



Board Report

File #: 2024-1163, File Type: Contract

Agenda Number: 15.

FINANCE, BUDGET AND AUDIT COMMITTEE MARCH 20, 2025

SUBJECT: WEB PLATFORM DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

AUTHORIZING the Chief Executive Officer to execute Modification No. 2 to Contract No. PS87947000 with Exemplifi, LLC in the amount of \$400,000 increasing the Not-to-Exceed (NTE) contract value from \$550,000 to \$950,000, and extend the period of performance from August 31, 2025 to June 30, 2026 to continue providing essential digital maintenance and development support for Metro.net and standalone websites (The Source, El Pasajero, and art.metro.net).

ISSUE

The current Contract No. PS87947000 is set to expire on August 31, 2025. Funding is projected to be exhausted by April 2025 due to higher-than-anticipated usage as the Customer Experience Department works to enhance key areas of its web and blog presence. Critical projects have included the development of the CX Hub, the Public Safety Hub, a new Projects hub and service alerts improvements, as well as the redesign of The Source and El Pasajero blogs.

BACKGROUND

Metro has contracted with various vendors to provide maintenance and support for Metro.net since at least 2016, ensuring the platform remains secure, accessible, and reliable for riders. Over the years, this work has included website security, infrastructure management, compliance monitoring, and user experience improvements.

Contract No. PS87947000 was awarded on August 30, 2022, for a NTE contract amount of \$450,000 for a two-year term. Contract Modification No. 1 continued web maintenance services, increased contract authority from \$450,000 to \$550,000, and extended the period of performance through August 31, 2025.

The scope of work under these contracts has included:

- Security & Compliance - Regular WordPress updates, security monitoring, and ADA Section 508 compliance checks to prevent vulnerabilities and legal risks.
- Infrastructure & Performance - Managing AWS hosting, optimizing performance, and

- preventing downtime to ensure fast, reliable access for riders.
- SEO & Site Maintenance - Fixing broken links, addressing mobile responsiveness issues, and maintaining search engine visibility to improve user experience.
- Emergency Support - Providing on-call assistance for critical website issues and outages.
- Front- and backend development support of website enhancement projects as necessary.

Since 2016, Metro has worked with three different vendors to perform these duties, adapting to evolving technology and agency needs. Extending the current contract ensures continued stability, security, and accessibility while Metro advances its long-term digital strategy.

DISCUSSION

Metro.net and its standalone websites are critical public resources, providing riders with real-time transit information, trip planning tools, and accessibility features that comply with ADA Section 508, Title VI, and Brown Act requirements. Metro.net and its associated websites serve over 4.2 million annual users.

Why Metro.net Matters to Riders:

Riders rely on Metro.net to :

- Check real-time arrivals
- Plan trips
- View schedules
- Access fare assistance (LIFE program)
- Stay updated on Metro services and projects

Ongoing Improvements & Unplanned Enhancements

To enhance the user experience and ensure critical information is accessible, Metro has undertaken major improvements to Metro.net and its blogs. Web development services have supported these initiatives, ensuring seamless integration, compliance, and platform stability.

Recent key enhancements include:

- The CX Hub - A dedicated section featuring plans, survey results, and updates to promote transparency and accountability in Metro's customer experience initiatives.
- The Safety Hub - A new section highlighting Metro's commitment to a safer, cleaner, and more welcoming transit system by providing safety resources, updates, and performance data (In progress).
- The Project Hub - A redesigned landing page for Metro project information, improving access to updates and engagement opportunities (In progress).
- Service Alert Improvements - Enhancements to Metro.net's service alert system, ensuring timely and accurate notifications for delays, disruptions, and service changes.
- Re-design and re-launch of The Source blog to modernize content delivery and accessibility.

Why additional funding is needed:

Metro historically spends \$13,400 per month (\$160,000 annually) on web maintenance and support. While efforts were made to reduce costs, recent unplanned but necessary improvements have exhausted available funds faster than anticipated.

Without this contract modification:

- Essential web services could be disrupted, affecting riders' ability to access information.
- Metro.net could face compliance risks, including ADA Section 508 violations.
- Operational costs could rise, as unexpected security issues or downtime would require emergency interventions.

This modification ensures continuity, stability, and compliance while Metro advances its long-term digital transformation, including a fully redesigned Metro.net by FY27. Renewing the contract is the most efficient and cost-effective solution, allowing Metro to maintain seamless service while improving rider experience and accessibility.

Modifying the existing contract is the most efficient and cost-effective solution to ensure continuity, stability, and compliance while Metro moves forward with long-term digital transformation plans.

Without this modification, Metro faces potential non-compliance risks, service disruptions, and a decline in the user experience for its 4.2 million annual users.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Without continued web development services support, Metro.net and associated websites would be vulnerable to security breaches, and becoming noncompliant with ADA Section 508 and Title VI requirements. This would compromise Metro's ability to deliver accurate and reliable information to riders, stakeholders, and the public.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The funding for this contract modification will be allocated as follows:

- \$30,000 is included in the FY25 Budget under Cost Center 7140 (Marketing), Project 100001 (General Overhead) for planned expenditures.
- \$195,000 for planned work in FY26 will be funded through Project 306006.
- An additional \$175,000 is allocated for spec development work through FY26, ensuring Metro can respond to emerging digital needs as they arise. This contract authority will only be used if necessary, allowing Metro to maintain flexibility for unforeseen enhancement work while remaining fiscally responsible.

