

French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization
Prioritization Subcommittee
December 19, 2013
Minutes

Attending

Eddie Henderson, Town of Fletcher
Ed Green, NCDOT Division 14
Reuben Moore, NCDOT Division 14
Marc Hunt, City of Asheville
Mariate Echeverry, City of Asheville
Doug Dearth, Town of Weaverville
Josh King, LOSRPO/FBRMPO
Paul Black, FBRMPO
Lyuba Zuyeva, FBRMPO

Vicki Eastland, FBRMPO
Josh O'Conner, Buncombe County
Jack McCaskill, Town of Montreat
Matt Cable, Henderson County
Autumn Radcliff, Henderson County
Don Kostelec, Kostelec Planning
Kristina Solberg, NCDOT Division 13
Rick Tipton, NCDOT Division 13

WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

Marc Hunt opened the meeting with a round of introductions. Marc Hunt asked for adoption of the meeting minutes from November meeting. Eddie Henderson-motion, Mariate Echeverry-second. Minutes approved.

BUSINESS

Review of Timeline

Josh King-we are currently on schedule. New project entry will be taking place in late January-early February. The process will go to TCC and Board during January cycle, to then be forwarded to NCDOT for review. Final approval expected in the spring of 2014 with projects ranking entry scheduled for May of 2014.

Marc Hunt-are we hearing about other communities developing their prioritization process, anything that might impact us? Josh King-the timelines are fairly firm now, do not anticipate any further major changes. Don Kostelec-what about the Board action to further cut non-highway element from 4% to 2%? Paul Black-this was not a new issue, they just finalized the changes. Don Kostelec clarified that out of \$15 billion in SPOT, 4% was initially the minimum for non-highway. The Board has decided to only apply 4% to the Regional and Division pots, which has decreased the overall percentage of non-highway funding. Reuben Moore-based on ranking, non-highway projects could still score well and get a higher funding amount than 4% (up to 10%). Rick Tipton—there are not many statewide non-highway projects that would be applicable. Paul Black-this is a floor so that we can program above that. There was a particular intent to ensure that some non-highway projects were programmed in the Divisions in the east. Don Kostelec-when will the Division methods to prioritize will be developed? Reuben Moore-Division 14 has an open house on January 14th and a 30-day public input period. Rick Tipton-our methods are fairly prescribed. Reuben Moore-like what Division 1 and 4 have done which might be applicable to us-include points for deficient roadway width.

Marc Hunt-how would Division methodologies interact with the MPO prioritization? Any specific suggestions for how the MPO and Division processes can interact? Paul Black-the bike ped funding from the state is primarily becoming based on the Transportation Alternatives Program. The bigger picture question is how bike ped elements get integrated as part of larger roadway projects. There might be a devolution of local projects to local governments taking place, rather than an anti bike/ped sentiment. Not enough funding for the core of the program.

Reuben Moore-other existing programs such as maintenance are also under threat, maintenance is being cut (even for signals, and reflective strips). Don Kostelec-is the overall theme that there is not enough of a process for small projects funding? Reuben Moore—we might get a little extra money for Division construction projects because some of the money is proportioned by Division. Rick Tipton—in the past, a disproportionate amount went to eastern part of the state and this will not be happening anymore. The opportunity exists to benefit in our region. We have to make sure

that municipalities are able to prepare a local match. Don Kostelec—there is an issue that the SRTS program is lumped in with other programs that do require a 20% local match. Don Kostelec—still some wait and see how this process shakes out. Marc Hunt—in this MPO, there is an interest in understanding and strategic thinking; this conversation is to be continued.

Prioritization Criteria

Josh King—there was a spreadsheet and a word format handout provided for this meeting. Matt Cable and Autumn Radcliff helped to set up a different spreadsheet to eliminate some of the criteria and improve the prioritization. In reviewing the full spreadsheet, MPO staff came up with similar conclusions that some of the criteria are not ready for prime time at this time.

Josh King started the discussion with criteria which are easier to define. First, high job growth areas.

Josh King showed a map with TAZs separated into three tiers for expected job growth to 2040. A project would get higher or lower job growth points. In response to a question from Marc Hunt, Paul Black indicated that the job growth is based on Land Use modeling initiated for GroWNC and adjusted for the FBRMPO Travel Demand Model—based on “do nothing” scenario. Josh O’Conner—request to normalize by area, otherwise larger TAZs in outlying areas end up with higher job growth. Paul Black—this is balanced out with lower network density in areas with larger TAZ. Josh O’Conner—when comparing project-for-project, a project in Rosman might score equally to a project in Asheville although the one in Asheville would have higher employment density. Concern that projects in rural TAZ might be prioritized unfairly. Josh King—other metrics such as v/c will probably help equalize. Paul Black—areas in the center will have multiple projects, whereas outlying areas will have just one or two projects. Matt Cable—points for projects near existing jobs would give more points to areas with higher current job density. Discussion followed about Henderson County suggested points for job growth area analysis. Paul Black—from MPO staff perspective, we are trying to go to a 3-point scale to avoid binary “yes/no” answers.

