



**ITEM #10**

**DATE:** January 7, 2015

**TO:** Board of Directors

**FROM:** Marlena Kohler, Purchasing Manager/DBE Officer *MK*  
Margaret Heath, Paratransit & Special Projects Manager

**SUBJECT:** Consider Authorization for the Sole Source Purchase of up to Eighteen (18) MV-1 Vehicle for ACCESS Paratransit Service From Creative Bus Sales, Inc.

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**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The ACCESS paratransit fleet currently consists of twenty-four (24) 23-ft long CNG fueled cutaways that were initially placed into service in October 2008. The Federal Transit Administration Useful Life of Transit Buses and Vans, (FTA VA-26-7229-07.1) dated April 2007 classifies these vehicles as Light-Duty Vehicles with a useful life of five years and/or 150,000 miles. The current ACCESS fleet has served its useful life and should be replaced to maintain reliable service provision to our customers. As of October 31, 2014 all of the ACCESS vehicles have been in service at least 5 years allowing for immediate replacement. The average odometer reading on October 31, 2014 was 147,499 miles; thirteen vehicles recorded at least 150,000 miles.

ACCESS provides ADA paratransit service complementary to GCTD's fixed services in compliance with federal regulations. Complementary paratransit service is best described as origin to destination service, requiring the service to assist passengers beyond the curb when necessary. ACCESS continues to receive requests for service at an increasing number of locations within the service area where a 23' foot cut-away cannot safely navigate to the curb to serve our senior and disabled passengers. Demand for service continues to increase; likewise, the need for a smaller vehicle to serve these passengers is anticipated to increase as well.

The most suitable vehicle to serve these challenging locations would be OEM CNG powered; have a smaller wheelbase with a minimum of 122 inches and support simultaneous transportation of two mobility aid devices. Twenty percent or more of ACCESS boardings on any given day involve passengers seated in a mobility device, making an automatic ramp option highly desirable.

GCTD staff and ACCESS contractor, MV Transportation, tested and evaluated several vehicle types over a 90 day period in summer 2014 from A-Z Bus Sales and Creative Bus Sales, Inc. It was determined that the MV-1 vehicle would meet GCTD's requirements as it is the only OEM CNG powered vehicle which has a wheelbase 122 inches and is able to support simultaneous transportation of two mobility aid devices.

Creative Bus Sales, Inc. is the only Commercial (Transit) Dealer for the MV-1 vehicle in the State of California as well as some of the surrounding states; therefore the purchases of this vehicle are justified as sole source procurements.

It is staff's recommendation to replace up to eighteen (18) vehicles of the current ACCESS fleet with the MV-1 vehicle from Creative Bus Sales, Inc. over the next three (3) fiscal years. GCTD anticipates purchasing up to eight (8) this fiscal year, four (4) will be purchased immediately for an estimated amount of \$60,752.30 per vehicle. The remaining units will be purchased during fiscal years 2015-16 and 2016-17.

**It is recommended the Board of Directors authorize the sole source purchase from Creative Bus Sales Inc. of up to eight (8) MV-1 Paratransit Vehicles in fiscal year 2014-15, and a total of up to ten (10) additional MV-1 Paratransit Vehicles during fiscal years 2015-16 and 2016-2017, for a total cost not-to-exceed \$1,154,293.70. Total cost includes eight (8) current year units at a cost of \$60,752.30 each and future units at a cost not-to-exceed current cost plus 10%.**

## **II. BACKGROUND**

The ACCESS paratransit fleet currently consists of twenty-four (24) 23-ft long CNG fueled cutaways that were initially placed into service in October 2008. The Federal Transit Administration Useful Life of Transit Buses and Vans, (FTA VA-26-7229-07.1) dated April 2007 classifies these vehicles as Light-Duty Vehicles with a useful life of five years and/or 150,000 miles. The current ACCESS fleet has served its useful life and should be replaced to maintain reliable service provision to our customers. As of October 31, 2014 all of the ACCESS vehicles have been in service at least 5 years allowing for immediate replacement. The average odometer reading on October 31, 2014 was 147,499 miles; as shown below, thirteen vehicles recorded at least 150,000 miles.

