



SWRPC

Southwest Region
Planning Commission

Microtransit Feasibility Study & Fixed Route Transit Service Plan Design Assistance

Request for Proposals

October 22, 2021

SOUTHWEST REGION PLANNING COMMISSION

37 Ashuelot Street | Keene, NH 03431 | (603) 357-0557 | www.swrpc.org

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The Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC), in partnership with Home Healthcare, Hospice Community Services (HCS) and the Monadnock Region Coordinating Council (MRCC), the City of Keene and others is undertaking a project to examine opportunities to improve transit service in the City of Keene and surrounding communities. Broadly, the technical assistance requested for the project consists of three areas of study:

Area 1: The assessment of the existing fixed route transit system in Keene, New Hampshire (aka the City Express) and development of an improved fixed route service design proposal servicing City residents, workers and visitors. Proposed improvements will consider routing, scheduling, and other service adjustment opportunities.

Area 2: An analysis of the feasibility of microtransit including service design considerations such as hours of service, vehicle fleet characteristics, and other operational and capital considerations as a replacement for or complement to the fixed route transit service currently operating as the City Express in Keene.

Area 3: An analysis of the feasibility of microtransit including service design considerations such as hours of service, vehicle fleet characteristics, and other operational and capital considerations as options for expanding transit access in a subregional area broader than the current service area of the City Express. The subregional service area will be determined based on guidance and discussion with the consultant and through input from the MRCC and other partners.

For each area of study described above, service adjustments should seek to improve rider experience and bolster the viability of transit as a transportation option.

Due to the nature of the work and the potentially different professional skillsets necessary for the successful completion of this project, this Request for Proposals (RFP) has been divided into two parts. Part A addresses the project's needs for Area 1 above. Part B addresses the project's needs for Area 2 and 3 above. Proposers are invited to submit proposals for one or both project parts.

1 Introduction

SWRPC requests proposals for professional consulting services to improve public transit services in Keene, NH and its surroundings. SWRPC and its partners are undertaking this effort to improve the experience of the region's transit riders, to make the system more attractive to potential riders, and to support the effective and efficient operation of the transit system. This project is funded with Federal Transit Administration 5305(e) State Planning and Research funds and administered by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation. The total budget available to consultant(s) expressing an interest in the project is \$42,000, including Parts A and B described above.

2 About SWRPC

SWRPC is one of New Hampshire's nine regional planning agencies established by NH RSA 36. SWRPC covers a planning district consisting of 34 towns (~1,000 square miles and ~100,000 people), comprising the Southwest Region of the State. A primary charge of the SWRPC is to represent member towns on issues which have a larger-than-local focus as well as issues that require proficiency in somewhat esoteric topics that may be less familiar to staff from smaller rural and suburban municipalities including transportation planning issues. For example, SWRPC assists municipalities in drafting transportation-related policies and plans, technical assistance and facilitation support to the MRCC on improving community transportation services regionally, and limited planning-level services to area transit agencies serving municipalities in the region including HCS.

3 Project Background

Given the low level of federal and state public transit investment in New Hampshire and the rural nature of Southwest New Hampshire, most communities do not have access to conventional public transit.¹ However, there are pockets of public transit services in the region. Technically, the regional network features three fixed route transit systems. However, two of these are systems that operate primarily in Vermont and have short route segments that enter parts of Hinsdale and Walpole, NH. The principal fixed route transit system in the region is the City Express², managed by the human service agency HCS, which operates in Keene and a small portion of the neighboring community of Swanzey. The service runs Monday through Friday excluding holidays. Broadly, the service consists of two fixed routes—one bus operating on each route—from approximately 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. stopping at twenty-two locations including downtown Keene, major retail centers in Keene and Swanzey and many residential areas. The bus fare is currently set at \$1 per ride with discount fares available.

The City Express service has been operating in the area since 1993, following the retirement of a longstanding privately-operated transit service offered by the Cheshire Transportation Company. Since the late 1990s, annual ridership has fluctuated between about 10,000 rides per year to over 50,000 rides per year. Ridership increased annually from 1993 to 2008 and then began an annual declining trend from 2009 to 2021. Ridership increased significantly when the City Express introduced a third route serving Keene State College in 2001. However, during the onset of Covid-19 in 2020, the college discontinued its shuttle service, resulting in a significant decrease in the City Express' annual ridership. The college has not renewed its agreement with HCS due to financial difficulties. Over the years, the City Express has made modifications to its routes with an aim to improve services for local transit users

¹ Seniors and people with disabilities are eligible for rides anywhere in the region from volunteer driver network services, however. In addition, some non-profits and social service agencies provide transport services, typically to clients using their other services.

