THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Staff Report

Council Meeting Date: March 28, 2023

Subject: Expanding Digital Opportunities in Western NC grant through the Dogwood Health Trust

Staff Resource(s): Holly Barham, Department Director, and Scott Barnwell, Deputy Director, I.T. Services.

Action Requested: Adoption of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to apply for the Expanding Digital Opportunities in Western North Carolina grant through Land of Sky Regional Council and the Dogwood Health Trust to make public WiFi available on public transit vehicles.

Background:

- Land of Sky Regional Council is applying for a Western North Carolina Digital Opportunities Grant through Dogwood Health Trust and has invited the City of Asheville to participate.
- The grant funds would cover all cradlepoint routers, antennas, five years of software support, and installation for the current 33 buses in the transit fleet at a total cost of $184,927.
- If awarded, this grant would provide public WiFi on all ART buses and support business operations of the buses (e.g. route planning, fare payments, passenger counters, etc.)
- For future buses, the City would need to spend approximately $5,000 per bus on WiFi equipment.
- The City would also cover future maintenance and support beyond the initial five years at approximately $500 annually, or $16,500 for all 33 buses.
- The anticipated grant award decision date is July 5, 2023.

Vendor Outreach Efforts:

- N/A

Council Goal(s):

- Improve and Expand Core Services

Committee(s):

- N/A

Pro(s):

- Public WiFi on all City buses
- Infrastructure to support transit business operations

Con(s):

- City is responsible for outfitting new buses and lifecycle refresh on installed equipment.
- The lifecycle refresh estimate to update WiFi technology for all transit buses is $165,000 every 6 years.

Fiscal Impact:

- Future buses will cost approximately $5,000 to equip with WiFi.
- The City will be responsible for maintenance after the initial 5 year period at approximately $500 per bus per year, for a total of $16,500 for all 33 buses.
- Lifecycle refresh estimate is $165,000 every 6 years, based on a fleet of 33 buses.
- Fiscal impact will be in the Transit Fund.
- Matching funds are not required for this grant.

Suggested Motion:

- Motion to adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager to join the Land of Sky Regional Council's application for the "Expanding Digital Opportunities in Western NC" Grant through the Dogwood Health Trust to make public WiFi available on all 33 Asheville Rapid Transit buses.

Attachment(s)

- Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 23-____

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO SUPPORT LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL'S EXPANDING DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES IN WESTERN NC GRANT APPLICATION TO THE DOGWOOD HEALTH TRUST AND TO ACCEPT GRANT FUNDS IF AWARDED

WHEREAS, the City of Asheville has authority to pursuant to North Carolina General Statute section 160a-17.1 to accept grants-in-aid and loans from the federal and State governments and their agencies for constructing, expanding, maintaining, and operating any project or facility, or performing any function, which such city or county may be authorized by general law or local act to provide or perform; and

WHEREAS, the City of Asheville supports expanding digital access and public wifi to the community and to the Asheville Transit ART buses; and

WHEREAS, Land of Sky Regional Council ("Land of Sky") has invited the City of Asheville to participate in a grant application to the Dogwood Health Trust to expand digital opportunities in Western NC; and

WHEREAS, if awarded, Land of Sky would use the grant funds to provide equipment and services necessary for public wi-fi on all Asheville Transit ART buses and enhance the overall experience of Asheville Transit customers; and

WHEREAS, the grant funds would cover Cradlepoint routers, antennas, five years of software support, and installation at an estimated cost of $184,927.30 for the City's existing thirty-three buses.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

The City Manager is hereby authorized to issue letters in support of Land of Sky' Expanding Digital Opportunities in Western NC grant application to the Dogwood Health Trust, and is further authorized to enter into agreements with Land of Sky, and other entities as necessary, pending approval of the grant application, to accept and spend grant funds up to $184,927.30 to provide equipment and services necessary to install and maintain public WiFi on all Asheville Transit ART buses.

Read, approved and adopted this the 28th day of March, 2023.

City Clerk

Mayor

Approved as to form:

City Attorney