FLEET VEHICLE #	PASSENGER SEATING CAPACITY	TYPE MFG.	DATE IN SERVICE	Age 10/31/2014	Mileage 10/31/2014	Replacement Eligibility Date
2315	13/7 + 2wc	Starcraft	10/02/08	6.1	129,986	10/1/2013
2316	13/7 + 2wc	Starcraft	10/02/08	6.1	150,985	10/1/2013
2317	13/7 + 2wc	Starcraft	10/02/08	6.1	147,068	10/1/2013
2318	13/7 + 2wc	Starcraft	10/02/08	6.1	150,868	10/1/2013
2319	13/7 + 2wc	Starcraft	10/02/08	6.1	150,252	10/1/2013
2322	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	2/24/2009	5.7	140,762	2/23/2014
2320	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	03/03/09	5.7	138,352	3/2/2014
2321	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	03/03/09	5.7	151,141	3/2/2014
2324	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	03/03/09	5.7	143,428	3/2/2014
2325	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	03/03/09	5.7	147,072	3/2/2014
2326	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	03/03/09	5.7	151,460	3/2/2014
2331	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	03/03/09	5.7	149,780	3/2/2014
2328	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	03/04/09	5.7	151,366	3/3/2014
2327	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	3/6/2009	5.7	144,840	3/5/2014
2323	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	03/09/09	5.6	149,118	3/8/2014
2329	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	03/09/09	5.6	151,126	3/8/2014
2330	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	03/09/09	5.6	151,245	3/8/2014
2332	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	4/2/2009	5.6	151,121	4/1/2014
2333	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	4/2/2009	5.6	140,279	4/1/2014
2334	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	4/2/2009	5.6	146,595	4/1/2014
2335	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	4/2/2009	5.6	150,885	4/1/2014
2336	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	4/2/2009	5.6	151,231	4/1/2014
2337	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	5/29/2009	5.4	150,872	5/28/2014
2338	13/7 + 2wc	EL DORADO	5/29/2009	5.4	150,132	5/28/2014

In fiscal year 2014, GCTD developed a paratransit vehicle replacement plan with a total cost of \$2,600,000. One-third of the fleet is to be replaced in each of three (3) fiscal years (FY2014-15, FY2015-16, and FY2016-17). GCTD has received State Public Transportation Modernization, Improvement, and Service Enhancement Account Program (PTMISEA) funding for the first year of the three-year plan in the amount of \$866,667. PTMISEA funding will be requested prior to each fiscal year vehicle order. ACCESS plans to replace a small portion of its fleet with 23' cutaways to continue service to the large Senior Nutrition Program and growing Adult Day Health Care groups. However, 78% of the trips scheduled during last FY had no more than two passengers on board at any time. This is consistent with origin to destination paratransit service provided nationwide.

Looking forward, the most desirable vehicle is actually a fleet mix of various types to adequately address the diverse needs of GCTD's ACCESS services. Staff plans to retain the 23' cutaway that has been the traditional vehicle for ACCESS service and expand the fleet mix with a smaller, more nimble vehicle to access the increasing number of challenging locations. The second vehicle would ideally be an OEM CNG powered vehicle; have a smaller wheelbase with a minimum of 122

inches and support simultaneous transportation of two mobility aid devices. Twenty percent or more of ACCESS boardings on any given day involve passengers seated in a mobility device, making an automatic ramp option highly desirable.

GCTD departments collaborated with the ACCESS contractor, MV Transportation, and potential vendors from A-Z Bus Sales and Creative Bus Sales, Inc. to test several vehicle types over a 90 day period in summer 2014. The goal was to look for a vehicle that would best serve these tight-constrained access locations without compromising potential capacity, as demand for services is forecasted to increase. ACCESS staff tested four vehicles in all, including CNG fueled low floor models provided by A-Z Bus Sales; a Class A 19' Starcraft gasoline fueled cutaway and a MV-1 provided by Creative Bus Sales, Inc. Vehicles were tested throughout the service area over a minimum period of two to three days each. Passengers, drivers and maintenance staff from MV Transportation provided feedback as to the pros and cons of each vehicle type. The MV-1 received the overall consensus recommendation.

### **Description of paratransit services and FTA mandated requirements for provision of services**

The ACCESS service is an extremely important service for our customers. Operating significantly differently from fixed route services, the equipment needs are different, including capacity. Paratransit trips are requested by customer with mobility challenges. Ninety percent of the trips provided originate from a user-specified origin to a user-specified destination at a user-specified time. This makes demand responsive services very difficult to group more than two passengers together outside of pre-arranged group trips to congregate meal sites and grocery shopping. Seventy-eight percent of the demand requested on GCTD ACCESS can be adequately served using the MV-1 vehicle. Senior nutrition and grocery shopping congregate trips account for 10% of the overall trip demand and would require the use of three vehicles larger than the MV-1 when these trips are provided simultaneously.

The ADA classifies complementary paratransit service as origin to destination service. Transit agencies were allowed to establish whether to provide door-to-door service or curb-to-curb service when submitting their original ADA plans in the early 90's. GCTD provides curb-to-curb service, where assistance is not provided to the rider beyond the curb. ADA compliance reviews performed over the last ten years have seen the FTA take a stronger stance on a passenger's right to assistance beyond the curb when necessitated by disability to ensure that the passenger has received origin-to-destination service. This means that when requested, door-to-door service must be provided. Door-to-door service involves more time per boarding theoretically, because the vehicle operator (driver) offers assistance from the rider's door to the vehicle, and then again at the destination.

