

Prioritization Subcommittee Meeting Minutes December 18, 2015 Land of Sky Regional Council Offices

Voting Members Present

Autumn Radcliff, Henderson County
Claudia Nix, Blue Ridge Bike Club
Ed Greene, NCDOT Division 14
Eddie Henderson, Town of Fletcher
Elizabeth Teague, Town of Waynesville
Josh O'Conner, Buncombe County

Julie Mayfield, City of Asheville
Kristina Solberg, NCDOT Division 13
Matt Champion, Henderson County
Mariate Echeverry, City of Asheville
Ricky Tipton, NCDOT Division 13

Non-Voting

Lyuba Zuyeva, FBRMPO
Tristan Winkler, FBRMPO

I. Welcome and Housekeeping

Agenda and Minutes Approval

Tristan Winkler asked for a motion and second to approve the agenda and minutes from November 19, 2015 minutes. Motion to approve: Elizabeth Teague, second: Eddie Henderson. All in favor, agenda and minutes from November 19, 2015 were approved.

II. Public Comment

No public comment at this time.

III. Business

III-A. Election of Officers

Tristan Winkler discussed that Marc Hunt was previously the Chair and Larry Freeman has been the Vice-Chair. Marc Hunt is no longer a member of the FBRMPO Board and Larry Freeman has been inactive. We need temporary officers for the next two months until March 1st, when the new Bylaws take effect and the new members will be appointed. Autumn Radcliff made a motion to appoint Josh O'Conner as the Chair, and Elizabeth Teague as the Vice-Chair. Eddie Henderson-second. All in favor, motion carried.

III-B Regional TDM Coordinator

Lyuba Zuyeva-Land of Sky Regional Council Regional TDM Coordinator has been hired and will be starting January 4th. The new TDM Coordinator will be working with the large employers in the region, and also working with Workforce Development Board staff to identify employer needs and target specific employee pools for carpooling and vanpooling options. Because NCDOT TDM Grant program is a one-year program, Land of Sky Regional Council has to reapply for the next year's funding this January of 2016. Last time the MPO Board approved a match from STP-DA funds for one year of TDM funding. For 2017, NCDOT has increased our region's allocation to \$45,000. MPO staff would like to request a set-aside from \$150,000 STP-DA flex funds set aside by the MPO Board per year to have \$50,000 per year designated for the TDM Coordinator Program match, for the next three years: 2017, 2018 and 2019. Because the state provides a match through the TDM Grant, there are no additional local dues required for this Regional TDM Program if using STP-DA Flex funds.

Julie Mayfield-motion to approve the TDM Program set-aside for 2017-2019, Claudia Nix-second. Elizabeth Teague asked for some discussion and clarification. If this is taking 1/3 of planning set-aside funds from the entire region, we

would need an assurance that this would be a region-wide program, that the TDM Coordinator would work with large employers outside of Asheville—including in Henderson and Haywood Counties. MPO staff confirmed that this program is regional in nature, and will be reaching out to large employers outside of Buncombe County as well as residents of surrounding counties commuting into Buncombe County.

Josh O’Conner-called for a vote. Prioritization subcommittee voted in favor of set aside from STP-DA flex funds for \$50,000/year during FY 2017-2019 to serve as a match for the state TDM Program grant.

III-C SPOT Prioritization Methodology

Tristan Winkler went over the changes made to the SPOT prioritization methodology based on the discussion that occurred last time. The local priority points were increased to 25, and congestion and safety scores out of the overall MPO methodology score were decreased slightly. Tristan Winkler indicated that with modifications to the SPOT methodology as discussed last time, the scores for MPO-submitted projects were calculated. Those score tables currently do not include projects submitted by NCDOT Divisions. Josh O’Conner-concern with geographic equity, projects outside of Asheville and Buncombe appear to not score as well. Tristan Winkler-some regional projects outside of Buncombe County could cascade and do well in the Division list.

