

French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization

Prioritization Subcommittee Meeting

August 22, 2013

Minutes

Attendance

Josh O'Conner-Buncombe County

Kristina Solberg-NCDOT Division 13

Reuben Moore-NCDOT Division 14

Marc Hunt-Asheville City Council

Doug Dearth-Weaverville Town Council

Claudia Nix-Asheville Bike Ped Task Force

Matt Cable-Henderson County

Larry Freeman-Mills River

Josh King-Land-of-Sky RPO (non-voting)

Paul Black-FBRMPO (non-voting)

Lyuba Zuyeva-FBRMPO (non-voting)

Vicki Eastland-FBRMPO (non-voting)

Sealy Easley-Land-of-Sky Regional Council (non-voting)

WELCOME AND SUBCOMMITTEE MISSION

Paul Black Paul Black opened the meeting with a round of introductions. With regards to the Prioritization Subcommittee mission and charge, Mr. Black has indicated that there are some changes in the state rules which require that MPOs develop a project prioritization process for the SPOT and TIP/STIP. FBRMPO has to develop meaningful criteria, which can be both qualitative and quantitative. This Subcommittee will work on developing such criteria for adoption by MPO TCC and Board.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment

MPO REQUIREMENTS FOR STIP PROCESS AND BRIEF REVIEW OF GOALS FROM CTP, LRTP AND CMP

Paul Black has pointed to a handout of all the qualitative criteria currently in use across the state of NC. Most of the scores provided by NCDOT are quantitative-based. There are some things which are meaningful but we don't currently measure and therefore qualitative criteria might be more appropriate.

Paul Black-looking at the LRTP, there are some vision and goals that we could work with and select appropriate qualitative/quantitative criteria. One of the challenges is that the SPOT process timeline has been bumped up, to where we now have to submit projects for SPOT prioritization a lot earlier than expected. Projects will have to be submitted for SPOT scores in January, and prioritized by the MPO based on qualitative/quantitative criteria by the end of March.

Paul Black reviewed the LRTP goals indicated that the LRTP has 9 goals duplicated in the CMP. The CTP does not have any goals. Today, would like to review at least one of the goals and discuss how different criteria might be appropriate. Paul Black pointed to a handout which attendees can take home and add their recommendations for potential qualitative and quantitative measures by goal. Goal #1 is prioritization of existing facility maintenance—this might not be an appropriate goal to look at since maintenance projects get selected outside of MPO/RPO SPOT input process. Goal #2 is to plan for and construct a regional public transportation system. Paul Black has asked that members select four criteria per goal. From this, the subcommittee will try to narrow it down. Goal #3 is to integrate quality of life into planning.

Paul Black asked Subcommittee members to fill out the worksheets and submit their results by the 13th of September to MPO staff, so that MPO staff can organize the results before the next meeting.

In response to a question from Reuben Moore about changing the LRTP goals, Paul Black indicated that the MPO can either amend the existing LRTP, or wait till the next LRTP adoption which will be finished by the fall of 2015. Marc Hunt—it might be good to establish evaluation system against the current goals, and in the future we can revise the goals while keeping the evaluation criteria in mind. Paul Black—one of the gaps in current goals is addressing freight and goods movement.

Paul Black—if a really good project idea comes up and we need to amend it into the LRTP, we can do that. For now, we can start with existing 9 goals and moving ahead on performance measures. Josh O’Conner—question about specific measures being quantitative vs. qualitative—for example, whether a project is on the TIP. Paul Black—for projects at the division level, the SPOT score already accounts for 50% of the score, Division engineers get to assign 25% of the score and MPO Board only has influence over 25% of the score. It might make sense to focus on the items that nobody else is measuring. If the group would want to simply take the SPOT score and double that, it’s an option and would make the process simpler.

