SOUTHWESTERN RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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Cherokee County

Andrews
Murphy

Clay County

Hayesville

Graham County

Fontana Dam
Robbinsville
Lake Santeetlah

Jackson County

Dillsboro
Forest Hills
Sylva
Webster

Macon County

Franklin
Highlands

Swain County

Bryson City

PRIORITIZATION 4.0 LOCAL METHODOLOGY - FINAL

INTRODUCTION

The North Carolina legislature and North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) require all rural and metropolitan planning organizations (RPOs and MPOs) to develop a local ranking methodology for projects across all modes of transportation (highway, bicycle/pedestrian, public transit, aviation, rail, and ferry). This methodology will need to be approved by the NCDOT's Strategic Prioritization Office of Transportation (SPOT), and adopted by the Southwestern RPO (SWRPO) Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), to ensure compliance with the legislative mandate.

This process applies to all projects ranked by the SWRPO in Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon, or Swain counties that are "Regional" or "Division" funding level projects. Funding levels (or tiers) are as defined in the 2013 Strategic Transportation Investments law.

SCHEDULE

Timeframe	Activity
July-August 2015	County stakeholder meetings to review the status of Prioritization 3.0 projects and select new or existing projects to be added to the Prioritization 4.0 database
September 2015	TAC approves the final project submittal lists for each mode
December 2015	Methodology Committee develops the SWRPO Prioritization 4.0 Local Methodology
January 25, 2016	Draft Methodology is distributed to TCC and TAC for preliminary approval
February 2016	Draft Methodology is submitted to NCDOT for conditional approval
March 14, 2016	Conditionally-approved Methodology is released for public comment period
March 28, 2016	TCC recommends approval and TAC approves final Methodology
March 31, 2016	Final approved Local Methodology due to NCDOT
March-April 2016	TCC/TAC members and other stakeholders develop their Local Priority rankings to apply to be used in applying the Local Methodology
April 1, 2016	NCDOT quantitative scores released
April 2016	SWRPO staff applies Methodology and ranks projects by score
April 2016	Local stakeholder meetings with NCDOT to discuss point assignments
May 9, 2016	Draft local point assignments released for public comment period
May 17, 2016	TCC recommends approval and TAC approves final Local Point Assignments for Regional Projects
Late May 2016	RPO Staff enters local points for Regional Projects into SPOT database
July-August 2016	RPO Staff reviews projects funded at Statewide and Regional tier; evaluates remaining projects eligible for Division points.
September 26, 2016	TCC and TAC recommends final Local Point Assignments for Division Projects
Late Sept. 2016	RPO Staff enters local points for Division Projects into SPOT database
December 2016	Draft STIP released by NCDOT

PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

Local Methodology:

Upon approval by NCDOT, the SWRPO will release the draft methodology for a 14-day public comment period, in accordance with the SWRPO Public Involvement Plan. The Draft Methodology will be posted on the SWRPO website, and the comment period will be advertised on the SWRPO website, social media page, and local media outlets. The results of the public comment period will be presented to the TCC and TAC at their March 2016 meeting, during which the public will also be permitted to submit comments. All public comment will be documented and reasonable edits to the methodology may be made prior to final approval by the TAC.

Local Point Assignments:

The draft point assignments for both Regional and Division projects will be released for a 14-day public comment period, in accordance with the SWRPO Public Involvement Plan. The draft point assignments will be posted on the SWRPO website, and the comment period will be advertised on the SWRPO website, social media page, and local media outlets. Public comments will be documented, filed by the RPO, and distributed to appropriate local entities to inform future Prioritization processes and transportation plans. No new projects will be added to the current Prioritization 4.0 list, however, as the NCDOT deadline for submitting new projects has passed. The results of the public comment period will be presented to the TCC and TAC at their May 2016 meeting, during which the public will also be permitted to submit comments. All public comment will be documented and considered prior to final approval by the TAC. The final, approved Local Point Assignments for Regional projects will be sent to SPOT by May 31, 2016. The TAC will approve the final local point assignments for Division projects at the September meeting, at which time the public will also be permitted to submit comments. The final, approved Local Point Assignments for Division Projects will be sent to SPOT by September 30, 2016.

RANKING PROCESS

Scoring Criteria:

Projects in the Prioritization 4.0 database will be scored using the following four criteria. These criteria will be used to score projects for all modes of transportation and for all funding tiers.

SPOT Score: The quantitative score generated by the NCDOT Strategic Office of Prioritization (SPOT) is a composite score that incorporates multiple metrics from a data-driven process including congestion, benefit-cost, safety, accessibility/connectivity, and freight. The SPOT Regional Score will be equal to 70% of the Project Regional Score and the SPOT Division Score will be equal to 50% of the Project Division Score.

Local Priority: Local Priority is a qualitative measure of the highest priority projects within each county. County TCC and TAC representatives are expected to collaborate with other county staff, county elected officials, staff and elected officials of municipalities within their boundaries, and other stakeholders to develop consensus on the ranked priority of projects within each county. Additional stakeholders consulted may include emergency management, law enforcement, economic development directors, tourism authorities, water and sewer authorities, tribal governments, major education or healthcare institutions, major employers, transit directors, airport managers, bicycle/pedestrian advocates, rail officials, etc.

