

MEMORANDUM

November 26, 2014

To: MVTA Board

From Michael Abegg, Planning Manager

Subject: Licensing Agreement – Driver Assist Systems

Requested Action

Authorize entering into a licensing agreement with the University of Minnesota for the Driver Assist System (DAS) technology.

Background

As part of the Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA), MVTA deployed the Driver Assist System, developed at and patented by the University of Minnesota, on ten buses operating in the Cedar corridor. Funding is available in MVTA's Cedar and I-35W CMAQ project budgets to extend this technology to additional buses and locations. Until just recently, it was planned to enter into a new agreement with the University to perform the work related to this system expansion.

However, within the last month, the University made a decision to close down the Intelligent Vehicles Laboratory (IVLab) due to the expiration of some Federal funding that supported the Lab's operations (as well as some other components of the Center for Transportation Studies). As a result, IVLab staff are dispersing and the University is no longer able to perform this work. In addition, the technology developed at the IVLab is in the process of being transferred to the University's Office for Commercialization of Technology (OCT), which in turn is able to enter into many types of technology licensing arrangements.

MVTA staff, working with IVLab and OCT staff, have concluded that the best path forward for MVTA to expand the use of this technology is to license the technology directly from the University, including the designs and software/hardware requirements. This will then allow MVTA to contract with other parties to purchase off-the-shelf components, build custom hardware and software, and perform installation services. Indeed, this approach is currently being taken by the California Department of Transportation, which is planning to deploy the DAS technology for its Donner Pass snowplow fleet.

Impact

If MVTA does not license the technology directly from the University, the only other option for DAS expansion is to hope that a commercial firm licenses it and is able to supply equipment and services to MVTA at a reasonable price. By MVTA obtaining a license, it is able to widen the range of potential project alternatives to include directly purchasing components and services.

MVTA could also simply allow the DAS program to end with the current ten buses. However, the FTA review of the DAS program indicated that it provides small but clearly measurable

benefits to transit operations. Also, the funds available in the Federal grants for the expansion would not be available to MVTA for other purposes, more likely they would be available to Met Council for different projects entirely, or simply revert back to the Federal government.

The licensing agreement is on a no-cost basis for the first step of the expansion, the seven Cedar Avenue Station-to-Station service buses. Given the evolving state of the technology, it is not yet clear whether future expansions should incur a licensing fee, so the recommended action is to limit both MVTA and the University to the seven buses only at this time.

Additional Board actions will be required to enter into agreements to acquire the components and services needed to actually install the DAS on the Cedar buses; this action simply provides the technology license to MVTA that enables those future agreements through the cleanest path.

Recommendation

Authorize the Chair and Executive Director to enter into a Technology License Agreement between MVTA and the University of Minnesota, at no net cost, for the deployment of the Driver Assist System Technology to the seven Cedar Avenue Station-to-Station buses, subject to review as to form by legal counsel.

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MINNESOTA VALLEY TRANSIT AUTHORITY
RESOLUTION NO. 12-_____

AUTHORIZING A TECHNOLOGY LICENSING AGREEMENT WITH THE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA FOR THE DRIVER ASSIST SYSTEM (DAS)
TECHNOLOGY

WHEREAS, MVTA operates a fleet of ten buses equipped with the Driver Assist System (DAS) developed at and patented by the University of Minnesota; and,

WHEREAS, MVTA desires and has funding to expand deployment of the DAS to additional buses and corridors, and,

WHEREAS, the University of Minnesota is unable to directly supply additional components and services for the expansion of the DAS but is willing and able to provide a no-fee technology license;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board authorize the Chair and Executive Director to enter into a no-cost Technology Licensing Agreement with the University of Minnesota, subject to review as to form by legal counsel, for the Deployment of the DAS Technology on Seven Cedar Avenue Station-to-Station buses.

ADOPTED by the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority this 27th day of June 2012.

Chair

Attest:
