

**French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization**  
Prioritization Subcommittee  
February 27, 2014  
Minutes

**Attending**

Marc Hunt, Asheville  
Paul Benson, Waynesville  
Jack McCaskill, Montreat  
Larry Freeman, Mills River  
Doug Dearth, Weaverville

Claudia Nix, Blue Ridge Bicycle Club  
Josh King, LOSRPO/FBRMPO  
Paul Black, FBRMPO  
Lyuba Zuyeva, FBRMPO  
Vicki Eastland, FBRMPO

**WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING**

Marc Hunt opened the meeting and with a round of introductions. Approval of meeting minutes from December and January was postponed till the next meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment

**BUSINESS**

**Review of Projects Based on Initial Scoring Criteria (“the Big Ugly”) and Local Scoring Criteria**

Paul Black talked about the initial scoring of SPOT projects based on the draft criteria. Indicated that some of the statewide projects might need to be scored, considering that some of them might cascade down. So far the scoring system appears to be working as it should. Marc Hunt-asked if there have been any comments from Josh O’Conner, Paul Black-not since the last discussion.

Paul Black-if the overall scoring criteria are generally ok, we can focus more in-depth on defining the local input points based on consistency with growth patterns, etc. Paul Black indicated that the Winston-Salem MPO has decided to move away from local government points that would use five factors: public input, consistency with planned growth and development areas, adherence to Complete Streets Policy, promotion of community goals and objectives to further adopted plans, and projects with existing local commitment to funding. Instead, Winston-Salem MPO will require a brief one-page explanation of why a particular project has local importance. Paul Black further discussed how local jurisdictions in our region could assign local input points, suggested that each county could assemble a meeting of a TAC or similar group and rank all projects in the county.

Matt Cable-to clarify, we don’t have to decide today how we will incorporate local ranking into the MPO score, but we have to figure out how each county will assign local scores? Paul Black confirmed. Marc Hunt-questioned how the various county-level TACs would work outside of Henderson County. Jack McCaskill-concern about different counties using different approaches. Paul Black-each county might have a different approach, different set of priorities. Marc Hunt-different counties have very different perspectives on prioritization. A couple of Buncombe County commissioners would like to see sidewalks and have had a meeting with NCDOT Division 13 staff to discuss. Those commissioners are not currently on the MPO Board. This was a substantive discussion about becoming more involved county-wide in working with municipalities to sort out what are the priorities. Buncombe County and City of Asheville are interested in starting intra-county meetings to be more strategic about priorities. Jan Davis is interested in helping organize it. Doug Dearth-there was an effort in this direction a few years ago—only lasted two meetings. Marc Hunt-in this current iteration, it would be one hour prior to MPO Board (TAC).

Paul Black-question about Henderson County TAC make-up. Matt Cable-all elected officials with some ex-officio non-voting members of the public. Sometimes staff serve as alternates for elected officials. Paul Black-in Haywood County, we've had several informal meetings and typically Chris Boyd hosts them.

Paul Black-if everyone feels comfortable with this, we will let local TACs decide on local ranking, and the MPO staff will work on translating local county-specific rankings to a 40-point scale. Matt Cable-suggestion for each county to rank-order projects and then each county would have a cap of points, so that the top 10 projects get 40 points each. Paul Black-or another option is to assign 40 points to the top project, 39 points to the next project, 38 points to the next project down, etc. Paul Benson-we might want to take a look at the other MPO score results and concur with the rank order. Paul Black-the idea of a one-pager is good because it can explain data points that are hard to measure but make a difference at the local level.

Paul Black-public input has been added as a scoring column. Aiming to have the scores to MPO Board in May, which will allow some additional time for public input. Lyuba Zuyeva-MPO PIP requires that the final prioritization list be posted for 14 days, with an additional MPO Board vote after the public input period.

Paul Black-in summary, the plan is to request that each county provides a ranked list of projects and a one-page explanation of how the ranking was arrived at. No two projects in the county should score the same. Lyuba Zuyeva-to clarify, the explanation would be one page per county to explain the overall ranking? Paul Black-correct. Can add a second page for any projects that have been moved in the ranking for a special reason. We can not always measure everything that is important, so local input allows for influence of factors that are difficult to measure. Matt Cable-in support, this method would likely have a buy-in from elected officials. Paul Benson-how does this compare with SPOT 2 rankings? Paul Black-have not made a comparison yet. Paul Benson-might be helpful to include SPOT 2.0 ranking. Paul Black-some projects don't have a score yet.

Paul Benson-request for explanation of scoring criteria. Lyuba Zuyeva-already included in the Prioritization Spreadsheet, will resend out.