The Local Priority ranking will incorporate the most current local knowledge such as economic development projects, destinations served, citizens' concerns, public safety, access, etc. Local stakeholders will meet to gain consensus on the priorities, and will submit a list of ranked projects in order of priority along with a brief rational for the ranking. If a project is prioritized by more than one county, it will be assigned the average of

the points received. The Local Priority will be equal to 20% of the Regional Score and 40% of the Division Score.

Plan Consistency: Projects that have been identified in a locally adopted plan with public input will be given additional points. Plan Consistency will comprise 5% of the Regional Score and 5% of the Division score.

Project Development: Projects that have had significant planning or development activities completed will be given points to distinguish them from projects that are simply conceptual. Project Development will comprise 5% of the Regional Score and 5% of the Division Score.

Regional Project Scoring

CRITERIA	MAX SCORE	POINTS ALLOCATED TOWARD REGIONAL SCORE			
SPOT Score	70	SPOT score	SPOT score	SPOT score	SPOT score
Local Priority	20	Priority #4 **5 points**	Priority #3 **10 points**	Priority #2 **15 points**	Priority #1 **20 points**
Plan Consistency	5	Project is not in a locally adopted plan **0 points**			Project is in CTP or other locally adopted plan **5 points**
Project Development	5	Feasibility Study or other project-specific plan **2 points**	Project or Sibling project programmed in current STIP **3 points**	Preliminary design or engineering **4 points**	Environmental document complete **5 points**
Total	**100**				

Division Project Scoring

CRITERIA	MAX SCORE	POINTS ALLOCATED TOWARD DIVISION SCORE			
SPOT Score	50	SPOT score	SPOT score	SPOT score	SPOT score
Local Priority	40	Priority #4 **10 points**	Priority #3 **20 points**	Priority #2 **30 points**	Priority #1 **40 points**
Plan Consistency	5	Project is not in a locally adopted plan **0 points**			Project is in CTP or other locally adopted plan **5 points**
Project Development	5	Feasibility Study or other project-specific plan **2 points**	Project or Sibling project programmed in current STIP **3 points**	Preliminary design or engineering **4 points**	Environmental document complete **5 points**
Total	**100**				

LOCAL POINT ASSIGNMENT PROCESS

Once all projects have been scored using the criteria above, SWRPO staff will rank the projects from highest to lowest within each county and within the RPO as a whole. This ranked list will be used to develop the recommended point assignments that are presented to the public for comment and to the TCC and TAC for approval.

The SWRPO has a total of 1300 Local Input Points to assign at the Regional tier and 1300 Local Input Points to assign at the Division tier. The maximum number of points any project can receive is 100.

Statewide Tier:

Statewide projects do not receive local points and are determined entirely by the SPOT quantitative score. Any projects programmed at the statewide tier will be removed from the process before the SWRPO assigns local points.

Regional Point Assignments:

Any projects on the Statewide tier that are not funded at the Statewide tier will cascade down and be available for local point assignments at the Regional tier. Any projects that are programmed at the Regional tier will be removed from the process prior to assigning Division points.

The two top-scoring Regional projects within each county will be initially assigned 100 points each, which will account for 1200 of the 1300 available points. The remaining 100 points will be assigned to the next highest scoring project, regardless of location. In the event that any counties do not have at least two Regional tier projects, then additional projects will be selected from the top of the list of remaining projects within the RPO as a whole.

Division Point Assignments:

All projects not funded at the Statewide and Regional tiers will cascade down and be eligible for Division Local Points along with the Division tier projects. Projects involving public transit, bicycle and pedestrian transportation, aviation, and rail are evaluated at the Division level in addition to highway projects on secondary routes.

The two top-scoring projects within each county will be initially assigned 100 points each, which will account for 1200 of the 1300 available points. If a non-highway project receives points from the initial 1200 allotment, the remaining 100 points will be assigned to the next highest scoring project, regardless of mode and location. However if the initial 1200 points are all assigned to highway projects, the last 100 points will be assigned to the highest scoring <u>non-highway project that is also supported by the local government</u>. No local points will be assigned to any project requiring local match if the local government expresses no commitment to provide the required match. In the event that any counties do not have at least two Division tier projects, then additional projects will be selected from the top of the list of remaining projects within the RPO as a whole.

Tied Scores:

In the event scores are tied, the SWRPO will work with the Division 14 Engineer to align Division priorities with RPO priorities and ensure mutual needs are prioritized appropriately. If only one of the tied projects will also be receiving points from the Division Engineer, that project will be awarded the RPO points. However if both or neither of the projects will be receiving Division points, the project with the highest SPOT score will receive the RPO points.

Deviations from Methodology:

The SWRPO TAC may modify final point assignments to provide local oversight to the data-driven process, to better align county priorities with the priorities of the RPO and Division 14 and to ensure appropriate projects at the relevant funding tier. Any variations in point assignments from the initial point assignments will be justified and documented. Potential justifications may include: project cost, estimated points required for funding, geographic equity, distribution between modes, new information, potential reconsideration of the limits of a programmed project, and public comment. All public comments received, all final point assignments and any justification/rationale for point assignments which deviate from this Local Methodology will be placed on the RPO website at www.regiona.org/transportation-planning-rpo.

This Southwestern RPO Prioritization 4.0 Local Methodology was approved by the Southwestern RPO Transportation Advisory Committee on March 28, 2016.

Mike Fitzgerald, Chair

Rose Bauguess, Secretary