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ITEM ID: 2026-263-0

TRANSMITTAL DATE: July 17, 2026

MEETING DATE: July 24, 2026

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Lisa Bahr, Chief Customer Experience Officer

SUBJECT: Contract No. SP645-27 - Customer Services Center - Recommendation to Award - 22nd Century Technologies, Inc.

Issue

The Authority requires a new contract for Customer Service Center operations to ensure customers continue to receive timely and accurate information on schedules, fares, stations, and service disruptions. Partnering with a qualified firm will enhance customer experience, support marketing initiatives, and ensure consistent, reliable communications with riders while supporting ridership growth and customer retention.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board authorize the Chief Executive Officer to award Contract No. SP645-27 Customer Service Center to 22nd Century Technologies, Inc. (TSCTI) and approve a not-to-exceed contract funding authorization of \$8.5 million. The term of the contract shall be for three (3) years with two one-year options to extend, at the sole discretion of the Authority. This recommendation is subject to the resolution of any timely filed protest.

Strategic Commitment

This report aligns with the Strategic Business Plan commitment of:

- **Customers are Our Business:** We respect and value our customers, putting them at the heart of all we do, and work hard to attract and retain new customers by understanding their needs and finding new and innovative ways to delight them. This contract will provide expert customer service support for new and returning riders needing real-time assistance. These efforts will strengthen the customer experience, build trust, and ensure riders continue to feel supported as they travel throughout

Background

Metrolink's current Customer Service Center contract, SP494-18, was awarded to Alta Resources on September 14, 2018. The contract included a five-year base term with a single three-year option and is scheduled to expire on November 30, 2026. The total not-to-exceed value of the existing contract is \$12,252,664.

To ensure uninterrupted, high-quality customer support, the Authority requires a new contract for a Customer Service Center to assist new and returning riders in both English and Spanish, seven days a week. The Customer Service Center receives approximately 500,000 customer contacts annually, including voice calls, SMS/text messages, and communications from hearing and speech impaired customers.

Under the new contract, the selected firm will be responsible for operating the Customer Service Center – whether through a dedicated facility or a remote workforce. This includes oversight of the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system, which delivers essential information to customers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Discussion

To support development of the Scope of Work and ensure alignment with current and future customer service center technologies and industry practices, the Authority issued a Request for Information (RFI) on October 1, 2025. Thirty-three (33) firms submitted responses, providing detailed information on available platforms, customer service tools, and operational models, including remote and distributed agent environments. The RFI process provided essential insight that informed the structure and requirements of the subsequent solicitation.

Following completion of the RFI, a scope of work was developed. On March 19, 2026, the Authority issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) No. SP645-27, seeking proposals from qualified firms for Customer Service Center services. The solicitation was published in the five-member counties and posted on the Authority's online procurement module. Notifications were sent to 62 registered firms. Eighty-three (83) firms downloaded the solicitation. A virtual pre-proposal conference was held on April 3, 2026, with 47 registered bidders representing 25 firms in attendance. The Authority received and answered 348 questions. Eleven (11) proposals were received by the due date of May 5, 2026. Eight (8) firms were found responsive and moved on to the evaluation phase.

Proposals were evaluated in accordance with the Authority's procurement policies and procedures. A Technical Evaluation Committee, consisting of four (4) internal subject matter experts, evaluated and scored the technical proposals. Six (6) firms met the minimum qualifications with a technical score of 56 or greater, per the RFP requirements, and were invited to participate in interviews. These interviews allowed the Evaluation Panel to further assess each proposer's operational readiness, customer-service strategies, technology platforms, staffing approach, and ability to meet the Authority's performance expectations. The interviews also provided an opportunity to evaluate each firm's capacity to operate a call center through a dedicated facility or a remote workforce. Evaluators had the opportunity to

adjust their technical score based on the results of the interviews.

Following completion of the interviews, price scores were calculated in accordance with the RFP and combined with the technical scores to determine final rankings:

Proposer	Technical Score	Price Score	Total Score
22 nd Century Technologies, Inc.	65	20	85
Etech Global Services, LLC	59.50	16.87	76.37
American Customer Care, dba ACC Premiere	62.75	12.47	75.22
Senture, LLC	53.25	18.47	71.72
Alta Resources Corp.	56.25	14.22	70.47
Cubic Transportation Systems, Inc.	54.75	7.57	62.32

The Authority held a negotiation meeting with 22nd Century Technologies, Inc., the highest ranked proposer.