Discussion about using shoulder width/roadway width as a criteria followed. Consensus to use current insufficient shoulder width as a criteria but to remove comparison to future cross-section, to limit the staff time required in looking up both current ROW and future cross-section. Only roadways with currently insufficient ROW and shoulder width would get bonus points.

### **Review of Modal Distribution of Points**

Paul Black-at the last meeting, we had a discussion about assigning 72 points to all other modes. Aviation will be the only project under Regional tier—whatever Aviation project is going to be scheduled first would be the only project to get MPO Regional Tier project points. Staff suggestion to bump up the minimum number of points to 100 for Regional Tier to assign to Aviation. This will be at the expense of putting points on a highway project.

Paul Black-for future SPOT prioritizations, MPO and RPO associations will be arguing to keep the other modes which are heavily funded through federal funding be kept separately-this would include Aviation, Transit and TAP-funded bike ped projects.

Long discussion followed about allocating MPO points for SPOT prioritization and the flexibility to shift prioritization points to bike ped or other modal projects if they rise to the top in importance at the Division level. Matt Cable-recommendation to propose to TCC and MPO Board to not assign points to other modes beforehand, but to allow point assignment at the very end if some of the bike ped projects rise to the top. Paul Black-we get two buckets of points, one for Regional Tier and one for Division Tier. Consensus to allow the flexibility to assign points to other modes at the end, based on scoring and depending on which projects rise to the top.

### **Review of “Cascading Projects” Policy**

Paul Black-this might be the most controversial point today. Initial staff recommendation was not to allow projects to cascade, i.e not to allow projects which scored poorly at the statewide tier to get points in the regional tier. We have a lot of statewide projects in the pot, and only one or two of them might get funded. Once cascaded, those projects would wipe out everything else. 40% of the Statewide Trust Fund is allocated to statewide funding, vs. 30% for Regional tier. One I-26 Connector project is equivalent to six Sweeten Creek Road projects. If managing a portfolio of stock, the logical choice would be to diversify. Balfour Parkway might cascade down from Regional to Division.

Claudia Nix-do we have any control over this? Paul Black-we could make a policy statement that we would not put any points to projects which cascade down. Some projects are going to get such a high score they would move forward even without an MPO score. Marc Hunt-if the Connector was cascaded down to Regional, would ranking it preclude other projects from getting funded? Further discussion about cascading and what to recommend to TCC and MPO Board. One option would be to indicate is that the MPO Policy is to have MPO TCC and Board review any cascaded projects and then decide whether to allocate MPO points at the Regional Level.

### **I-26 Connector Update**

Marc Hunt-would like to speak briefly to the Connector Project. The I-26 Working Group has been meeting for about a year and a half. The City and County are expecting to have some sort of agreement in May 2014 regarding the alignment alternative-3B vs 4. However, the state would like to know where the community stands by the end of March. There is a new alternative called 3C which is the lowest cost of all. The challenge that the I-26 Connector Working Group faces is whether to endorse the lowest cost alternative vs the higher cost alternative. There is a strong interest on both of the elected boards to come to a common resolution, so that before the end of May there would be an identical resolution passed at both ends. Marc Hunt-NCDOT would like to see an MPO vote on March 27<sup>th</sup> on the alternative that is preferred. Paul Black-from the MPO perspective, having city and county consensus would be critical.

### **Transit, Aviation and Rail Prioritization Methodologies**

Lyuba Zuyeva provided a brief overview of NCDOT transit prioritization methodology. MPO staff recommendation for transit is to adopt NCDOT methodology and pro-rate it for the MPO score. Only one transit project has been submitted for SPOT in our region. Matt Cable-the likely expansion projects for transit in our region are small in terms of cost (buses). Fixed guideway projects is where the prioritization and assignment of points in completion with highway projects would make more sense.

Paul Black-will be looking at some fixed guideway corridors as part of LRTP update. Also facilities cost more but we don't currently have any scheduled for the 2016-2019 timeframe. MPO staff would like to take NCDOT SPOT score for transit projects and scale it to MPO score. No objections from the committee.

Paul Black-for aviation and rail, MPO staff would also like to keep the NCDOT scoring methodology and scale it in proportion to MPO points. Right now we have no rail projects. Paul Benson-question about the passenger service. Paul Black-no movement for now, we don't generate enough ridership. However, we might be able to explore seasonal weekend-only service. Asheville passenger rail would have to go to Salisbury. If we could work with Chattanooga or Knoxville to not be the end of the line it could be different, but for now this does not seem likely.

#### **Follow-up Discussion about Timelines**

Lyuba Zuyeva-discussed that the local input points would be needed prior to April Prioritization subcommittee meeting. Paul Black-NCDOT SPOT scores should be available after March 31<sup>st</sup> so early April would be the best time to assemble local TACs.

Meeting adjourned. Next meeting scheduled for March 27, 2014 at 10 AM.