are certified as Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) by the State of Ohio or another relevant agency with the authority to make such certification, along with the type and percentage of work to be performed by each subcontractor. Include description(s) of subcontractor(s) qualifications, identify key personnel, and provide contact person with respective email and telephone number for any subcontractor(s). NOACA reserves the right to approve or reject any subcontractors proposed by Vendor for this project.

## 7. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

### A. Technical Evaluation Criteria

#### 1. Experience/Qualifications (up to 30 points)

Each proposer will be evaluated regarding their experience and qualifications appropriate to the proposed project. Factors to consider include:

- i. Experience working with planning agencies such as NOACA
- ii. Experience working with railroad projects
- iii. Experience working with multiple public entities and agencies
- iv. Experience working within budget and schedule constraints
- v. Other relevant specialized experience

## **2. Project Approach (up to 40 points)**

Each consultant will be evaluated based on the approach presented in the Technical Proposal to complete the project. Factors to consider include:

- i. Demonstration of understanding the goals and objectives of the proposed project
- ii. Quality and completeness of a projected table of deliverables included in the Technical Proposal, including identification of project components that will achieve the objectives of the project.
- iii. Methods and strategies to best accomplish all deliverables of the project, including the proposed schedule.
- iv. Creativity and innovation

## **3. Project Management (up to 30 points)**

Each consultant will be evaluated based on the presentation of a management plan that ensures services are successfully completed. Factors to consider include:

- i. Demonstration of effective past project management, resulting in the delivery of a high-quality work product
- ii. Capacity to manage the project meet deliverables according to defined timeline.
- iii. Description of performance evaluation methodology that monitors for achievement of project goals and objectives throughout the duration of the project.
- iv. Description of status reporting methodology, including details of both written and oral reporting
- v. Project approach that demonstrates how tasks or parts are coordinated, staffed, and completed.
- vi. Identification of potential risks, and steps that can be taken to prevent or mitigate those risks.

## **B. Evaluation Procedures**

A team comprised of staff from NOACA and its project partners will evaluate all technical proposals received by the deadline. The evaluation team may also include non-voting subject matter experts. The evaluation team will score the technical proposals according to the criteria stated above. As part of the technical evaluation, the team may ask proposers for clarification of their proposals; conduct interviews; or request that proposers give presentations. Such interviews may be conducted in person, by telephone or through video conference.

The team shall select no fewer than three proposers that it considers most technically qualified, ranked in order of the evaluation scoring, and request that the top-ranked firm submit a Business Proposal, which typically should contain the following elements. The panel may modify the elements based upon the specifics of the solicitation:

- A copy of the cover letter included in the Technical Proposal.

- A pricing proposal in the format included herein for illustration as Exhibit B. The form will be provided to the proposer in an electronic, editable format. The price proposed should not exceed the budget of \$450,000. In the pricing proposal, staff hourly rates should be broken out according to base hourly rate, overhead (%), and burden, which are listed separately on Exhibit B. Profit should also be broken out separately on the pricing proposal. Profit must be identified as a fixed dollar amount, not as a percentage of cost. Direct costs such as travel expenses, fixed-price payments to subcontractors or other vendors, supplies, and equipment rental will be reimbursed at cost. NOACA will reimburse travel and living expenses only for travel more than 50 miles from the traveler's ordinary work location, at the rates specified in the General Services Administration's most current per diem rates for the locality involved.
- Copies of the proposer's worker's compensation certificate for the jurisdiction where work will be performed and general liability, professional liability, railroad protective liability and automobile insurance certificate(s).
- Completed form "Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension & Other Responsibility Matters," attached to this RFP as Exhibit C.

The team evaluating the Business Proposal may ask the proposer for clarification of its proposal; conduct interviews; or request that the proposer give presentations. The team will then negotiate with the proposer to reach an acceptable agreement. Negotiations may address modifications to the Technical Proposal or Business Proposal. Following such negotiations, if an agreement is reached, NOACA shall submit the recommended award for approval by its Board of Directors in accordance with its policies and procedures. Upon Board approval, a contract shall be executed between NOACA and the awarded vendor.