Matt Cable—question about what is already accounted for in SPOT that’s on the list—Paul Black—many items, for example the number of jobs is indirectly represented in the SPOT score via TREADIS models. The modeling is not always very good at predicting the future job trends—large employers coming in could change the trend very quickly. Different types of projects are measured by different things, especially for modes other than highways.

Josh O’Conner—are there any of these data points not currently available that the MPO could not produce with existing budget? Paul Black—most of those are existing data points except for ROW acquired and environmental status. Marc Hunt—how would environmental process be quantified? Josh King—depending on where it is in the environmental review process process. Reuben Moore—this would only apply for a project which is already fairly far along. Paul Black—could find a better explanation for environmental criteria.

Josh O’Conner—question about Cost-Benefit. Paul Black—this is obtained from SPOT, based on travel time savings. Claudia Nix—is our region at a disadvantage because we are so small and experience less congestion? Paul Black—not really, but it’s expensive to build in our area, have to add a 50% premium for projects in the mountains. Josh King—our projects are competing in the two division equity region, including Division 13 and 14. The municipalities in our area are some of the largest in this wider equity region. Paul Black—we also do ok because the facilities are all in the valleys, ways of getting around are limited and there is congestion on those main corridors. However, the construction cost is what’s making it difficult to score well.

Paul Black—could add a criteria listing under-sized roads. This was an issue that came up in Divisions 1 and 2. Paul Black—David Hyder looked at shoulder width and crash data. The biggest fatality contributor on rural roads is based on the distance to ER, not necessarily based on roadway width. Reuben Moore and Claudia Nix—surprised by this finding, indicated that it would be important to have clear zone to recover if a driver runs off.

Matt Cable—divisions look at a lot of quantitative data plus some qualitative criteria, do we want to avoid looking at the same criteria three times—for example, crash rates?

Kristina Solberg—what criteria were used in the past? Paul Black—before I started, FBRMPO Board has met and traded off individual project priorities, no clear selection process. We would like to deal with geographic equity but we would want to go beyond that. CAMPO has a way to account for what other projects from the same jurisdiction have already been funded in the past. There would be a way to scale that based on population.

Reuben Moore-question about TREADIS not accounting well for jobs related to a project. Reuben Moore—when a development has come in in the past, NCDOT has stepped up to provide the improvements. Maybe jobs induced should be part of the criteria. Paul Black-we might not have access to these data. Might be zero for some.

Claudia Nix—what about public health issues, how can we tie this in? Josh King—hard to get the public health data at a project-specific level. We have public health data at a county level. Paul Black-could have a qualitative score even if we don't have a quantitative score. Claudia Nix—especially in low-income neighborhoods, likely to see higher disease rates. Paul Black—can add public health to the tentative list of qualitative criteria and run it past NCDOT.

Paul Black reviewed the timeline and tasks for the Prioritization Subcommittee briefly. Highway, transit and bike ped projects need to be scored. In addition, air and rail also need some work. Air should be easy based on the Asheville Regional Airport Draft Master Plan (draft released recently). There is a plan to add a smaller taxiway, plus there is a freight component.

Paul Black- 15 new highway projects will need to be submitted. MPO staff recommendation is to focus on projects already in the CTP. However, 10 projects will likely be amended into the CTP including some bike ped projects which are too big and have to be categorized as highway.

Josh O'Conner-question about air quality determination. Paul Black-NCDOT will be using the MOVES model to determine whether the projects will negatively impact air quality.

Paul Black-request that if there are new projects that are not in the CTP submitted for SPOT, local jurisdiction staff are asked to give MPO staff as much advanced notice as possible to prepare background information on those projects.

Kristina Solberg-when will the CTP be amended? Paul Black-have been working on those amendments since May, preparing project packets. Looking at map amendments because that's the only thing that NC Board of Transportation adopts. Kristina Solberg-NCDOT might come up with new projects on the CTP. Paul Black-Division gets to submit projects independently of the MPO submission; any spillover projects from the Division were submitted through the MPO in the past but this will require more scrutiny going forward.

Paul Black- call for new SPOT projects will be announced in September. We will have to schedule MPO TCC and Board additional meeting on November 21st (TCC at 10:30, Board at 12:30 and we will serve lunch) due to expedited SPOT schedule. Josh King—RPO does not anticipate an additional meeting in November, will plan to be done by October cycle.

In response to a question from Matt Cable, Paul Black indicated that the old projects are not being automatically eliminated and previously submitted projects will not count against 15 new highway project spots. NCDOT staff will have to manually evaluate intersections and interchanges, which is the limiting factor in project submission.

Paul Black-Divisions might not be able to submit new projects. If something is important, let us know as soon as possible. Preferably it's a project on the CTP or can be amended into the CTP. Paul Black-more efficient projects that can pull another project out would be helpful.

Paul Black—there are six projects in the LRTP that have not been submitted for SPOT. Three of those are Wilma Dykeman projects. Perhaps all of those LRTP projects can be submitted for SPOT as new projects. LRTP is an adopted plan with a lot of public and stakeholder involvement behind it. With 15 spots hopefully including all of

those six projects would not be an issue. Matt Cable-as long as geographic equity is addressed, Henderson County would be amenable to this.

Paul Black-realistically, out of the new projects very unlikely that any of them would get moved into the draft STIP. It might be best to keep moving the projects we already have vetted.

Paul Black added that EJ criteria review might be an additional item for the Prioritization Subcommittee to discuss.

STP-DA SELECTION PROCESS AND TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM SELECTION PROCESS

Lyuba Zuyeva gave an overview of STP-DA and TA Selection process.

Under Surface Transportation Program-Direct Attributable Funds, \$3.3 million/year will be available for 2016 and 2017 for projects in the FBRMPO region. Under the Transportation Alternatives Program, \$283k/year is available for 2013 and 2014. There is some flexibility in when those funds can be spent—can be spent a couple years later.

MPO staff would like to do a parallel call for projects for STP-DA funds and TA funds, with call for projects due by July 2014 and final approval of projects by MPO Board in September 2014.

Eligible activities under TA include the following (more details at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/tap.cfm>):

- Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized transportation.
- Construction, planning, and design of safe routes for non-drivers
- Use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails
- Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities;
- Stormwater management, control, and water pollution prevention
- Recreational trails program
- Safe routes to school program
- Others including workforce development, training, and education activities; wildlife corridors; scenic overlooks; vegetation; control and removal of outdoor advertising

Eligible activities under STP-DA include the following (more details at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/stp.cfm>):

- Construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, resurfacing, or operational improvements for highways
- Replacement, rehabilitation, preservation for bridges and tunnels on any public road, including construction or reconstruction necessary to accommodate other modes.
- Construction of new bridges and tunnels on a Federal-aid highway.
- Capital costs for transit projects, including vehicles and facilities used to provide intercity passenger bus service.
- Carpool projects, fringe and corridor parking facilities and programs
- Electric and natural gas vehicle charging infrastructure
- Bicycle transportation and pedestrian walkways, and ADA sidewalk modification.
- Highway and transit safety infrastructure improvements and programs
- Capital and operating costs for traffic monitoring, management and control facilities and programs, including advanced truck stop electrification.
- Surface transportation planning.
- Others

Some additional requirements include the following: there has to be at least a 20% local match; the projects have to be locally administered; the projects have to be LRTP and TIP/STIP compliant; only MPO jurisdictions can apply; and the Prioritization Subcommittee can create an additional list of selection criteria.