² <https://www.hcsservices.org/services/transportation/city-express/>

with mixed results. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted City Express ridership, decreasing to approximately 20,000 annual riders, a level not experienced since 2000. The service is at an inflection point to determine how best to serve City of Keene’s residents, visitors and students.

Aside from Federal Transit Administration funding contributions to the City Express’ operating expenses, the largest local contributor to the City Express is the City of Keene, investing between \$83,000 and \$92,300 into the system between 2010 and 2021. The City of Keene is nationally recognized as a leader on green energy, sustainability and climate issues and has become increasingly interested in tackling energy demand and climate impact associated with the transportation sector. In 2018, the City Council adopted a resolution³ that all energy consumed in the City come from renewable resources by the year 2030 and that 100% of all thermal energy and energy used for transportation comes from renewable energy sources by 2050. In 2021, a *Sustainable Energy Plan*⁴ was adopted by the City Council. Among the strategies to address its transportation goal, Keene is seeking opportunities to reduce vehicle miles traveled by shifting from the single-occupant vehicle mode to heavier reliance on walking, bicycling and the use of transit. Today, the City Express mostly serves a small subset of Keene’s population. Riders tend to be transit-dependent rather than the “choice” riders. Choice riders would need to be part of the future transit ridership in order to meaningfully address Keene’s climate goals.

The City of Keene, population ~23,000, is a regional hub for jobs, services and shopping in Southwest New Hampshire and as such, it attracts a number of people living outside Keene. Adjacent to the City’s urbanized area are urbanized areas in the Town of Swanzey and Town of Marlborough that might benefit from an expansion of the Keene-based transit service. The MRCC seeks to explore new ways of improving transportation service delivery in a way that provides users the reliability they need to carry on with their daily lives. The MRCC’s vision is “[a] regional transportation network for everyone.”⁵ Implied in this umbrella category of “everyone” includes not only transit dependent groups, but also “choice” riders, people that prefer having the choice of transit which tend to be less expensive and more environmentally friendly than individual vehicle ownership. SWRPC and its partners believe designing transit for an expanded user base could act as a positive feedback loop, creating a larger, more efficient system based on economies of scale.

4 Microtransit as a Focus of the Study

In addition to exploring at least one improved fixed route transit scenario serving Keene, NH (Part A cited above), a focus of this project is to explore microtransit (Part B). “Microtransit” as defined by this proposal

³ https://keenenh.gov/sites/default/files/Boards/Resolution%20R-2018-36_adopted.pdf

⁴

<https://keenenh.gov/sites/default/files/Community%20Development/ECC/Keene%20Sustainable%20Energy%20Plan%20Jan%202021%20with%20appendices.pdf>

⁵ http://monadnockrcc.weebly.com/uploads/1/3/0/3/13039095/mrcc_coordinated_plan_072618update.pdf

is a form of demand responsive transit that offers flexible routing and/or scheduling of vehicles (often vans), typically booked through a smartphone application and sometimes through a call center. Microtransit services started in urban areas, but more recently microtransit has come to be seen as a potentially viable approach to shared ride service delivery in suburban and rural areas. Sometimes microtransit is seen as having a complementary role to existing services. Other times, its role may be to replace fixed route transit or legacy shared ride services (i.e., “dial-a-ride”), especially for services with a history of poor or declining performance. Of particular interest to SWRPC and its partners is that microtransit could potentially improve coordination, resilience and increase access to segments of the population due to the following potential benefits:

- Increased user friendliness with phone apps or call center;
- Improved user convenience with shorter wait times and more direct trips;
- Improved cost efficiencies partly due to increased ridership as a result of improved convenience, especially in areas served by fixed-routes with long headways and long walks to reach bus stops, as well as improved efficiency relative to legacy demand-response systems due to improved routing and trip assignment;
- Expanded labor force with which to recruit drivers providing microtransit services (drivers do not require a commercial driver’s license);
- Potential backup ride provision for service areas or times of day when rides cannot be guaranteed;
- A communications platform to improve coordination among multiple providers;
- An ability to be scalable, flexible and adaptive to changing conditions; and
- Other benefits as identified by the consultant and/or through conducting the study.