GCTD ACCESS frequently transports passengers who have either experienced a physical barrier at the stop, or the nature of a person's disability is such that the passenger experiences tremendous difficulty negotiating the distance to the door.

Physical barriers (e.g., sidewalk construction) are not uncommon in GCTD's service area. A barrier may prevent a passenger from traveling between the curb and the door of his or her destination point. In these and similar situations, to ensure that service is actually provided "from the user's point of origin to his or her destination point," the bus operator may need to offer assistance beyond the curb, even though the basic service mode for GCTD ACCESS remains curb-to-curb.

ACCESS continues to receive requests for service at an increasing number of locations within the service area where a 23' foot cut-away cannot safely navigate to the curb to serve our senior and disabled passengers. If a 23' vehicle were to enter a narrow street, the vehicle would be forced to either make a multiple point turn or back up all the way, either of which is prohibited under state law. This effectively forces a senior/disabled service to make the passenger walk a distance that may be too far for them to navigate safely. The average age of the ACCESS passenger is 80 years of age. These challenging locations include but are not restricted to mobile home parks, nursing home parking lots and narrow streets along the beach areas of our community. As the demand for service increase, the need for a smaller vehicle to serve passengers in these challenging locations has increased as well.

### **Vehicle Description**



The MV-1 is an American-built vehicle specifically designed from the ground up to meet or exceed the needs of wheelchair passengers as well as the guidelines of the ADA. The power telescoping wheelchair ramp slides out to two lengths, for either a slope of 1:6 or 1:4. The ramp deploys and retracts within 30 seconds. The interior is roomy, and provides for transportation of one scooter or two manual wheelchair passengers with seating for up to three ambulatory passengers.

### **Operations Feedback**

GCTD ACCESS service has traditionally been provided in 23' cut-a-ways with moderate success. The demand dynamic for service does not require the capacity

the larger vehicle offers. Moving to a smaller 16' vehicle such as the MV-1 would provide many operational advantages such as:

- Parking a 16' vehicle closer to the intended destination is easier, thereby improving the customer's overall experience.
- Passengers would enjoy a smoother ride. Many passengers ACCESS transports have conditions that are acutely sensitive to the additional movement experienced in the higher sitting cut away buses. Any movement could be especially stressful after having completed a procedure as debilitating as dialysis. Dialysis transportation requests account for approximately 10% of the current demand.
- The 16' MV-1 is easier to maneuver in tight areas such as mobile homes or apartment complexes with no safe turn around. Many of the medical facilities passengers are transported to follow specific traffic patterns due to restricted space within the parking lots.
- The MV-1 can be safely driven into a driveway or a parking space to wait for passengers who have not yet come outside. Drivers will avoid double parking and congested areas, improving safety for the passenger. Clearance obstacles at some locations, such as 801 S C Street and nursing homes no would longer present safety challenges.
- Passenger access is easier for both pedestrians and those using mobility equipment. Drivers noted that the time to properly secure a wheelchair is significantly less, estimated to as few as three minutes compared with the current seven minute average on the cutaways.
- The average speed of the routes would improve due to the relative agility of the MV-1 in tight spaces along with fewer blind spots, improving visibility and safety for the driver and the customers. The ability to use the fast lane when traveling to the transfer locations in Camarillo would be very helpful.
- Passengers in wheelchair devices account for 18% of ACCESS trips overall. They loved sitting "shot gun" with the driver, as it was more engaging for the passenger. Ambulatory passengers liked the MV-1 because it was easier to access. Though the smaller interior cabin was more intimate, it was boxy and roomy, allowing for ease of movement. Walkers and bags were stowed away in the back cabin above the tanks.

### **Maintenance Review of MV-1's in service**

Access Services Inc. (ASI) of LA County currently has 50 of the CNG units in their fleet. Rick Streiff, Manager Fleet Design and Maintenance for ASI commented in August 2014 that the vehicles perform very well for ASI. GCTD and MV staff traveled to the ASI yard in Van Nuys August 20, 2014 to investigate MV-1 maintenance information. ASI operates 25 MV-1's from this yard.

GCTD and MV Transportation staff reviewed maintenance jackets of three randomly selected CNG powered vehicles. No extraordinary work was required on the vehicles. The average odometer was 100,000 miles. MV Transportation personnel report that from a maintenance perspective, the MV-1 seems OK. The V-8 engine, dash and transmission are all Ford components. The brakes are GM

components. All parts are regular items easily obtained from the manufacturer/dealer. Work on the engines can be performed more easily. The vehicle is rear-wheel drive. The engine does not have to be dropped to perform work, as is the case with the larger cut-aways.

