



City of Smithville, Missouri

Board of Aldermen - Work Session Agenda

Tuesday, January 21, 2025

6:30 p.m. – City Hall Council Chambers and Via Videoconference

Anyone who wishes to view the meeting may do so in real time as it will be streamed live on the City's YouTube page.

For Public Comment via Zoom, please email your request to the City Clerk at ldrummond@smithvillemo.org prior to the meeting to be sent the meeting Zoom link.

1. Call to Order
2. Update on Bridge Street Construction
3. Discussion of City Tow Services
4. Adjourn

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85276399940>

Meeting ID: 852 7639 9940

Passcode: 758318



	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="background-color: #76923c; color: white; padding: 5px 10px; font-weight: bold; margin-right: 10px;">STAFF</div> <div style="background-color: #00557c; color: white; padding: 5px 10px; font-weight: bold;">REPORT</div> </div>
Date:	January 14, 2025
Prepared By:	Mayra Toothman, Assistant to the Public Works Director
Subject:	Downtown Streetscape Phase III Project
Staff Report:	Public Works

Status

The City's contractor, MegaKC Corporation, has made significant progress on the Downtown Streetscape Phase III project. Most of the underground and concrete work has been completed. Light poles are expected to arrive this month, allowing their installation to begin in the next couple of weeks. The fence for the bridge is scheduled to arrive in February, with work anticipated to start next month.

To ensure the safety of pedestrians and drivers, North Bridge Street will remain closed while work on the bridge continues. The street overlay will not be completed until warmer weather allows asphalt plants to reopen, which is expected in March.

Street Overlay

Street improvements as part of this project extend to the southern portion of the intersection of North Bridge Street, Hilltop, and First Street. This intersection is planned for further improvement when the Bridge Street Roundabout is constructed, with construction anticipated to begin in fall 2027.

Currently, the intersection of First Street, North Bridge Street, and Hilltop is in poor condition. Staff requested a quote from MegaKC to overlay approximately 6,000 square feet of this intersection. The quote for the additional work came to \$26,100. The City's 80% share amount would be \$5,220.

The contract with MegaKC Corporation includes an \$80,000 allowance, which has been partially utilized for additional work such as driveway improvements, curb enhancements, riprap installation near the river, and other adjustments required due to utility relocations. Following these expenditures, \$38,314.89 remains available in the contract allowance.

Staff is seeking direction from the Board on whether to use the remaining contract allowance to overlay the intersection as part of the Streetscape Phase III project or wait until 2027–2028 to complete the improvements during the roundabout construction.



Financial Considerations

The proposed changes will not affect the original contract amount. This project is partially funded by a grant from the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), with the City covering 20% of the total contract cost and the remaining 80% funded by the grant.

	STAFF REPORT
Date:	01/21/2025
Prepared By:	Jason Lockridge, Chief of Police
Subject:	City Tow Services Follow Up

Purpose

During the Board’s work session on December 3, 2024, the City Tow Services RFP process was reviewed. The Board requested additional research, focusing on tow rotation services and the companies that provide them. This report addresses those requests, offering clarification on the services provided and the potential costs involved.

The Smithville Police Department currently handles approximately 90 to 95 vehicle tows annually. These tows are primarily related to arrests or accidents where the driver has no preference for a tow company. More than 90 percent of these incidents occur on 169 Highway, where vehicles cannot be left unattended.

Under the existing contract, the cost for a police-initiated tow is \$100, which includes the first 24 hours of storage. After that, a daily storage fee of \$40 applies. Towing services for City-owned vehicles are provided free of charge, as outlined in the vendor’s bid. Currently, there are no ongoing costs to the City for these services.

Following Board Discussion in December

On December 18, 2024, Chief Lockridge spoke with a representative from Autura, formerly known as Auto Return, to discuss their tow rotation service, which is currently used by the Platte County Sheriff’s Office. Several key questions were addressed during this discussion. The following is a summary of that conversation.

First, the costs and payment responsibilities were reviewed. Autura’s service includes two types of fees: the tow rotation service fee, which is paid by the dispatch center or City, and the tow fee paid directly to the tow company, by vehicle owners when retrieving their vehicles. These fees may include a hookup fee, clean up fee (at accident scenes), and storage fees. While Autura is restructuring its pricing for the New Year, a representative advised the platform cost is not expected to exceed \$10,000 annually, based on the City’s estimated annual tow volume. Autura does not offer a per-tow pricing model for the volume discussed.

The cost per tow, including fees such as hookup, cleanup, and storage, is determined by the tow companies. Autura does not regulate these fees and recommended that the City and Smithville Police Department confirm these fees to prevent price gouging.

Regarding the contract duration, Autura indicated this is negotiable for each organization. The average response time for tows in the U.S. is 12 minutes, although no specific data for Platte County was available. Autura also confirmed that the City can specify which tow companies are included on the rotation list and where vehicles are stored, both governed by the negotiated contract terms.

Additionally, Autura can respond to a Request for Proposal (RFP), though this is not their typical engagement process. The tow rotation process involves dispatching the next company on the rotation list, with the closest truck from that company being sent. Calls are distributed in a rotating manner among the companies.

Autura offers a mobile app, which can be used on a phone or mobile computer in a patrol car. Once a tow truck is dispatched an officer could use this app to see which company and driver have been dispatched, an estimated time for the arrival of the tow truck, and it's GPS location.

Other Services

Staff has not been able to identify another company that offers this type of service. If the City were to transition to another service, discussions with the Platte County Sheriff's Department would be necessary to determine their openness to using that service, in addition to Autura.

Tow Rotation Option

A tow rotation can be implemented in one of two ways: by soliciting bids for a vendor list or by utilizing a tow management company, such as Autura.

