



THE CITY OF BOSTON FINANCE COMMISSION  
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Superintendent Mary Skipper  
Boston Public Schools  
2300 Washington Street  
Roxbury, MA 02119

December 12, 2022

Dear Superintendent Skipper:

The Finance Commission received several complaints regarding the Boston Public Schools Invitation For Bids to procure student transportation services in the Boston Public Schools (EV00011276) which resulted in the Commission reviewing the bid package and the process. There were several areas of concern that are worth noting:

1. Though four potential vendors attended the mandatory walkthrough held on September 29, 2022, only one vendor submitted a bid. The vendor was Transdev, the incumbent vendor.
2. The IFB set a minimum requirement that vendors must have “experience working with at least 3 school districts, transit agencies, or specialty districts with a fleet at least 50% the size of the BPS fleet”. The IFB stated that Boston Public Schools has a fleet of 736 total fleet buses (including spares) but 624 buses in daily use. This requirement seems arbitrary and most likely had the effect of eliminating potential viable candidates. The one vendor who did submit a bid, the incumbent, supplied several similar contracts in their response but only one Phoenix, Arizona, would reach the minimum requirement in the IFB. It can be assumed Boston would be a second but was not noted. The Finance Commission does not know if additional data was sought by Boston Public Schools to meet that minimum threshold.
3. Within the Vendor Questions and Responses, part 1, number 44, a potential bidder questions this minimum fleet requirement by asking BPS if the “50% of the size of Boston fleet” could be reduced to 150. The response from BPS was “The City/District have considered a variety of options and determined that this IFB is the best approach for achieving our mission of providing safe, reliable, on-time, and cost-effective transportation for the students of Boston, in collaboration with our transportation vendor. The bid specifications will not be modified.” The vendor identifies themselves as STA, and that the requirement appears to have eliminated them, the third largest operator in the United States.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Office of the Inspector General created The Practical Guide to Drafting Effective Invitation for Bids and Requests For Proposals for Supplies and Services, on page 14, section III (Quality Requirements), it states, "Make your requirements as stringent as necessary, but do not unduly limit competition." The Finance Commission is concerned that without a rational and a complete explanation of the need for all vendors to have experience with three contracts operating a fleet of at least 50% of the total size of the BPS fleet, that the requirement is arbitrary, artificially limited competition, and could increase costs to the taxpayers of the City of Boston. The inclusion of this requirement should be fully investigated.

Bidding processes are conducted to assure transparency, inclusion, and that government agents are doing their jobs to secure capable vendors at the best possible price. This includes conducting outreach to as many potential vendors as possible as well as eliminating any language that could limit the pool of capable vendors. The Finance Commission recommends that the Boston Public Schools withhold awarding this contract and reach out to the Office of the Inspector General to review the matter.

Sincerely Yours,



Matthew A. Cahill  
Executive Director

CC: Mayor Michelle Wu  
Adam Cederbaum  
Jack Meyers