The Van Nuys shop supervisor was asked to identify any possible fleet defects or issues. The only issue discussed was local temperatures. The vehicle has only front air conditioning. The average temperature in Van Nuys during July-August-September is 95-97-93 degrees, respectively. To address this issue, the Van Nuys shop tinted the windows. The a/c actuators (blend doors) are an issue as well. Van Nuys personnel observed that the part is built cheaply, as they fail a lot. The parts are inexpensive and easy to replace. Parts availability overall has not been an issue. GCTD staff does not anticipate that air conditioning is going to be a problem here in Oxnard. The average temperature locally during the same three month period is more than twenty degrees cooler, varying from 71-73-71, respectively.

The Oxnard MV Maintenance Manager is not a fan of slide ramps; however Van Nuys indicated the ramps have performed well for them with minor issues requiring replacement of few switches and some electrical problems. It should be noted that Van Nuys received some of their MV-1's from another contract in Chicago. Those have had mechanical ramp issues due to salt and rust build up common to weather conditions not found in Southern California.

### **Cost and Procurement Options**

The anticipated cost for a CNG fueled MV-1 is approximately \$60,000 per unit. This is significantly less than what was expended on the paratransit vehicles that were available to purchase in 2008. GCT spent \$81K on each of five Starcraft vehicles and \$94K on each of 19 El Dorado vehicles. Both models are 23' cutaways, weigh about 14,500 pounds and average approximately 6 mpg. Using the current rate of 80 cents a unit, the cost to fuel the 23' for 150,000 miles is approximately \$20,000. The cost to fuel a MV-1 is anticipated to be \$6,000 due to the lighter chassis (5,500 pounds) that yields a minimum mpg of 20.

As an OEM vehicle, the warranty on the MV-1 will include:

- 3 years/36,000 miles – Bumper to Bumper
- 5 years/75,000 miles – Power Train
- 5 years/75,000 miles – Wheelchair Ramp
- 5 years/100,000 miles – Rust

Staff intends to replace up to one third of the ACCESS fleet with MV-1's during the current fiscal year. Creative Bus Sales, Inc. is the Commercial (Transit) Dealer for the MV-1 in the State of California as well as some of the surrounding states. There are other MV-1 commercial dealers in other states; Creative is the only dealer set up to handle deliveries and to provide local after-sales support for transit agencies in the state of California. The MV-1 may be available via the Cal-

ACT/MBTA purchasing collective and the State of California contracts in Spring of 2015. Access Services Inc. of LA County (ASI) also anticipates procuring an additional 80-90 units; this procurement has been yet to be announced. Staff recommendation is to investigate these alternatives as they become available, to possibly avail GCTD of better pricing for purchases to the initial 8 vehicles requested.

### **Company stability and availability of parts for future maintenance**

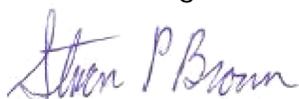
There has been concern voiced about the stability MV-1's manufacturing. The original manufacturer, Vehicle Production Group LLC (VPG) was a Miami, FL based wheelchair-accessible taxi-cab maker. The MV-1 was marketed as the only American-built vehicle specifically designed from the ground up to meet or exceed the needs of wheelchair passengers as well as the guidelines of the ADA. VPG ceased production of new vehicles in February 2013 after their finances dropped below the minimum condition of a \$50 Million clean-energy loan awarded in March 2011 by the Department of Energy (DOE). The company laid off all its employees and closed its doors in May 2013.

In September 2013 the original contract builder of the MV-1, AM General, reached an agreement with DOE to purchase the secured loan for \$3 million. AM General created "Mobility Ventures", a wholly owned subsidiary to again produce and distribute the MV-1 through its dealer network. Production and assembly resumed in March 2014 at AM General's 675,000 square-foot Commercial Assembly Plant in Mishawaka, Ind. This plant was already fully tooled for the original MV-1 under contract from VPG, prior to VPG's bankruptcy. As the current owner and operator of the MV-1 business, AM General is a 50+ year old company mainly known for building the HUMMVEE military vehicle.

### **III. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION ACTION**

**It is recommended the Board of Directors authorize the sole source purchase from Creative Bus Sales Inc. of up to eight (8) MV-1 Paratransit Vehicles in fiscal year 2014-15, and a total of up to ten (10) additional MV-1 Paratransit Vehicles during fiscal years 2015-16 and 2016-2017, for a total cost not-to-exceed \$1,154,293.70. Total cost includes eight (8) current year units at a cost of \$60,752.30 each and future units at a cost not-to-exceed current cost plus 10%.**

General Manager's Concurrence



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Steven P. Brown