Staff compared the current cost to the proposed prices for the base three-year period and the two-year option period and the five-year total. The proposed cost is considered fair and reasonable. Following a competitive procurement process, 22nd Century Technologies, Inc. (TSCTI) is recommended for award of the Call Center Services contract. TSCTI has extensive experience supporting large public sector customer service operations and demonstrated the ability to meet Metrolink's current requirements while providing a scalable platform for future enhancements. Their proposed solution includes a comprehensive set of day-one capabilities, along with several phased features that will be implemented after contract start. Additional advanced tools are available as optional enhancements at an added cost. TSCTI's platform strengthens Metrolink's customer communication infrastructure, expands digital engagement options, and improves reporting transparency. The solution aligns with Metrolink's long term strategy to modernize customer service delivery and support multimodal communication preferences across the agency's diverse ridership.

- **CX Connect** - Unified customer experience platform enabling centralized management of all customer interactions.
- **IVR** - Modern interactive voice response system supporting efficient call routing and self-service options.
- **Automatic Call Distribution** - Intelligent call queuing and agent assignment to reduce wait times and improve service consistency.
- **Voice Services** - High-quality voice support for customer inquiries, service updates, and issue resolution.
- **SMS/Text Messaging** - Two-way text communication allowing customers to receive timely responses without calling.
- **Salesforce Integration** - CRM integration enabling case tracking, customer history visibility, and improved reporting.
- **TTY Support** - Accessible communication for hearing impaired customers.
- **Multilingual Support** - Language support across key customer demographics to ensure equitable access.

These capabilities ensure continuity of service while expanding digital communication channels for passengers who prefer electronic engagement over traditional phone calls.

The following capabilities are included in the base contract and will be deployed in phases after initial implementation:

- **Real-Time Dashboards** - Live visibility into call volumes, queue times, and agent performance.
- **SLA Reporting** - Automated tracking and reporting of contractual performance metrics.
- **Quality Assurance Tools** - Monitoring, scoring, and coaching tools to support continuous improvement.

These features enhance operational oversight and provide improved transparency into call center performance.

TSCTI also offers a suite of advanced capabilities that Metrolink may implement in future phases. Development for many of these features is already complete; however, activation may require additional implementation and monthly subscription costs. These enhancements provide a roadmap for continued modernization of Metrolink's customer service operations:

- **AI Virtual Agent** - Automated conversational support for routine inquiries and after-hours assistance.
- **Agent Assist** - Real time prompts and knowledge suggestions to improve agent accuracy and reduce handle time.
- **Advanced Automation** - Workflow automation for repetitive tasks and customer follow ups.
- **Quality Assurance Tools** - Call monitoring, scoring, and coaching tools to support continuous improvement.
- **Predictive & Sentiment Analysis** - AI driven insights into customer behavior and emotional tone.
- **Chatbot** - Automated web-based chat support for common questions and navigation assistance.
- **Email Support** - Integrated email case management for customer inquiries submitted through online channels.
- **TBD Features** - Additional enhancements available for future evaluation as technology and customer needs evolve.

These optional features provide a pathway for continued modernization as demand, budget, and strategic priorities evolve.

Awarding this contract to TSCTI will:

- Expand customer access through multiple communication channels
- Improve service responsiveness and consistency
- Modernize Metrolink's customer service technology stack
- Enhance reporting, transparency, and operational oversight
- Provide scalable tools that support future digital engagement
- Position Metrolink to adopt advanced automation and AI capabilities as needed

TSCTI's solution supports Metrolink's long-term strategy to enhance customer correspondence, improve service quality, and meet the expectations of riders who increasingly prefer digital interactions.

Budget Impact

A portion of the amount for which contract authority is requested is included in the Proposed Operational Budget for FY2026-27 (\$1,393,230) and is contingent upon adoption thereof. Funding for subsequent years will be requested through the annual budget or an equivalent process.

Next Steps

Upon the Board's approval of this award, Staff will execute a contract and issue a Notice to Proceed to 22nd Century Technologies, Inc. The Authority will work collaboratively with the selected contractor and the incumbent provider during a transition period to ensure continuity of customer service and a seamless transfer of operations prior to full implementation.

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Approved by: Lisa Bahr, Chief Customer Experience Officer

Attachment(s)

[Presentation - SP645-27 Call Center RFP](#)