



# CITY OF APPLETON

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** 12/09/2024  
**To:** Municipal Services Committee  
**From:** Michael Hardy, P.E., Traffic Engineer  
**Subject:** 2025 Sole Source Purchase Request – Various Traffic Equipment & Technologies

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This sole source purchase request is reassessed and presented annually as required by the City Procurement Policy. It was last approved for calendar year 2024.

### Traffic Signal and Control Equipment

Within the traffic signal control industry, there is a tremendous amount of proprietary functionality and limited interoperability. The number of vendors servicing traffic signal equipment is also very limited. For example, Traffic and Parking Control Company, Inc. (TAPCO), located in Elm Grove, Wisconsin, is the exclusive vendor in Wisconsin for Siemens traffic signal cabinet and control equipment, which the City of Appleton uses. Because TAPCO is designated as the exclusive rights vendor in the state by this manufacturer, they have exclusive knowledge for set-up, testing and servicing, beyond what the City is capable of performing. There are other vendors in nearby states that carry this product line, but their manufacturer-vendor relationships do not allow overlap with each other. Thus, the City cannot, for example, do business with Brown Traffic Products, Inc., which is TAPCO's equivalent in Illinois and Minnesota.

Because of this, it is common in the traffic industry that complete traffic signal control assemblies are sole-source purchased as complete, functional systems. Another unfortunate reality is that each manufacturer's equipment has its own proprietary firmware and controls, which makes it nearly impossible to competitively procure comparable equipment. In this situation, TAPCO or TCC will assemble the cabinet, controller, vehicle detection equipment and any other integrated equipment, and perform functional testing prior to shipment and installation. The advantage to this approach is it helps manage compatibility issues and puts responsibility on the sole source vendor to assure complete functionality of the system. The disadvantage is that procured equipment is not competitively bid in a formal process. The other common application in the traffic industry is that specifications are written to accept only one manufacturer's products. This gives the illusion of being competitive, but often only one vendor can meet the required specifications.

In 2023, there were some big changes related to the traffic controller and software the city uses. Siemens was acquired by a company called Yunex. Yunex then changed their distribution to a new vendor named Mobotrex. Several other product lines we use (Iteris, EDI, Polara) also transitioned from TAPCO to Mobotrex. In 2024, the city began a switch to Econolite for traffic controller and software, with is exclusively purchased thru TCC. By the end of 2025, the city will be exclusively Econolite.

### *Decorative Street Lighting Equipment*

Specific items that apply are decorative lighting components involving steel poles, concrete poles, arms and fixtures. One large contributing factor is the City has standardized on a specific appearance and quality using Stresscrete, King and Visco brand. While there are other decorative brands on the market simulating a comparable look, the quality of these off-brands has been much lower, leading to increased maintenance costs and decreased life. To meet the City purchasing policy, we have been competitively bidding these decorative lighting brands through the electrical supply chains. While this gives the appearance of competitive bidding, it actually amounts to a mark-up on a product we ultimately know we are going to purchase. Having considered the above, we feel sole source offers the best value of the City's time and resources.

### *LED Street Lighting*

We have standardized on products from Cooper and Philips as the preferred fixtures. To comply with the City's purchasing policy, we would have to competitively bid these two brands thru the electrical supply chains. While this would give the appearance of competitive bidding, it would actually amount to a mark-up on the product. Based on this, we feel sole source offers the best value of the City's time and resources. We have established a relationship with the manufacturers and have been advised we can purchase from them directly. Where these two products are competitive with each other, we would be able to compare costs direct from the manufacturers which would meet the competitive spirit of the policy. However, three products would be needed to satisfy the policy as written. Having considered the above discussion, we feel a sole source exception offers the best value of the City's time and resources.

### **Summary:**

The City Traffic Section continues to pursue equipment and services to help improve competition in our purchases. When we evaluate comparable products, we try to take a holistic approach, considering additional software, training, stocking, etc. We also stay in touch routinely with our counterparts in the traffic industry, like WisDOT, City of Green Bay, and Milwaukee County to help evaluate pricing when and where sole sourcing is performed. This helps communicate between agencies on acceptance of alternative products. We also pursue

alternative procurement options when available through the WisDOT procurement contract. Where equipment is consistent with WisDOT procurement contracts, a price match is pursued.

The following is the Traffic Section's current list of equipment and services we feel it is in the City's best interest to sole source for procurement:

Signal Controller and Control Software:

- Econolite (TTC)

Signal Control Cabinets:

- Mobotrex (Mobotrex & TAPCO)
- Econolite (TTC)

Signal Control Malfunction Management Unit:

- Eberle Design, Inc. (Mobotrex & TAPCO)

Loop Detector Amplifiers:

- Eberle Design, Inc. (Mobotrex & TAPCO)
- Reno A & E (TTC)

Video Detection Systems:

- Iteris, Inc. (Mobotrex)
- Econolite (TTC)

Radar Detection Systems:

- MS Sedco / Intersector. (TAPCO)
- Notraffic (TAPCO)
- Wavetronix (TTC)
- Iteris, Inc. (Mobotrex)

Pedestrian Pushbuttons:

- Polara (TAPCO)

Preemption:

- GTT/Miovision (Mid America Signal)

Wireless Radio Communications:

- Encom Wireless (Mobotrex & TAPCO)

Radar Speed Signs:

- Information Display Company
- TAPCO

Field Network Switch:

- Comnet (TAPCO)

Railroad Interconnect Inspection Service

- Meade & Hunt

Decorative Concrete Poles & Arms:

- Stresscrete / King Luminaire (Visual Impact Lighting, LLC)

Decorative Steel Poles & Arms:

- Niland Company (Visual Impact Lighting, LLC)
- Spring City (Visual Impact Lighting, LLC)
- Structura Inc.
- Candela Series (Spectrum Lighting)

Decorative LED Fixtures:

- Stresscrete / King Luminaire (Visual Impact Lighting, LLC)
- Beacon Viper
- Candela Series (Spectrum Lighting)
- Gardco

LED Street Light Fixtures:

- Philips (Neher Electric, TAPCO)
- Cooper Lighting (Neher Electric, TAPCO)
- American Electric Lighting (Neher Electric, TAPCO)

Traffic Cameras:

- Avigilon/Aware

School Zone Flasher & RRFB Controls:

- TAPCO
- Carmanah (Mobotrex)
- RTC
- Carmanah (Mobotrex)