In response to a question from Julie Mayfield, Tristan Winkler further explained that the current draft scores are just based on quantitative criteria. Currently Haywood and Henderson projects score towards the bottom of the list. To address this inequity, we could save 100 points for the top-scoring Henderson County project and 100 points for the top-scoring Haywood County project. There is also a question as to whether to do the same for Madison County. Mariate Echeverry-what criteria result in projects in other counties scoring lower? From MPO staff perspective, safety and congestion scores come in lower for projects outside of Buncombe County. Rick Tipton-less congestion means less accidents. Josh O’Conner—if we try to make sure everybody gets a project then more populous areas might get disadvantaged. What about looking at per-capita transportation spending. Tristan Winkler-this score does not include the 25 local priority points. If we could find a way to make the 25 points shift the score for the other jurisdictions, that could take care of the geographic equity issue. Julie Mayfield-bigger jurisdictions still get more local priority points. Tristan Winkler-we could make the local priority points more scarce to give them more effect.

Mariate Echeverry-what about instead of absolute numbers using proportionate numbers. For example, crashes in relationship to population. Tristan Winkler-as discussed in October, under the safety score, the state crash rate score already takes into account VMT and compares roadways to other roadways of similar size across the state. So the safety measure is already proportioned to population. With more congestion, the rate of crashes might grow exponentially instead of in a linear fashion. Rick Tipton suggested that the benefit of STI and SPOT prioritization is trying to rely more heavily on data rather than political decisions. Trying to figure out what is going to help the most people and save the most lives. Claudia Nix-our travel patterns are regional, and people from outlying areas also come into the center for various trips.

Tristan Winkler- the current scores table does not take into account Division-submitted projects and some of those might score really well. For example, Balfour Parkway in Henderson County has been broken up into four sections and those sections are likely to score fairly well. Kristina Solberg made a comment in support of a data-driven process.

Tristan Wikler—in Henderson County, NC 191 widening scores pretty high, and in Haywood County South Main street project scores fairly high. Further discussion continued about whether the MPO has to assign 100 points at a time or could the MPO points be divided more finely. Ultimately MPO Board still has digression to decide on assigning points regardless of the MPO methodology score. Rick Tipton indicated that Madison County is likely to receive Appalachian Developments funds for its top priority transportation project. Tristan Winkler-geographic equity is something to keep in

mind but it sounds like the group could move forward with the methodology as proposed. Julie Mayfield posed a question about the MPO assigning points to Division projects. Tristan Winkler responded that Division-submitted projects would be up for consideration, but not scored for this draft score for now. Rick Tipton-cascading could take place. Will have a chance to look at regional scores first before cascading.

Tristan Winkler pointed out a couple other differences made to the methodology since last time based on the discussion at last meeting. Bike ped crash hot spots score has been lowered to 5 points. For the freight volume vs. percentage discussion, MPO staff undertook a comparison analysis. Volumes appear to work slightly better than freight percentages. If using percentages, it boosts a few projects which ultimately carry less freight than some of the other corridors. For example, Long Shoals Road at 450 trucks per day would score better than New Leicester Hwy at 1500 trucks/per day. For this draft methodology, MPO staff have adjusted the upper category to 700+ trucks to include areas not previously showing up as having a high freight impact. Under environment category, MPO staff reduced non-widening CMP strategies benefit to 1 point and boosted points based on “inside existing public utility service area.” In response to a question from Julie Mayfield, Tristan Winkler noted that there are very few projects that are not in the service area or cross the boundary. Also the data that we are using outside of Buncombe and Henderson are generated by a Civil Engineering organization; these area includes planned expansion. Josh O’Conner-Buncombe data also buffers existing service area by ¼ mile. There is a built-in buffer.

