

Item 1B:

March 5, 2015 Minutes

**Prioritization Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes
March 5, 2015**

ATTENDING

Marc Hunt, City of Asheville
Eddie Henderson, Town of Fletcher
Josh O'Conner, Buncombe County
Mariate Echevery, City of Asheville
Matt Cable, Henderson County
Claudia Nix, Blue Ridge Bike Club
Kristina Sohlberg, NCDOT Division 13
Brian Burch, NCDOT Division 14

Non-Voting

Tristan Winkler, FBRMPO
Vicki Eastland, LOSRPO

John Marshall, Hickory MPO
Kelly Larkins, Hickory MPO

Don Kostelec, Kostelec Planning

I. Welcome and Housekeeping

A. Agenda Approval

Motion to Approve: Josh O’Conner, Second: Don Kostelec. Agenda approved.

B. December 11 Minutes

Motion to Approve: Josh O’Conner, Second: Matt Cable. December 11th Minutes Approved.

C. January 15 Minutes

Motion to Approve: Josh O’Conner, Second: Eddie Henderson. January 15th Minutes Approved.

II. Business

A. Bent Creek Greenway Revised Scope

Tristan Winkler explained that the Bent Creek Greenway Feasibility Study had been re-submitted with a reduced scope. The project had been previously approved by the Prioritization Subcommittee as well as the TCC and MPO Board, but had been resubmitted due to a reduced the scope. Since approval by the MPO Board, the project had been funded by NCDOT in order to get the money moving more quickly. NCDOT, however, only funded a part of the project and the remainder has been re-submitteed. MPO staff recommends that because this is a reduction in scope, it should not have to compete with projects submitted in this round.

Matt Cable asks if this sets a precedent for projects that had been approved and set-aside to be revived without going through the proper process? Would Henderson County be able to bring back its Transit Center without it having to be re-scored?

Josh O’Conner replied that a precedent that would be set by having to re-score this project would be to discourage the leveraging of other funds- which was the cause of the revised scope. Matt Cable agreed, saying this would be easier to consider if we were viewing it as a return of funds and had been brought to the subcommittee’s attention at an earlier meeting.

Motion for Approval of the Revised Scope of the Bent Creek Greenway Feasibility Study: Matt Cable. Second: Eddie Henderson. Motion approved.

B. STP-DA and TAP Project Submissions and Scoring

Tristan Winkler explained that there was only one submission for TAP funding that was non-competitive: the City of Asheville’s Greenway Connectors project. There were more STP-DA submissions than allotted

funds for this call, so projects were submitted to the selected scoring methodology. Projects that made the cut included: Buncombe County's bus shelters on US 70, Buncombe County's Greenway on NC-251 (Riverside Drive), the City of Asheville's Transit Master Plan, and the Town of Fletcher's Roadway Improvements on US-25. This leaves more than \$600,000 remaining to program for STP-DA.

Tristan Winkler also noted that being able to use the adopted scoring methodology in a competitive call enables the subcommittee to begin to decide whether or not it's something that needs to be adjusted. Marc Hunt suggested we approve the projects and then get into critiquing the scoring methodology.

Matt Cable pointed out that Geographic Equity was not functioning the way it was supposed to. Tristan Winkler noted that he had heard similarly from Paul Black and that may need to be adjusted. One of the things noticed was that projects submitted by NCDOT Division 14 had their geographic equity points divided because- as written- the scoring called for geographic equity points to be given by applicant, rather than by location of the project. Don Kostelec noted that it's not fair to penalize a project in Waynesville because the same sponsor submitted a project in Henderson County. Matt Cable noted that past projects should be accounted for in Geographic Equity.

Mariate Echeverry asked if social equity should also be a part of the scoring methodology so that environmental justice considerations are inserted as well. Marc Hunt asked if population equity can be considered as well, noting that Asheville could be penalized similarly to much smaller towns, if both received projects.

Marc Hunt also requested that future calls for projects include something to make sure DOT-submitted projects are welcomed by the local governments. Matt Cable echoed that sentiment and pointed out that Henderson County was unaware of the projects that had been submitted by NCDOT Division 14, which might have caused contention, had they been approved.

Marc Hunt asked the group if there were problems anyone noticed with scoring with the adopted methodology, noting that even though there are problems with the methodology, it's what was approved and what every party had to work with when submitting. Josh O'Conner asked if Buncombe County's Greenway project included points submitted by Woodfin. Tristan Winkler pointed out that the scores- as they appear- do not include Woodfin's point submission, but the project does well enough to receive selection without Woodfin's point. Tristan Winkler explained that, as Josh O'Conner had discovered, as written the scoring methodology allows any local government in the MPO boundaries to submit "local points" on behalf of a project. Tristan Winkler suggested this may cause more political problems than are necessary if you are asking every single local government to pick a project they like. Josh O'Conner suggested that, if the scoring methodology is changed, projects should be able to have multiple sponsors submit local points if the secondary sponsors are directly affected by the project.

Marc Hunt requested that the group return to the item at-hand: what to do with the remaining \$600,000 of STP-DA funds. Tristan Winkler explained that NCDOT's programming branch generally awards the next affordable project remaining funds- in this case, that would be Flat Rock's Pedestrian Trails project. However, the next highest scoring project is the City of Asheville's Craven Street Bridge project, but costs far more than the MPO has remaining to program. Josh O'Conner suggested that the

City of Asheville be given the right of first rejection. Mariate Echeverry asked if the project could be altered to do something like PE, instead of construction. Matt Cable replied that if the application is altered, it should be resubmitted for scoring. Don Kostelec questioned whether having a call for only two-years is the best way of programming the funds and whether or not the MPO should be looking at a longer time-span. Matt Cable noted that it's very uncomfortable for the MPO to be partially funding something and having a sort of obligation to fund the rest in the next call for projects. Don Kostelec replied that it's also worrisome that a lot of local governments may not be suited for the work involved in dealing with federal funds. Brian Burch made note that there are not many local professional engineering firms with experience dealing with federal funds, but there are some. John Marshall informed the group that Hickory had local government training prior to the call for STP-DA projects and that the training was mandatory prior to any submittal.

Josh O'Conner made a motion to accept the projects selected by the scoring methodology, as submitted, with the caveat that Asheville has the right of first-approval for three months then Flat Rock will receive the obligation. Motion seconded by Matt Cable. Motion approved.

C. SPOT Schedule

Tristan Winkler pointed out that a preliminary SPOT schedule had been made available by NCDOT- project revisions need to be submitted by August, new candidate projects need to be submitted by September.

IV. Announcements, News, Special Updates

Claudia Nix informed the group that the Bent Creek Greenway Feasibility Study would be holding a public meeting in late-March.

V. Topics for Next Meeting

Marc Hunt assumes that revising the scoring methodology will be one of the items.

No public comment.

Meeting adjourned.