Option 1: Solicitation of Bids for a Vendor List

This approach would involve issuing an RFP (Request for Proposals) to create a list of approved tow vendors. The process would be similar to the Public Works bid for on-call engineering services. Key points include:

- **RFP Process:** Vendors would submit proposals to be included on the City's tow rotation list. Approval would be required for any vendor initially selected or added to the list in the future.
- **Management Requirements:** Maintaining the list would require ongoing oversight and administration. Coordination with the Platte County Sheriff's Office would be necessary, as all tow requests are routed through their dispatch center. This could place additional burdens on their resources and staffing.

- **Challenges:** Increased administrative workload for both the City and the Sheriff's Office, with the potential for logistical issues if multiple vendors struggle to meet service standards.

Option 2: Solicitation for Tow Management Services

This approach would involve engaging a professional tow management company, such as Autura, to oversee the rotation process. Key points include:

- **RFP Process:** The City could issue an RFP to select a tow management company to handle the rotation. Based on staff's current research, no other companies can be identified that are providing this same service. Autura may be able to be considered a sole source for this type of service.
- **Responsibilities of the Management Company:** The selected company would handle vendor rotations, response times, and performance metrics, minimizing administrative burdens for City staff and the Sheriff's Office.
- **Benefits:** This option would streamline operations, ensuring consistent service while reducing the need for City and Sheriff's Office resources.
- **Challenges:** Will introduce new administrative costs for the City, which were unaccounted for in this years' fiscal budget. Dependence on an external management company could limit flexibility in vendor selection.

Considerations for Both Tow Rotation Options

- **Consumer Impact:** Both options aim to ensure fair distribution of tow requests among vendors, but they may lead to varying fee structures that could affect consumers.
- **Operational Complexity:** Implementing a rotation, regardless of the approach, introduces new logistical challenges that must be addressed in coordination with the Platte County Sheriff's Office.

Contract Options Available

The current tow services contract expires October 31, 2025. A Request for Proposals must be issued before a new contract is signed. Staff believes the following three options remain the most viable:

1. Continue with the Current Practice

The City would issue an RFP for tow services, specifying a contract for three-years, with the possibility of two one-year extensions.

- **Impact on Consumers:**
The current practice has been designed to be cost-effective for consumers, particularly those whose vehicles are towed. Fees are consistent and

regulated by the existing contract, avoiding unexpected expenses. Retaining the current system minimizes disruption and maintains a familiar process for all involved.

- **Impact on Tow Companies:**

The existing contract primarily benefits the selected vendor by providing exclusive access to the City's tow business. This approach, while stable, limits opportunities for other tow companies to compete or participate, potentially discouraging smaller or local businesses from growth opportunities.

- **Impact on Operations:**

This option is operationally straightforward, as it continues with a well-established system. Minimal additional administrative effort is required to maintain the current process, making it the easiest option for staff to implement and manage.

2. Implement a Tow Rotation

Implementation of a tow rotation would be done either through a rotation managed internally or an outside service. To internally manage a rotation would require cooperation from the Platte County Sheriff's Office. Conversations with administrators in the Sheriff's Office have indicated that this would be burdensome on their already strained staff.

- **Impact on Consumers:**

Consumers may face higher costs under a rotation system due to unregulated fees from different tow companies. While a rotation ensures fair access to tow jobs among multiple vendors, it could result in inconsistent pricing, making it harder for vehicle owners to predict costs.

- **Impact on Tow Companies:**

A rotation creates opportunities for more tow companies, particularly local vendors, to access City-related business. However, it could lead to inefficiencies if newer or less experienced companies struggle to meet service expectations or maintain adequate response times.

- **Impact on Operations:**

Managing a rotation would introduce complexity to the dispatching process. Collaboration and agreement from with the Platte County Dispatch Center would also be needed, as this approach could place additional demands on their resources. Alternatively, contracting a third-party service like Autura could streamline the process but would introduce new costs.

3. Modify the Current Practice with a Shorter Contract Period

This option would look similar to the current practice, but with a shortened length of contract. The RFP would outline a specific number of years, with or without extensions.

- **Impact on Consumers:**
Consumers are unlikely to see a direct impact with shorter contract periods. However, the increased competition generated by more frequent RFPs might encourage vendors to offer better rates, potentially reducing costs over time.
- **Impact on Tow Companies:**
Shorter contracts provide more frequent opportunities for local and new tow companies to bid for the City's business, fostering a competitive environment. This approach could lead to greater participation by a wider range of vendors, promoting fairness and innovation in service delivery in the future.
- **Impact on Operations:**
While shorter contracts would require issuing RFPs more frequently, the benefits may outweigh the increased administrative effort. By allowing the City to adapt more quickly to market conditions or performance issues, this approach could provide greater flexibility. However, it would require staff resources to manage the additional workload associated with frequent bidding and contract evaluations. With the contract open for bid more frequently, it is possible that prices may increase more quickly.

Final Considerations

Each option presents distinct trade-offs. Continuing with the current practice offers stability but limits opportunities for additional tow companies during the duration of the contract term. Implementing a tow rotation increases fairness for vendors but introduces complexity and potential cost increases for consumers. Modifying the current practice with shorter contracts terms provides a balance between stability and adaptability, though it requires more staff time to administer.

Staff Recommendations

After careful evaluation, staff recommends modifying the current practice with a shortened contract term. An RFP would be issued for a two-year contract with a one-year extension possible.

This approach maintains the benefits of the existing single-vendor system while providing opportunities for local vendors to participate in the RFP process more frequently and, ensures flexibility to adapt to changing needs and vendor availability.

Staff requests direction from the Board on a desired approach.