Impact to Budget

The source of funds will come from federal, state and local funding sources which may be eligible for

bus and rail operating and capital expenses. Since this is a multi-year contract, the Executive Officer, Marketing, the Deputy Chief, Customer Experience and the Chief Customer Experience Officer will be accountable for budgeting the cost in future years, including any option exercised.

EQUITY PLATFORM

Metro.net and its associated standalone websites, including The Source (Metro's English language blog), El Pasajero (Metro's Spanish-language blog), and Art.metro.net (showcasing visual and performing arts in the transit system), play a vital role in ensuring equitable access to transit information and resources. These platforms are especially vital for low-income, minority, and non-English-speaking populations, serving as key communication tools to provide critical updates, service alerts, and travel information in an accessible and inclusive manner.

Exemplifi has been instrumental in maintaining Metro.net's compliance with Section 508 ADA standards, ensuring that users of all abilities can access the site, while providing translations in 9 additional languages. Their support will also include the upkeep of standalone sites like El Pasajero, which provides Spanish-language content tailored to the needs of Metro's Spanish-speaking riders. This is central to Metro's commitment to equity and inclusion, ensuring underserved communities can easily access reliable transit information.

By extending Exemplifi's contract, Metro will maintain the accessibility and functionality of these platforms, avoiding service disruptions that could disproportionately impact marginalized populations. This contract modification upholds Metro's responsibility to serve all communities equitably, ensuring that riders continue to benefit from the agency's digital services. Exemplifi, LLC, a Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Prime, made a 60% SBE commitment. The project is 95% complete, and the current participation is 60% SBE, meeting the commitment.

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED OUTCOME

VMT and VMT per capita in Los Angeles County are lower than national averages, the lowest in the SCAG region, and on the lower end of VMT per capita statewide, with these declining VMT trends due in part to Metro's significant investment in rail and bus transit.* Metro's Board-adopted VMT reduction targets align with California's statewide climate goals, including achieving carbon neutrality by 2045. To ensure continued progress, all Board items are assessed for their potential impact on VMT.

As part of these ongoing efforts, this item is expected to contribute to further reductions in VMT. This item supports Metro's systemwide strategy to reduce VMT through customer experience activities that will benefit and further encourage transit ridership, ridesharing, and active transportation. Metro.net and its standalone websites are critical public resources, providing riders with real-time transit information, trip planning tools, and accessibility, serving 17,607 daily users and 44,388 daily views, with over 4.2 million annual users. Metro's Board-adopted VMT reduction targets were designed to build on the success of existing investments, and this item aligns with those objectives.

*Based on population estimates from the United States Census and VMT estimates from Caltrans' Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) data between 2001-2019.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Approving this contract modification aligns with Metro's strategic goals by ensuring the ongoing maintenance, reliability, and accessibility of Metro.net and its associated standalone websites.

1. Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling. Metro.net is an essential tool for riders to efficiently plan their journeys, access service alerts, and receive real-time transit information. Exemplifi's continued support guarantees that the site remains functional, reliable, and current, allowing riders to spend less time searching for information and more time traveling to their destinations.

2. Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system. A well-maintained Metro.net enhances the overall rider experience by offering a seamless digital platform for planning, navigation, and service updates. Exemplifi has improved the usability, accessibility, and performance of Metro.net, ensuring that all users, regardless of ability or language, can access the information they need for a smooth and informed journey.

3. Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity. Metro.net is more than just a website; it serves as a gateway to mobility and opportunity for communities throughout Los Angeles. Exemplifi's efforts ensure that the platform remains accessible to all riders, including low-income and minority communities, as well as Spanish-speaking audiences through sites like El Pasajero.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board may elect not to approve these recommendations. This option is not recommended as Metro faces potential non-compliance risks, service disruptions, and a decline in the user experience for its 4.2 million annual users of our websites.

1. Allow the contract to expire and transition to internal staff. This option is not viable because developer positions are difficult to fill and Metro currently lacks the staff resources and expertise required to maintain and support Metro.net and the standalone websites. As a result, Metro.net and the standalone sites would be at risk of security breaches, non-compliance, and serious performance issues, all of which could jeopardize the rider experience and Metro's public-facing presence.

2. Issue a new RFP for web maintenance services to begin before this contract expires. Issuing a new RFP is not viable given the time constraints. It will take approximately a year for a new contract to be awarded and commence work with the selected vendor. Consequently, Metro would be without any web maintenance support for an extended period. This gap could result in outages, compliance violations, and disruptions to critical public-facing tools.

NEXT STEPS

Upon Board approval, staff will execute Modification No. 2 to Contract No. PS87947000 with Exemplifi, LLC to continue to provide critical digital services through June 30, 2026.

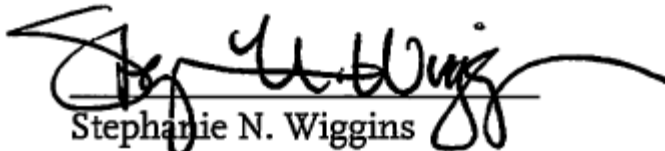
Staff will also begin work on a new procurement for web design and maintenance services contract.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Procurement Summary
Attachment B - Contract Modification/Change Order Log
Attachment C - DEOD Summary

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