If the team determines that it cannot reach an acceptable agreement with the top-ranked proposer, it shall notify the proposer that its proposal has been rejected and repeat the process with the second-ranked proposer, continuing until an agreement is reached with a technically acceptable firm. The team may at any time determine that no agreement is possible and cancel the solicitation.

NOACA reserves the right to reject all proposals at any time, as deemed to be in NOACA's best interest. NOACA also reserves the right to waive minor informalities, irregularities or errors which do not affect the substance of the proposal.

The proposer may identify any proposed exceptions to NOACA's Terms and Conditions as contained in this RFP or propose any additional terms it considers appropriate. Such proposed exceptions or additional terms must be specific and include a clear explanation of the reasons for the exception or addition. Please note that certain terms contained herein are required by law or regulation and cannot be modified.

## 8. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND CONDITIONS

- A. It is the policy of NOACA, as required by the United States Department of Transportation (US DOT) that Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) shall have equal opportunity to compete for this federally assisted contract and/or subcontract with another other consultant to perform the requested services.

Consequently, the requirements of Title 49 CFR Part 26 will apply to this contract. If not a DBE itself, the Consultant must use good faith efforts to solicit from and to utilize DBE subcontractors with meaningful minority groups and female representation among their employees. The Consultant must ensure that the DBE subcontractor(s) is performing a "commercially useful function" as defined in NOACA's Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

This proposal includes a DBE Goal of 5%. At least this percent of the agreement shall be performed by certified DBE firms. The percentage goal may be met if the awarded Contractor is DBE certified. However, in the event the Consultant is unable to meet the DBE goal placed on this project, a good faith effort must be demonstrated, which documents the effort made to secure the services of DBE subcontractors prior to the submittal of a proposal, pursuant to [49 CFR Part 26.53](#). This documentation must be included with the proposer's submittal. Consultant proposals that do not include the minimum percentage of DBE participation noted above, or that cannot demonstrate good faith efforts to include a DBE, will be rejected. The Consultant's price proposal shall reflect the required level of DBE participation.

Only firms certified as DBE through Ohio's Unified Certification Program (UCP) will be counted toward meeting this goal. A directory of certified DBEs in Ohio can be accessed on the UCP website at:

<https://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/ODI/SDBE/Pages/DBE-Directory.aspx>.

Potential DBEs may also access the website [www.ohiucp.org](http://www.ohiucp.org) to obtain information on how to become certified. To qualify for certification as a DBE, an applicant must meet the eligibility standards established in the federal regulations at 49 CFR Part 26 and 13 CFR Part 121. DBE certification must be in place at the time of proposal submittal and throughout performance of the contract.

- B. Consultants agree not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, age, creed, sex, sexual orientation or national origin. Such action shall include, but not be limited to, the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment or recruitment advertising, layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensation; and selection for training, including apprenticeship. Consultants further agree to comply with all requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq., 49 C.F.R. Part 21.

- C. The proposal, including price, shall be valid for at least 120 days from the date of submission.
- D. An RFP does not constitute an offer or a contract. No contract may be awarded without a resolution by the NOACA Board of Directors.
- E. NOACA reserves the right to amend, cancel or reissue the RFP or to revise the timeline at any time.  
  
NOACA reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive minor irregularities in the proposal process. NOACA may accept any proposal if such action is believed to be in the best interest of the agency.
- F. NOACA is not liable for any cost incurred by the proposer prior to execution of a contract.
- G. The contract between the successful proposer and NOACA shall include all documents mutually entered into including the contract instrument, relevant portions of the RFP and the response to the RFP. The contract shall include and be consistent with the provisions stated in the RFP, as may be modified by negotiations.
- H. The prime Vendor will assume the responsibility for all services required by the contract regardless of whether directly performed by the prime Vendor. Further, the prime Vendor will be the sole point of contact for NOACA with regard to all contractual matters.
- I. The consultant project team shall be approved by NOACA. NOACA must approve any changes in the project team.
- J. Any award of contract will be to the Vendor that provides the highest value relative to costs.