Next Lyuba Zuyeva discussed two scenarios developed by MPO staff for local priority points (25% of the total MPO score). Scenario 1 is more closely linked to individual municipality population as a percentage of overall MPO population and might be more confusing- a lot of smaller municipalities would end up with less than 25 total priority points to allocate. Scenario #2 is a little simpler, with Buncombe County jurisdictions sharing 8 projects at the highest score (25 points) and 8 projects at the medium score (20 points), Henderson County jurisdictions sharing 4 highest and 4 medium-scoring projects, Haywood County jurisdictions assigning 2 projects at 25 points and 2 projects at 20 points, and Madison County would have one in each category. This scenario would envision county-level meetings where MPO TCC members representing all the municipalities and the county in the area would get together to discuss points trade-off. In Henderson County, Henderson TAC could make the decision. Some discussion followed about allowing a jurisdiction to assign points higher than 25 points per project—this increases potential overall project score to above 100. Additional discussion followed about county-level meetings. Josh O’Conner-concern that sometimes municipalities are not able to send their representatives to participate in a county-level meeting, and then later their questions and issues come up. Autumn Radcliff indicated that in Henderson County, scenario 2 would work well because of the structure of Henderson TAC. In other counties, scenario 2 might not work and maybe scenario 1 might work better. Henderson TAC pre-existed before the MPO region expanded to include Henderson County. Hybrid methodology was further discussed. For example, out of total Buncombe County allocation, the City of Asheville could receive a guarantee of at least 3 projects at highest points and 3 projects at 20 points if the county-level agreement does not work. Tristan Winkler pointed out that the MPO SPOT points assignment (1800 regional project points and 1800 Division project points) it will ultimately still be subject to TCC and MPO Board approval, so the local county-wide discussion might not result in the ultimate decision. Elizabeth Teague pointed out that at the Division level, not all jurisdictions are competing against each other because the region is split between two Divisions. Tristan Winkler-would like to have Division staff represented at the county-level discussions to talk about how to advance the best projects.

Julie Mayfield posed a question about SPOT prioritization timeline. Tristan Winkler indicated that the project scores will be available April 1st, and MPO staff would prefer to hold county-level discussions in the second half of April. Coordination with Divisions on Regional projects will need to happen at the same time. MPO will advertise for public comment on the resulting proposed MPO points assignment (starting on May 4th). This point assignment for regional projects will go to TCC for approval in May and to the MPO Board in May. This process starts again in August for Division needs projects. Tristan Winkler indicated that under the MPO PIP, public comment requires 14 days. Would probably

advertise from May 4th for 14 days. MPO TCC meets on May 19th, by which point the public input period would be over—May TCC meeting falls on the 3rd Thursday due to NCAMPO Conference schedule.

The subcommittee came back to a consensus for a hybrid methodology for local input points. All jurisdictions would have an option to allocate their input points based on population, or to come together as a county-wide committee to discuss. Local jurisdictions would be expected to either come to county-wide meeting or to send in info re: how they would like to allocate their share of points prior to the meeting. No follow-up changes would be allowed after the meeting if the jurisdiction missed that meeting.

Tristan Winkler next spoke to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Methodology. Current draft is very similar to last methodology, simplified as compared with SPOT 3.0. Bike Ped projects are only eligible for Division needs. However those projects compete with other bike ped projects across the entire state. Kristina Solberg emphasized that it is important to prioritize better-scoring projects so that they are well-position to compete with projects in other parts of the state. Lyuba Zuyeva-from MPO staff perspective, SPOT score plus local priority points would be easier than keeping track of a separate MPO methodology. Josh O'Conner-in support of SPOT score plus 25 points for local priority. Tristan Winkler noted that a bike ped project would only receive MPO points if there was a local commitment for the match and it was a local priority. Group in support of SPOT score plus 25 points local priority.

Tristan Winkler further discussed the SPOT transit methodology. MPO staff proposes to utilize NCDOT SPOT score plus 25 local priority points. Only one transit agency has submitted projects-they are transit vehicle expansion projects for three different years. Last time it was discussed to set aside 200 total MPO Division points for bike ped projects and 100 points for transit. Subcommittee members were in agreement with SPOT score plus 25 local priority points for transit methodology.

III-D Bylaws

Tristan Winkler-Prioritization subcommittee bylaws were approved at the MPO Board and become effective March 1, 2016. In February staff will go to TCC and MPO Board and ask for new nominations.

IV. Announcements and Other Updates

Lyuba Zuyeva noted that there will be a half-day training focused on STP-DA and TA project management process on January 22nd in the morning. Next prioritization subcommittee meeting scheduled for January 28th at 10 AM.

MPO staff will go ahead and send the draft methodology to NCDOT SPOT Office now, and bring back final draft to Prioritization on January 28th.

Meeting adjourned.