Reuben Moore—is it true that if a project is not on a plan it is not eligible for SPOT? Paul Black—correct.

Matt Cable—question about the measure “appropriately addresses MPO base year congestion”. Paul Black—this is a difficult category to measure, we do not have capacity or volume data for all the roadways. Would recommend against it. Reuben Moore—state NCDOT score takes congestion into account. Paul Black—capacity calculations are somewhat subjective based on urban/rural, impedance from intersections, etc. Paul Black—there is an easier congestion management score. If it’s on the MPO Hot Spot Corridors (based on CMP), it would get points. Paul Black—if the corridor is both on CM Plan and uses a CM strategy it would get two points. If a project is not on a hot spot corridor but uses a CM strategy it would get one point.

Josh King—moving on to the freight. There is a statewide freight network. We could add points for being identified on the national or state freight network. Anything on a route with a shield gets basic freight points. Additional points for specially-specified routes on the national network. Marc Hunt—in the context of the I-26 Connector discussion with relationship to the Port of Charleston and the Intermodal Port, how would that work? Paul Black—the Connector should be part of the Statewide pot selection, where the MPOs do not have any input. Rick Tipton—if this project drops out of the statewide funding pot into regional, we might have to deal with the I-26 Connector. Further discussion about I-26 and I-40 strategic importance, and how to compare the two. Reuben Moore—many restrictions on trucks for example on US 64 between Franklin and Highlands. Does that come into account? Paul Black—it would take too long to consider it, for now not considering truck restrictions. Josh King—discussed the question of using a buffer for freight. One-mile buffer includes too much. Matt Cable—suggestion to limit to facilities directly on the freight routes, without considering a buffer..

Josh King next talked about the multi-modal solutions criteria. We could keep one and drop the other one. Don Kostelec-the demographic indicator is more important. Discussion to add LEP and Zero Vehicle Ownership to the Social Equity index. Paul Black-a lot of variables are self-reinforcing. Trying to calculate the 25th percentile for each category to come up with a score. Marc Hunt-which multi-modal criteria are we going to keep? Mariate Echeverry-are the two criteria in conflict? Josh King-we could keep both measures and include the definition of multi-modal measures to include transit and freight. Mariate Echeverry—this would allow access for everybody.

Josh King moved on to discuss access to recreation facilities. The staff initially considered two points for ¼ mile buffer and one point for 2 mile buffer. Marc Hunt-US forests are not specifically included but they provide a lot of recreation in our area. Visitation to the sites is important. Autumn Radcliff—Henderson County staff were trying to figure out if this would get at providing access to physical activity. Further discussion about access to recreation facilities. Reuben Moore-do we limit this to recreational facilities? People can walk and bike to other destinations. Paul Black-concern about MPO staff time that would be required for the larger-scale analysis of all connections between residential points and any destination. Josh King-question to Autumn Radcliff and Matt Cable, do we capture your comments elsewhere? Don Kostelec-suggestion that there is an economic benefit to access to recreation sites beyond physical activity. There is some merit to retain this measure, not just for multi-modal transportation. “Project promotes transportation to public recreation sites”. Discussion about both active transportation and active transportation needs—for example, the soccer fields off Swannanoa River Road. Matt Cable-question about staff time concern. Paul Black-the measures do need to be very simple. Josh King-if we tighten the buffer to ¼ mile and limit to active transportation, this would limit the number of projects to analyze. Josh O’Conner-this could be set to zero unless the local jurisdiction provides evidence that there is access to recreation sites within the buffer. Lyuba Zuyeva-concern that small town staff might be at a disadvantage to review and provide this information. Marc Hunt—would want to make sure that we are not embracing the remote recreational facility as the way to promote physical activity over routine bike ped trips to a grocery store in the center of activity. Other communities have moved away from aesthetic and recreational aspects of bike ped infrastructure to more purposeful infrastructure for transportation. Mariate Echeverry—in support of Marc Hunt’s comment. Recreation is likely to be less frequently where as basic trips such as to the grocery store happen more frequently. Being able to walk for everyday trips might be more important. Further discussion followed about recreational trips by car—there are a lot of vehicular trips for recreation on the corridors in our region. Doug Dearth-if you only focus on transportation, then the Buncombe County Greenways Master Plan will never be realized-only Asheville and Black Mountain portions would ever get built. Eddie Henderson-comment that the focus should be on transportation, not on bikes and peds. Reuben Moore-comment that there is a lot of latent demand for pedestrian trips but not enough infrastructure available. It’s about offering transportation choices and the statewide metrics already measure congestion and travel time which are the largest concerns to a typical motorist. MPO metrics can flesh out the other criteria that are not as present in the NCDOT statewide score. Matt Cable—can we return to “the project includes multi-modal components.” We do not need to measure the same thing twice. Discussion about Fanning Bridge Road followed. Narrow road and needs accommodation for all users, including freight.

