

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority enters first stage of new payment system

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The [Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority](#) (WMATA) has been working toward a new electronic fare collection/open payment system since 2009, and has reissued a [request for proposals](#) (RFP) that will be the first of two solicitations.

In 2009, the WMATA issued an RFP to establish an initial set of requirements and specifications, and give vendors the opportunity to submit their proposals and be listed as a qualified vendor. Following the first phase, the WMATA anticipated issuing a second solicitation in order to award a contract to develop and implement an electronic fare collection system. However, the WMATA opted to cancel all bids and reevaluate the first phase specifications before the second RFP.

On December 30, 2010 – approximately a year and a half after the initial RFP release – the WMATA issued a new set of specifications that will allow the agency to review vendor's proposals, engage vendor suggestions, view various presentations, and discuss how they may develop the RFP for the second phase of the project.

While it is not common for an agency to engage vendors in a two-step process for a project, due to the length of the procurement cycle and hours required, the WMATA considers the revamping and upgrade of the payment system to necessitate the two-step process. A longer process will bring more costs to both the WMATA and vendors involved in bidding. Allowing vendors to comment and provide their own ideas almost acts as a request for information; however, in this case, the first phase allows the WMATA to determine which vendors can bid on the second phase.

GovWin's Take

It is important for state and local agencies taking part in a costly large-scale project to ensure they implement the most cost-effective and efficient solution, especially in times when budgets are strained. Vendors who submit proposals for phase one of this project will essentially be assisting the WMATA in developing the specifications. More agencies may look to a multiphase approach in order to guarantee implementation is a smooth and cost-efficient process.