## 9. QUESTIONS

For questions regarding the RFP, please contact [procurement@mpo.noaca.org](mailto:procurement@mpo.noaca.org). The deadline for submittal of questions is November 3, 2023. Submitting questions early in the process provides NOACA the opportunity to respond; questions received near the deadline may not receive a response. All answers will be publicly posted on [NOACA's website under About-Contact Us-Doing Business with NOACA](#).

**Exhibit A - Example Table of Deliverables**

Deliverable	Description	% Work	Time to complete (weeks)
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>	



## Exhibit C – Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension & Other Responsibility Matters

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This Certification is required to be submitted to NOACA on behalf of the principal bidder/proposer and all subcontractors whose subcontracts are reasonably anticipated to exceed \$25,000 in value.

- A. The undersigned Bidder/Proposer/Subcontractor ("Attester") certifies to the best of its knowledge and belief that the Attester and/or any of its principals or subcontractors:
1. Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from covered transactions by any Federal department or agency;
  2. Have not, within a three-year period preceding this bid/proposal, been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for commission of fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain or performing a public (Federal, State or Local) transaction or contract or subcontract; violation of Federal or State antitrust statutes, or commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements or receiving stolen property; and
  3. Are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State or local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated in Paragraph 2 above; and
  4. Have not, within a three-year period preceding this bid/proposal, had one or more public transactions (Federal, State or local) terminated for cause or default by any federal, state or local agency.

"Principals" for the purposes of this certification, means officers, directors, owners, partners, and persons having primary management or supervisory responsibilities within a business entity (e.g., general manager, plant manager, head of a subsidiary, division, or business segment, and similar positions).

This certification concerns a matter which may be within the jurisdiction of an agency of the United States and the making of a false, fictitious, or fraudulent certification may render the maker subject to prosecution under Section 1001, Title 18, United States Code.

- B. The Attester shall provide immediate written notice to NOACA's Procurement Officer if, at any time, the Attester learns that its certification was erroneous when submitted or has become erroneous by reason of changed circumstances.
- C. A certification that any of the items in Paragraph A exists will not necessarily result in withholding of an award under this solicitation. However, the certification will be considered in connection with a determination of the Attester's responsibility. Failure of the Attester to furnish a certification or provide such additional information as requested by NOACA may render the Attester non-responsible, and the Attester shall not be considered for award.
- D. Nothing contained in the foregoing shall be construed to require establishment of a system of records in order to render, in good faith, the certification required by Paragraph A. The

knowledge and information of an Attester is not required to exceed that which is normally possessed by a prudent person in the ordinary course of business dealings.

- E. The certification in Paragraph A is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when making award. If it is later determined that the Attester rendered an erroneous certification, in addition to other remedies available to NOACA, NOACA may terminate the contract resulting from this solicitation for default.

If the Attester is unable to attest to any of the statements in this certification, it shall attach an explanation.

THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFIES OR AFFIRMS THE TRUTHFULNESS AND ACCURACY OF THE CONTENTS OF THE STATEMENTS SUBMITTED ON OR WITH THIS CERTIFICATION AND UNDERSTANDS THAT THE PROVISIONS OF 31 U.S.C. SECTIONS 3801 ET. SEQ. ARE APPLICABLE THERETO.

Executed this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

Name of Bidder/Proposer: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Authorized Official: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Official \_\_\_\_\_ Title of Official \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

## Exhibit D – Internal Charrette Snapshot Summary

### Visioning for the CVNP Rail Extension: Internal Charrette #1

August 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023

#### SNAPSHOT SUMMARY

This Snapshot Summary is a collective result of the collaboration and communication heard during the Internal Charrette #1. It can be used to guide future considerations and the basis for what is shared at the External Charrette #2.