In addition to the benefits for studying microtransit listed above, the project could address some key research needs identified by SWRPC and its partners including whether microtransit would complement an envisioned transportation hub in downtown Keene.

5 Project Objectives

The purpose of this project is to explore the feasibility of improvements to transit service delivery that could result in a more innovative, coordinated and resilient transportation system for everyone in Keene, New Hampshire and the surrounding communities. More specifically, the project will help:

- SWRPC and its partners better understand microtransit benefits and costs and their potential applicability to Southwest New Hampshire.

- HCS compare and evaluate different service delivery scenarios with the goal of improving the existing City Express service. The analysis would help them compare the existing fixed route system with at least one new revised route system scenario and at least one microtransit scenario. The comparison and evaluation would assess anticipated performance measures relating to cost, ridership and convenience, and the result of the analysis would help HCS make decisions about future service provision.
- SWRPC and its partners assess the feasibility of at least one microtransit scenario in an area larger than Keene (e.g., Keene urbanized area or other geography based on consultation with the microtransit consultant, the MRCC and others as warranted). The purpose of the analysis is to examine the feasibility of microtransit in supporting or replacing existing transit and legacy shared ride services for the service area. The analysis would explore the impact of adjusting service zone boundaries and service parameters (i.e., pre-scheduled vs. on-demand, maximum wait time for on-demand service or pickup window for pre-scheduled service) as they relate to rider experience and quality of service. The focus would be on transit-dependent populations including seniors, people with disabilities, youth, lower-income populations, and other transit-dependent groups identified by the MRCC. The evaluation will assess predicted performance measures relating to cost, ridership and convenience and the result of the analysis will help MRCC make decisions about future service provision.
- SWRPC and its partners evaluate the potential for a microtransit online platform to integrate ride brokering functionality or other features that assist users in planning trips across multiple transportation services, including volunteer driver programs.

6 Scope of Work

SWRPC envisions a scope of work that comprises two phases: “Service Plan Scenario Development” (Phase 1) and “Action Planning” (Phase 2). Activities during Phase 2 are contingent on the results and findings of Phase 1. During Phase 2, it is anticipated that up to two service plan ideas will be designed by the consultant to be considered for implementation (based on service planning activities conducted during Phase 1 for Tasks 5.1.A, 5.1.B.1 and 5.1.B.2 as described below). As noted above, the scope of work may require different professional skillsets for the successful completion of this project. Therefore, the scope of work that follows is divided into two parts. Scope of work tasks labeled with an “A” address Part A project needs as described under Area 1 above. Tasks labeled with a “B” address the Part B project’s needs for Areas 2 and 3 as described above. Proposers are invited to submit proposals for one or both parts. Proposers submitting proposals for Part “B” tasks are required to submit proposals associated with both “B” areas. Although SWRPC will consider individual consultants (one for developing the fixed route service design, another for assessing feasibility of microtransit), we see value in a single consultant covering both aspects of the overall project from an efficiency standpoint

6.1.A Service Plan Scenario Development for Keene-Based Fixed Route Transit Service

The selected firm will, at a minimum, conduct the following activities:

- Become familiar with the existing HCS-operated City Express transit system and other transport services operating in Keene. This will involve documenting/inventorying and assessing existing conditions and available operational resources, including vehicle and fleet capacities, maintenance facilities, driver pools and technology investments. The familiarization process should also identify and consider any future plans or initiatives that might affect the resources available to the City Express transit system.
- Analyze financial, routing, scheduling, and other service characteristic data to identify opportunities for improved efficiencies in the current City Express service area and examine ways to address any barriers, concerns or opportunities resulting from the analysis.
- Provide draft service plan scenario-based recommendations that reflect input received from HCS, SWRPC and other identified stakeholders, the results of the analysis, and existing and anticipated operational and capital resources. Draft recommendations will include service maps, changes to routes and schedules, anticipated benefits and tradeoffs associated with the recommended alternatives, and other elements as appropriate.

