

Cooperative Contracts Deliver Public Safety Supplies to Ensure SunTrust Park is Ready for Opening Day

For baseball fans, opening day brings excitement and renewed hope that this year's team will surpass all expectations to bring home more wins than last season. When opening day is in a new stadium, the excitement and expectations are escalated as fans clamor to experience their first game. For the new Atlanta Braves Stadium, SunTrust Park, public safety officials wanted to ensure all the fans had an experience unlike any other while keeping the community safe.

As opening day plans were being finalized, public safety leaders were completing the traffic and security measures to be implemented around SunTrust Park. On opening day, April 14th, officials would be implementing their well-planned processes and procedures to ensure traffic flowed smoothly and the safety of the thousands of visitors attending the game wasn't compromised.

Critical to the implementation of these plans was a list of items that needed to be purchased and delivered prior to opening day. The Police Department had several meetings with Bill Thomas, Supervisor of General Purchasing for Cobb County to outline their supplies and specifications. Some of the requirements included more than 1,000 safety cones, metal barricades, golf carts, all-terrain vehicles, safety balloons, generators and covered trailers – representing more than \$100,000 in needed supplies.

Opening day was quickly approaching and Bill needed to ensure that the procurement of the extensive list proceeded smoothly. To do this, he turned to two U.S. Communities contracts: Safeware for the majority of the public safety items and Club Car for the transportation vehicles.

Bill proposed the cooperative contracts to the public safety team. "Using these contracts would save a lot of time by eliminating the need for an RFP and I knew we would get their lowest pricing," said Thomas. "Everything that was needed was available through these two contracts which really streamlined the entire process."

As an Advisory Board member for U.S. Communities since 2001 (currently represented by Joe Tommie, Purchasing Director), Cobb County is familiar with the advantages of utilizing U.S. Communities contracts. The solicitation process by a lead public agency is similar to the Cobb County purchasing process so the requirements for a competitive bid are met. Being able to utilize a cooperative contract streamlines the entire purchasing process and eliminates the time needed for an RFP. In addition, U.S. Communities holds rigorous supplier commitments to ensure their supplier

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partners offer their best government pricing. “Using U.S. Communities, we knew we were getting the most competitive pricing” said Thomas.

Arriving at opening day without these items was not an option. Before proceeding, Bill focused on the majority of the public safety needs and had several meetings with Safeware to ensure the items they needed were covered under the contract and would be delivered by the designated dates. “I wanted absolute confirmation there would be no issues with the purchase. Sometimes when working with a vendor, you start the process and then find out a particular item is not available or can’t be delivered by the needed date,” stated Bill. “Working with Safeware went as smoothly as it could have gone.”

“We really value the trust and confidence that Cobb County has placed in our company and in our contract,” said Rick Bond, Vice President of Sales for Safeware. Rick and Clint Anderson, Southeast Branch Director for Safeware, were part of the planning meetings and attribute the success to a strong relationship with the Cobb County Police Department and Bill Thomas’ understanding of the Safeware contract. The situation with Cobb County was not new to the Safeware experts. Having utilized their U.S. Communities contract on high profile events with the Democratic National Committee, the Republican National Committee and most recently the Presidential Inauguration, they are accustomed to fulfilling large orders with a limited timeline -- it’s one of the benefits of utilizing a cooperative contract. “Major events like this require many months of detailed and intensive planning, and once the budget gets approved and the equipment is selected, the window of time to make the purchase can be very limited” said Bond.

Bill and Joe also met with Brian Skinner from Specialty Car Company, their local Club Car dealer. They outlined their public safety team’s vehicle requirements and how they intended to use them. Brian was able to recommend the purchase of two Villager eight-passenger transportation vehicles to meet their needs of shuttling the on-site public safety officials to various posts throughout the stadium. An additional advantage for Cobb County was the ability to use the local Club Car dealer. Going forward, being able to service and maintain the Club Car vehicles locally will be a convenience and time savings.

As with the Safeware purchase, the delivery of the Club Car vehicles was tight. Delivery would typically take 5-6 weeks, but Cobb County needed these at the stadium in time for the soft opening – only four weeks away. Club Car was able to expedite the order and Specialty Car Company had them delivered within the four weeks. “If Cobb County had to do an RFP they would not have been able to meet that deadline. Using the U.S. Communities contract saved everyone time, money and effort to meet the demands for the soft opening,” stated David Peterson, Strategic Account Manager for Club Car.

As leaders in best practice purchasing, Joe Tommie, Bill Thomas and the Purchasing Team at Cobb County knew the most resourceful and cost-effective way to proceed in such a tight time frame. With their knowledge of how to strategically utilize cooperative contracts, they were able to work with Safeware and Club Car to meet the needed deadlines and make the project a success.

The successful completion of this project was summarized perfectly by Safeware’s Rick Bond. “The real heroes in these events are the folks in public safety who work countless hours to make the process seamless and safe. We feel validated each time that we see a successful event in the news and realize the small part that our Safeware team, our experience, and our U.S. Communities contract played in the success.”

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