Marc Hunt asked for a quick break.

After the break, Marc Hunt brought the group’s attention to the spreadsheet with initial results from a quick analysis based on some of preliminary criteria that the MPO staff developed based on previous Prioritization Subcommittee discussions and based on available data. Paul Black explained the results.

Some items were not available, for example:

- Consistency with local growth patterns-would look to local governments to score this

- Stormwater—no information
- Local street grid connectivity-no good way to measure

With regards to multi-modal, there was a bike/ped column in the LRTP that was considered. Whether a project is on existing bike or ped plan can be measured but was not measured for this round. With regards to traffic volumes- volumes above 16,000 and above 30,000 received points. Projects on CMP “Hot Corridors” and using CM measures got points. Safety and security was not easy to measure—geocoded crashes from NCDOT only capture 10-20% of the crashes. This is not satisfactory. We can get more detailed data but it’s very labor-intensive to map those. Staff recommendation is to eliminate crashes but we could consider length width and shoulder width. Kristina Solberg-question about geocoded crashes. Paul Black-crash reports are tagged to the roadway characteristics network but the original data might not be accurate. Lyuba Zuyeva-concern that lane width might not be easily available. Rick Tipton-in support of using paved shoulder width and roadway width as a criteria if we focus on roads under 24 ft in width. Paul Black-if we have roadways below 10 ft lane width and 2 ft paved shoulder, projects would get points for bringing a roadway closer to the standard. Group in favor of this measure.

Paul Black-further discussion about EJ criteria. Promoting physical activity and ADA compliance not easy to measure at this point. Reducing VMT is a very qualitative measure, hard to measure on a project-by-project basis. Don Kostelec-this is similar to air quality analysis. Paul Black-overall, have not found a good criteria for health and environment category. On the project history—“identified as a top local priority” would be a question for local government input. The scoring methodology can be submitted to NCDOT now without submitting the final scores until May. Josh King-with regards to older projects, this would reward projects that have been more studied. Matt Cable-what about quality control for projects with PE which has expired and can not be used. Paul Black-no way to control for that right now. Paul Black-one last criteria is “what tier of LRTP is this in.” Josh O’Conner-what about a column for “built to a minimum of complete streets design standards” to not reward projects that were designed prior to complete streets guidelines. Paul Black-would look to local input to provide the information as to whether the project is designed up to complete streets standards. Josh O’Conner-in support of this. Lyuba Zuyeva-suggestion to add a metric for multi-modal that would provide points for being on a pedestrian plan, bicycle plan and on an existing transit route, with up to 3 points if a project has all three. Discussion about transit outside of Buncombe and Henderson Counties. Josh King-there is service connection between Mountain Projects and Mountain Mobility at Exit 37 truck stop.

Matt Cable-question about what the group has to decide on today. Do we have to agree today to the methodology and the criteria today? Paul Black-correct, there is time for some small adjustments at TCC and MPO Board meetings in January, otherwise it will be final.

Paul Black-in summary, we would be adding a multi-modal criteria (bike plan, ped plan, on transit route), PE, lane/shoulder width. Josh King-the total points by projects we are not being approved today. However, the overall framework would need to be approved.

Marc Hunt-what additional guidance would you need today? How is the subcommittee feeling about this. Josh King-question to TCC members, what would you need to see on the TCC agenda? Josh O’Conner-would like to see the cleaned-up result of today’s outcome and for the Subcommittee to have a 3-day comment period. Matt Cable-at this point I don’t feel like we have a final result yet that we can hand off. Autumn Radcliff-in support, if we rush now the TCC discussion would be long.

Josh O’Conner-suggestion to go ahead and ship out the MPO TCC agenda before this item is finalized.

Mariate Echeverry—would be support an additional opportunity for comment prior to TCC. Marc Hunt-we have a consent on a three-day comment period. Josh King-staff will ship this updated methodology tomorrow morning by 10 AM. Comments to be returned by 5 PM on Thursday the 2nd.

Discussion about the public comment process for SPOT prioritization. Division 14 meeting is on 14th 1:30-8 PM.

Paul Black-will send out the spreadsheet tonight. Matt Cable-request for detailed explanation of scoring rules used for the spreadsheet.

Meeting Schedule for 2014

Josh King-request to approve the calendar for 2014 meetings. Meetings to be scheduled for fourth Thursday at 10 AM: January 23, February 27, March 27, April 24, May 22, June 26, July 24, August 28, September 25, October 23. No meeting scheduled for November and December 2014 at this point. No concerns, meeting calendar for 2014 approved. Next meeting scheduled for January 23rd at 10 AM at Land-of-Sky offices..

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment

Meeting adjourned.