Proposals will budget for meetings (minimum of three) with SWRPC, HCS and potentially other stakeholders to address this task and develop consensus on the draft service plan recommendations. Virtual meetings may be considered for efficiency.

The deliverable associated with this task will be a technical memo addressing the three activities bulleted above. The technical memo will be written in sufficient detail to adequately inform future service planning development activities.

6.1.B.1 Service Plan Scenario Development for Keene-Based Microtransit Service

The selected firm will, at a minimum, conduct the activities described below. If the selected firm proposes conducting task 5.1.A above, the first two bulleted activities are the same and should not be construed as an additional work effort.

- Become familiar with the existing HCS operated City Express transit system and other transport services operating in Keene. This will involve documenting/inventorying and assessing existing conditions and available operational resources, including vehicle and fleet capacities, maintenance facilities, driver pools and technology investments. The familiarization process should also identify

and consider any future plans or initiatives that might affect the resources available to the City Express transit system.

- Analyze financial, routing, scheduling, and other service characteristic data to identify opportunities for improved efficiencies in the current City Express service area and examine ways to address any barriers, concerns or opportunities resulting from the analysis.
- Identify opportunities for at least one microtransit system to replace or complement the existing City Express fixed route transit system. The analysis should consider the role, performance, and opportunities of existing on-demand service providers operating in the area, including their role in meeting the need for door-to-door rides among certain populations, such as older adults and people with disabilities.
- Model demand for microtransit service to reflect an anticipated volume and distribution of ride requests according to factors including travel patterns, the availability of alternative modes of transportation, key origins and destinations, residential and job density, and area demographics.
- Provide draft service plan scenario-based recommendations that reflect input received from HCS, SWRPC and other stakeholders, and the results of the scenario model's analysis and service cost estimates. The draft recommendations should also include service maps and/or maps showing geographic operational zones, relationships with other on-demand services, and anticipated benefits and tradeoffs associated with the recommended microtransit alternative(s). Information about assumptions should be included as context for the recommendations including size of fleet, vehicle types and maximum wait times.

It is anticipated that the consultant will need to budget for at least three meetings with SWRPC and HCS (other stakeholders may be invited as well) to address this task and develop consensus on the scenario-based draft service plan recommendations. Virtual meetings may be considered.

The deliverable associated with this task will be a technical memo addressing the five activities discussed above. The technical memo will be written in sufficient detail to adequately inform future service planning development activities.

6.1.B.2 Service Plan Scenario Development for Subregional Microtransit Service

The selected firm will conduct the following activities at a minimum.

- Become familiar with existing transit offerings operating in the identified subregional service area (SWRPC and the MRCC have several subregional candidate areas that would require further

discussion with the firm based on its assessment of microtransit suitability). This will involve documenting/inventorying and assessing existing conditions and available operational resources, including vehicle and fleet capacities, maintenance facilities, driver pools and technology investments. The familiarization process should also identify and consider any future plans or initiatives relating to transit provision in the identified subregion.

- Analyze financial, routing, scheduling, and other service characteristic data to identify opportunities for improved efficiencies in the selected service area and examine ways to address any significant barriers, concerns or opportunities resulting from the analysis.
- Identify opportunities for at least one microtransit system in the selected service area. The analysis should consider the role, performance, and opportunities of existing on-demand service providers operating in the area, including their role in meeting the need for door-to-door rides among certain populations, such as older adults and people with disabilities.
- Model demand for microtransit service to reflect an anticipated volume and distribution of ride requests according to factors including travel patterns, the availability of alternative modes of transportation, key origins and destinations, residential and job density, and area demographics.
- Provide draft scenario-based service plan recommendations that reflect input received from SWRPC, the MRCC and other stakeholders, and the results of the scenario model's analysis and service cost estimates. The draft recommendations should also include service maps and/or maps showing geographic operational zones, relationships with other on-demand services, and anticipated benefits and tradeoffs associated with the recommended microtransit alternative(s). Information about assumptions should be included as context for the recommendations including size of fleet, vehicle types and maximum wait times.

It is anticipated that the consultant will need to budget for at least three meetings with SWRPC and the MRCC (other stakeholders may be invited as well) to address this task and develop consensus on the draft service plan recommendations. Virtual meetings may be considered.

The deliverable associated with this task will be a technical memo addressing the five activities bulleted above. The technical memo will be written in sufficient detail to adequately inform future service planning development activities.

