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Planning

Kent Thameside Fastrack 2022

Kent County Council

F01: Prior information notice

Prior information only

Notice identifier: 2021/S 000-002705

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocids-h6vhtk-0291f8

Published 10 February 2021, 12:31pm

Section I: Contracting authority

I.1) Name and addresses

Kent County Council

County Hall

Maidstone

ME14 1XQ

Contact

Mr Shane Hymers

Email

Shane.Hymers@kent.gov.uk

Country

United Kingdom

NUTS code

UKJ4 - Kent

Internet address(es)

Main address

<http://www.kent.gov.uk>

Buyer's address

<http://www.kent.gov.uk>

I.3) Communication

Additional information can be obtained from the above-mentioned address

I.4) Type of the contracting authority

Regional or local authority

I.5) Main activity

General public services

Section II: Object

II.1) Scope of the procurement

II.1.1) Title

Kent Thameside Fastrack 2022

II.1.2) Main CPV code

- 60112000 - Public road transport services

II.1.3) Type of contract

Services

II.1.4) Short description

This PIN provides notice of a future opportunity to operate the premium Fastrack Bus Rapid Transit network in the Dartford and Gravesend area for Kent County Council.

Fastrack has operated successfully since 2006 and is a key element of the substantial developments being constructed in Kent Thameside. The developments are designed to be served by sustainable transport modes and, without Fastrack, it is forecast that there would be significant additional traffic congestion on the local road network. Fastrack is therefore vital in increasing the modal share between public and private transport. Currently at 22 per cent, our mode share goal is to be at 25 per cent by 2025/26.

In 2022, the network reaches a critical point where the planned opening of the Fastrack tunnel between Bluewater and Whitecliffe (Eastern Quarry) prompts the opportunity for Fastrack to expand to serve the new sites effectively.

The Council therefore intends to hold a competitive tendering process during 2021 for a new contract incorporating an extended service A and the current route B. There are also plans for further expansions to these services during the life of the contract as the development sites proceed. A new route C is also in development.

From April 1st, 2022, it is anticipated that this new contract will run for 8 years, subject to periodic KPIs being met. Future phases of the network will have the provision to be awarded without retendering, subject to meeting performance criteria

II.1.6) Information about lots

This contract is divided into lots: No

II.2) Description

II.2.3) Place of performance

NUTS codes

- UKJ4 - Kent

II.2.4) Description of the procurement

*** THIS IS NOT A CALL FOR COMPETITION and for information only ***

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Following a successful trial in 2018 and to enhance the sustainability of the Fastrack network, we will seek only to operate an electric single deck vehicle powered primarily with opportunity roadside charging. Charging points would be placed at the Gravesend Bus Hub and Dartford Home Gardens, with additional chargers provided at the operating depot as a backup. Kent County Council will undertake associated groundworks and provide connectivity locations for the on-street charging, however, the Council will ask tenderers to procure a specified fleet (c.27 buses initially) and both the on-street charging interfaces and depot charging facilities. The council encourages interested parties to research funding opportunities for electric buses and actively engage with relevant manufacturers now. This could help you provide best value operating prices.

A gross cost contract is currently the preferred option of KCC, though the precise nature of the contract is still to be determined. Regardless of contract type, our evaluation of tender submissions will be based on performance confidence as well as being price driven. A strong focus on providing a very high-quality service is expected, demonstrating how tenderers would stimulate the significant passenger growth required to achieve KCC's strategic goals for Fastrack. Our key ambitions are to be Europe's best Bus Rapid Transit network and to empower our passengers to have greater influence over their service. This will mean regular customer contact and localised decision making. All whilst delivering KCC with value for money.

A single contractor will be required for the whole Fastrack network and the appointed contractor will be expected to:

- Provide and maintain the fleet bus fleet and charging interfaces to high operating standards and to a set of core requirements.
- Secure and operate a conveniently located operating Centre, supported if required by a well-equipped maintenance base sited within a reasonable distance from the Fastrack routes.
- Recruit, measure and maintain a well-trained and enthusiastic driver team supported by committed local management staff.
- Employ visible and highly motivated Fastrack supervisors who will work as an ambassador with both users of the service and local stakeholders to enhance and develop Fastrack's reputation and passenger base.
- The contractor will have in place and employ clear plans including a comprehensive Customer Service Plan, a Route Control Strategy and a Business Continuity Plan.
- The contractor will play a full part in publicising and marketing Fastrack, including digital media channels.
- The contractor will also be able to keep pace with anticipated growth of the Fastrack network.

Whilst it is envisaged that the Council will take the risk on revenue and that the contract will be let on a gross cost basis, the contractor will be expected to ensure that revenue growth is maximised and that there is co-operation with other operators on multi-operator ticketing use and acceptance. Patronage growth will be a key metric, alongside reliability and customer satisfaction.

The contract will be supported by a contract management process driven by performance standards and KPIs designed to enhance the service quality of Fastrack.

Companies that are interested but are not registered on the Kent Business Portal should register at the following address in the first instance: www.kentbusinessportal.org.uk. Please note that no response is required from prospective bidders to this notice.

If you require more information about this notice, please contact Shane Hymers at the following address: shane.hymers@kent.gov.uk

II.3) Estimated date of publication of contract notice

1 September 2021

Section IV. Procedure

IV.1) Description

IV.1.8) Information about the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)

The procurement is covered by the Government Procurement Agreement: Yes