#### DRAFT VISION STATEMENT

*Our vision is to extend rail service, connecting Cleveland to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, so we can expand regional opportunities around educational programs, access for disadvantaged families, increased mobility, enhanced visitor experience, economic benefits for all partners, while also recognizing and preserving the natural, cultural, and historic elements of Cuyahoga Valley National Park.*

#### Success: What does it look like?

- Financial Stability
  - For both CVNP and CVSR as it relates to the entire rail corridor
  - Includes operations, maintenance, and capital improvements.
  - Economic benefits for local communities
- Operational Stability
  - For both CVNP and CVSR as it relates to the entire rail corridor
  - Includes consistent service along the entire rail corridor.
  - Adequate infrastructure at stops and within local communities
- Heightened awareness of Conservation and Preservation
  - Includes history of the railroad, transportation through the valley, and the natural and cultural elements of the CVNP
- Increase in educational programs.
  - For children and adults
- Increase access to/from CVNP to underserved communities in Cleveland.
  - Generate new park experiences – recreational and educational.
  - Recognize benefits to social network, physical/mental health, employment.
- Develop and implement master plans for adjacent transportation and land use.

- Increase benefits and minimize impact to local communities.
- Increase stewardship of CVSR and the CVNP
  - Volunteer support, financial support, and positive messaging
- Maintain or Improve Visitor Experience
  - Includes train ride, park visit, and access to local communities.

### **Failure: How do we prevent it?**

- Focus on expanding existing service scenarios not creating entirely new ones.
  - Can't be everything to everyone.
  - Value added benefits evolve over time.
- Embrace the regional value of the expanded rail system.
  - Maintain clear communication and ongoing engagement with all regional partners.
- Establish clear ownership and O&M responsibility for the new section of railroad tracks.
  - NPS will not take on more track ownership nor O&M
- Mitigate negative impacts to local communities along the rail line.
  - Ensure infrastructure and facilities are in place for increased ridership.
- Mitigate potential impacts of the longer operational loop time.
  - Expand the visitor experience to bring more value from a longer ride.
- Gain knowledge on what new park visitors need to enjoy their first experience and beyond.
  - Focus on underserved communities, all ages and abilities.
  - Integrate findings from the Community Access Plan
  - Implement a community outreach initiative with partners.
- Ensure the financial and operational stability of the entire rail line.
  - Revenue sources, staff capacity, and regional agreements need to be established.

### **Challenges yet to be resolved but critical to the effort.**

The items below include issues that may be outside the scope of visioning but require resolution, as part of the feasibility study or separately by CVNP and CVSR.

- Establish track ownership for the rail extension.
  - Need a seamless partnership of CVNP and whoever owns the track extension.
- Establish track operations and maintenance responsibilities.
  - Coordination between the O/M for the rail extension versus the existing 26 miles
  - Establish partnerships to streamline maintenance – make sustainable.
  - Create framework to minimize disruption and absorb unforeseeable impacts.
- Establish inspection responsibilities for the entire system.
- Market Analysis to refine service scenarios and increase revenue generation.
- Increase stewardship and volunteer capacity.
- Funding

## Future Ideas, Actions, and Benefits

The items below include ideas that may be outside the scope of visioning but would benefit from ongoing consideration by the partners, now and in the future.

- Bike and Kayak Share on Train
  - Plan for accessible and affordable access to park amenities.
- Transportation connections within the park once people arrive by train.
  - Each station should serve as a mobility hub – disperse park use and activities.
  - Improvements/infrastructure additions should have a neutral impact.
- Opportunity to recruit seasonal employees, interns, etc. from Cleveland.
  - Employment within CVNP for high school or underemployed in Cleveland
- Economic development for local communities along the corridor
- Potential “choice” commute riders from Akron to Cleveland
- Future extensions
  - National Football Hall of Fame - RTA owns the line and wants to abandon.
  - Cleveland Zoo

## NOACA Feasibility Study - Overarching Elements to be Included in the Scope of Work

This is underway but included here for documentation.

- Need to consider the entire rail system collectively not just the additional 10 miles.
  - CVNP/CVSR will provide details on O/M needs and costs, ridership, revenue, service scenarios, and more.
- Highlight coordination with ALL Core Partners throughout the Feasibility Study.

## NEXT STEPS - External Charrette #2