6.2.A Action Planning for Keene-Based Fixed Route Transit Service

The selected firm will, at a minimum, conduct the following activities should SWRPC and HCS decide to move forward with the fixed route transit service option for final design and public comment.

- Provide final recommendations and an actionable implementation plan for the proposed fixed route

transit service. Recommendations should include specific changes to routes and schedules, fares, detailed maps, and capital and operational costs.

- Prepare for and present the final recommendations at one public meeting and assist in taking feedback on the proposed service. Develop visual aids to help the public understand proposed changes to the fixed route transit service.
- Develop final recommendations and an actionable implementation plan for the proposed fixed route transit service based on public feedback and input from HCS, SWRPC and other relevant stakeholders. The final product shall include final recommendations and final proposed changes to routes and schedules, fares, final detailed maps, and projected capital and operational costs.

It is expected that the analysis, recommendations, public meeting, and implementation plan will culminate in a service design that can be implemented within six to twelve months of study completion. The implementation plan should include phasing strategies and document any specific steps, including any final outreach, HCS may need to take in implementing the recommendations.

6.2.B.1 Action Planning for Keene-Based Microtransit Service

The selected firm will conduct the following activities at a minimum should SWRPC and HCS decide to move forward with the Keene-based microtransit service for final design and public comment.

- Provide final recommendations and an actionable implementation plan for the proposed microtransit service. At minimum, the final draft recommendations should include specific information about geographic operational zones, fleet information, schedules, fares, detailed maps, technology needs and capital and operational costs.
- Prepare for and present the final recommendations at least one public meeting and assist in taking and noting public feedback on the proposed service. The firm will develop visual aids to help the public understand proposed changes to the fixed route transit service.
- Develop final recommendations and an actionable implementation plan for the proposed fixed route transit service based on public feedback and additional feedback from HCS, SWRPC and other relevant stakeholders. The final product shall include final recommendations and final proposed changes to geographic operational zones, fleet information, schedules, fares, detailed maps, technology needs and capital and operational costs.

It is expected that the analysis, recommendations, public meeting, and implementation plan will culminate in a service design that can be implemented within twelve to twenty-four months of study completion. The implementation plan should include phasing strategies and document any specific step, including any final outreach, HCS may need to take in implementing the recommendations.

6.2.B.2 Action Planning for Subregional Microtransit Service

The selected firm will conduct the following activities at a minimum should SWRPC and the MRCC decide to move forward with the subregional microtransit service for final design and public comment.

- Provide final recommendations and an actionable implementation plan for the proposed microtransit service. At minimum, the final draft recommendations should include specific information about geographic operational zones, fleet information, schedules, fares, detailed maps, technology needs and capital and operational costs.
- Prepare for and present the final recommendations at least one public meeting and assist in taking and noting public feedback on the proposed service. The firm will develop visual aids to help the public understand proposed changes to the fixed route transit service.
- Develop final recommendations and an actionable implementation plan for the proposed fixed route transit service based on public feedback and additional feedback from the MRCC, SWRPC and other relevant stakeholders. The final product shall include final recommendations and final proposed changes to geographic operational zones, fleet information, schedules, fares, detailed maps, technology needs and capital and operational costs.

It is expected that the analysis, recommendations, public meeting, and implementation plan will culminate in a service design that can be implemented within twelve to twenty-four months of study completion. The implementation plan should include phasing strategies and document any specific step, including any final outreach, HCS may need to take in implementing the recommendations.

7 Proposed Schedule

It is anticipated that the project will be complete 12 months after work begins. SWRPC anticipates that Phase 1 will extend approximately 6 months from January 1, 2022 to June 30, 2022 and Phase 2 will extend an additional 6 months from July 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022.

8 Procedures

8.1 Proposal Requirements

Cover Letter

Proposals must include a brief cover letter, not to exceed one page, indicating the interest of the firm in providing professional services as outlined in this request for proposals. The cover letter must be signed by the project manager of the consultant team and include contact information including mailing

address, phone number, and email address. The cover letter must be addressed to:

J. B. Mack, Principal Planner
Southwest Region Planning Commission
37 Ashuelot Street
Keene, NH 03431

Qualifications and Project Understanding

The proposal must include a brief history of the firm as it relates to the project and a description of the capacity and ability of the firm in providing the requested professional consulting services. The proposal must include a narrative demonstrating a detailed understanding of the project, especially with regard to SWRPC's commitment to providing a high-quality experience to transit riders, maximizing operational and financial efficiencies in the transit system, and developing an actionable implementation plan with stakeholder engagement. This section of the proposal is not to exceed three pages.

