Agenda Item 8-B
Consent Item

To: Chairman Milde and the VRE Operations Board

From: Doug Allen

Date: April 18, 2014

Subject: Authorization to issue a Request for Proposals for Marketing and Advertising Services

Recommendation:

The VRE Operations Board is being asked to authorize the Chief Executive Officer to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for marketing and advertising services.

Background:

The current contract for marketing and advertising services is with Sparky's Garage of Leesburg, Virginia. Work awarded under the contract has included printing of schedules, posters, Rider's Guides, brochures, and radio and print marketing campaigns.

The existing contract was for a three year term beginning July 1, 2011 and as such, expires on June 30, 2014. Staff is requesting permission to issue a new RFP for marketing, advertising and other related services. The contract proposed will be for a three-year base term with options for two, one-year extensions, which could be exercised by VRE.

In addition to our on-going marketing, advertising and creative services work, the RFP will also include the following tasks that were not explicitly required under the previous RFP:

- Re-design of the VRE website (already approved by the VRE Operations Board)
- Geographical Information Services (GIS) for cartography
- Creation of a VRE style guide/graphic standards manual
Additional goals, tasks and tactics for the Marketing Firm include:

1. Build VRE Brand Equity and actively manage the brand - refresh current logo, slogans, etc. Keep the brand relevant. Position the brand – We deliver world class, high quality commuter rail service. Illustrate the exemplary job we do on a daily basis. Feature the people that make VRE work. Build the brand through event marketing and cooperative marketing.
2. Manage fare policy communications to maintain rider perception of value.
3. Ensure consistent communications through social media and a redesign of the web page.
4. Conduct elected official and opinion leader communications. Develop briefing books for elected officials, business and community leaders.
5. Provide materials to assist conducting media relations – media kits, news releases, feature stories, source of news, public service announcements, op-ed articles, editorial board meetings and annual report.
6. Assist staff in creating a community relations plan to gain support for expansion plans, service and fare changes, increase understanding of VRE, and build coalitions that support VRE.
7. Create an annual marketing plan with clearly established goals and objectives based upon approved activities within a constrained budget provided by VRE.

It is anticipated the competitive procurement process will result in the selection of a viable candidate firm by July 2014 and that a recommendation for contract award will be brought to the Operations Board for approval at its September 2014 meeting.

Fiscal Impact:

Funding is provided for in the adopted FY 2015 operating budget. Funding for future fiscal years will be included in proposed annual budgets.
Virginia Railway Express
Operations Board

Resolution
8B-04-2014

Authorization to Issue a Request for Proposals
For Marketing and Advertising Services

WHEREAS, the current contract for marketing and advertising services was awarded in July of 2011 and expires in June 2014; and,

WHEREAS, VRE has an ongoing need for professional support for marketing and advertising services; and,

WHEREAS, hiring marketing consultant will allow VRE to better perform many mission critical functions in communicating to riders and the general public about VRE services.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the VRE Operations Board does hereby approve the Chief Executive Officer to issue a Request for Proposals for marketing, advertising and other related services.

Approved this 18th day of April 2014

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Paul Milde
Chairman

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Gary Skinner
Secretary