The projects most recently funded with STP-DA in the FBRMPO region are as follows:

- US 25 Hendersonville Road Sidewalks, I-40 South to NC 146 (fed. \$3.3 million; local \$825k, CST in 2014)
- New Leicester Highway Sidewalks, Patton Avenue to Asheville city limits (fed. \$2.9 million, local \$726k, CST in 2015)
- Hendersonville Transit Center (fed. \$1672, local \$418k, CST in 2015)

Lyuba Zuyeva further provided an example of some of the review criteria used in selecting STP-DA projects by Capital Area MPO (as presented to MPO TCC and Board during the May meeting cycle). CAMPO has a larger funding pot to allocate, and sets modal goals (i.e. 65% of funding to be spent on roadway projects, etc). Considering that FBRMPO region has access to a smaller funding pot, it would make a bigger impact with smaller bike ped and transit projects; it would be hard to fund a large roadway project. For example, currently ongoing Howard Gap Road complete streets-type project in Henderson County carries a \$9 million price tag. Black Mountain Blue Ridge Road proposed I-40 interchange would likely cost on the order of \$20-25 million. Such large projects can not be funded with STP-DA, but a smaller roadway project could be funded.

Marc Hunt-comment that it would be good to see a use estimate measure to score bike ped facilities, so that higher use would be prioritized. Reuben Moore—suggestion to look at residential density and bicycle/pedestrian counts to rank the areas in terms of likely usage. Marc Hunt—on average, 18,000 people/day in Portland ride to work. However, if you polled them ten years ago, maybe they would not have expected to ride a bike. Considering the people on bikes in Asheville today—it might be ten times more in ten years.

Lyuba Zuyeva-emphasis that it's very time consuming to manage an STP-DA or TA project, and not all small communities would be willing to deal with it. Reuben Moore-in the past, Divisions could help build/administer a project to support a smaller jurisdiction. Going forward, might not be able to do it.

Lyuba Zuyeva-would like to look at STP-DA and TA selection criteria between January and April 2014, to have a finalized list of criteria a couple months prior to when project submission will be due in July.

Doug Dearth-question about local match, is this new? Paul Black-STP-DA always had a local match requirement, TA replaces Transportation Enhancements (TE); for TE NCDOT would provide a local match in the past. Doug Dearth-have to be aware of local funding scheduling and CIPs.

FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE AND FOLLOW-UP STEPS

Paul Black—requested to consider future meeting days for the subcommittee. The morning of September 26th at 10 AM prior to MPO Board meeting was selected. No objections.

In response to a question from Kristina Solberg, Paul Black indicated that during the September 26th meeting, the subcommittee will be developing the list of criteria for SPOT prioritization.

Paul Black-what about a criteria looking at how many different projects have been funded in a specific area? Paul Benson-suggestion to look at projects per capita to adjust for larger jurisdictions. Paul Black-that would work. Also suggestion to look at a link to an interstate as adding new useful connections? Or a link to an existing bike corridor? Or what if a project addresses a recurring bottleneck or hazard?

Paul Black-will present quantitative criteria not already considered as part of SPOT score at next meeting. Request to submit your input by September 14th.

Lyuba Zuyeva - the Subcommittee will need to address some of the administrative items at the next meeting. Paul Black-will need to elect Chair and Vice Chair. Paul Black nominated Marc Hunt and Larry Freeman as Chair and Vice Chair and asked for additional nominations to be submitted to MPO staff prior to next meeting.

Marc Hunt—request that Paul email out his suggested criteria for Goal #4 to the subcommittee. Paul Black-will do. There might be some criteria that are applicable to multiple goals. Josh O’Conner-are you looking for scores on the worksheet that add up to 100? Paul Black –not necessarily, we can scale the results up or down. Paul Black-talked about different ways to distribute SPOT points, creating a ranked list of projects is not necessary.

Lyuba Zuyeva—considering that the Prioritization Subcommittee will be focused on highway projects at September meeting, suggestion for Complete Streets to consider Bike Ped SPOT prioritization first in early October, prior to Prioritization Subcommittee considering it at October meeting. No objections from the Subcommittee.

Paul Black-transit projects prioritization to be considered later, there are very few transit projects that will be considered—only transit capital new projects.

Meeting adjourned.