Project Summaries and References

The proposal must include project summaries of at least three examples of similar projects completed by the firm. Each project summary, not to exceed one page, should detail the project client, location, background, process, and outcomes. Each project summary must include a client point-of-contact willing to serve as a reference.

Resumes of Key Staff

The proposal must include resumes of key staff that will be involved in the project. Each resume is not to exceed two pages.

Scope of Work

The proposal must include a scope of work, not to exceed ten pages, including any graphics and visuals, detailing how the firm will address the project as described in this RFP including the tasks as described in *Section 6, Scope of Work*. At the beginning of this section, proposals must clearly indicate if the scope of work will be addressing scope of work Parts A, B, or both.

All activities described in the scope of work should include the relevant task objective and approach, key staff that will be involved, relevant timeline information, and any outcomes and deliverables.

Approximately two weeks after the selected firm is under contract and has been issued a notice to proceed, SWRPC will schedule a project kickoff meeting among the SWRPC project team, the project advisory committee, and the consultant team. This meeting is intended to orient and familiarize the project participants to the established scope of work. For this meeting, the consultant team will be expected to develop and present a written project management plan, detailing procedures, the scheduling of tasks, expectations for deliverables, and other items. This project management plan should be developed in consultation with the SWRPC project manager in advance of the kickoff meeting.

Proposed Schedule

The proposal must include a proposed schedule detailing how tasks are to be sequenced, deliverable milestones, and approximate meeting dates. Under *Section 7, Proposed Schedule*, the project is to be complete 12 months after work begins.

Budget

The firm must submit a budget that breaks down costs by task. If applicable, the budget must show any reimbursable direct costs the firm anticipates incurring.

Should the firm assemble a project team that includes any subconsultants, the firm will be required to submit cost information associated with each subconsultant.

8.2 Submission Procedures

Proposers are invited to submit proposals for one or both project parts (Parts A and B) as described above.

The proposal must include the items detailed under *Section 8.1, Proposal Requirements*. Five hard copies of the proposal and accompanying materials must be submitted to SWRPC addressed to:

J. B. Mack, Principal Planner
Southwest Region Planning Commission
37 Ashuelot Street
Keene, NH 03431

Hard copies must be sent to and received by 5:00 p.m. on November 22, 2021. Proposals received after the deadline will not be accepted.

8.3 Selection and Award Process

Final selection will be based on the following criteria:

- The proposal demonstrates an understanding of the work to be performed; and the proposed scope of work is reasonable and effective (20% of total score).
- The project team has the necessary qualifications, skillsets, and capacity to complete the project as presented (20% of total score).
- The firm has the necessary experience to complete the project as presented, as demonstrated by the provided examples of similar projects completed by the firm (20% of total score).
- The provided references demonstrate an ability of the firm and the project team to effectively manage projects, be responsive to client concerns, and deliver products that exceed expectations (20% of total score).
- The proposal thoroughly and completely addresses this RFP, is specific to the project, demonstrates strong attention to detail, and an ability to develop effective visuals, including charts, maps, or other graphics (20% of total score).

At its discretion, SWRPC may choose to interview firms that respond to this RFP.

SWRPC will award contract(s) to the applicant(s) based on the terms and conditions of the RFP and subject to a final agreement on the Scope of Services, contract provisions, and availability of funds. At any time in the review process, SWRPC may request additional information or clarification in order to properly evaluate an application. SWRPC reserves the right to reject any and all applications and to cancel the solicitation at any time, at its sole discretion.

8.4 Requests for Clarification

Questions and other requests for clarification must be submitted to J. B. Mack, Principal Planner, by email at jbmack@swrpc.org by November 8, 2021.

SWRPC's response to all questions and requests for clarification submitted in a timely manner will be published on November 15, 2021 to SWRPC's website at www.swrpc.org/jobs-rfps. Verbal communication will not be considered the official response or position of SWRPC.