

Prioritization Subcommittee Meeting Minutes February 25, 2016 Land of Sky Regional Council Offices

ATTENDING

Julie Mayfield, City of Asheville
Josh O'Conner, Buncombe County
Claudia Nix, Blue Ridge Bike Club
Reuben Moore, J.M. Teague Engineering
Mariate Echeverry, City of Asheville
Ed Greene, NCDOT Division 14
Kristina Solberg, NCDOT Division 13

Non-Voting

Tristan Winkler, FBRMPO
Brendan Merithew, NCDOT TPB
Vicki Eastland, LOSRPO
Lyuba Zuyeva, FBRMPO
Jamal Alavi, NCDOT TPB
Zack O'Keefe, NCDOT TPB

I. Public Comment

No public comment at this time.

II. Business

II-A STP-DA and TAP-DA Call for Projects General Information and Methodology

Tristan Winkler gave an overview of STP-DA and TAP-DA funding available for the spring 2016 call for projects. For STP-DA, 12.8 million should be available between FY 2017 and FY 2019; TAP-DA funding available should be at \$1.12 Million

Discussion occurred about funding available at an earlier timeframe vs. later timeframe. MPO receives approximately \$3.5 million per year in STP-DA and approximately \$325,000 per year in TAP-DA funding with the updated funding amounts under the FAST Act. Tristan discussed that the MPO staff would like to hold a call for projects from April 1st through June 1st. The application was attached to Prioritization Agenda—please let staff know if there is something that needs to be updated on the application form.

One of the questions remaining from last month's discussion was how to handle cost overruns for projects. MPO could set-aside a portion of funds for project cost overruns, or make each individual project sponsor set aside contingency. With Black Mountain Riverwalk Greenway Phase II the cost for PE has gone up significantly, and so funds had to be shifted out of ROW into PE. Other projects are likely to encounter similar problems. Mariate Echeverry noted that setting aside funds for cost overruns might make the project sponsor discount this possibility during the application. Suggestion to encourage project sponsors to build in contingency. Josh O'Conner—would be in support of individual project contingency, since especially during construction a project could change significantly. When Buncombe County puts in an application, we consult with an engineer to get a good cost estimate. The subcommittee was in support of individual project sponsors to set aside contingency; if the project sponsor has to utilize contingency costs they would have to come back to MPO Committees for approval. Also a recommendation was added that cost estimates be reviewed with a Professional Engineer or a similarly qualified professional. Reuben Moore brought up a concern that there could be

unforeseen circumstances where a project legitimately ends up costing more than expected. Discussion about typical NCDOT contingency percentage—about 15% seems reasonable. Contingency will be included as part of programmed project cost in the TIP. Josh O’Conner-18-20% might be better with the cost of oil and asphalt fairly low right now.

Josh suggested that making a timeline more clear during the application process would be helpful. Typically the program administration and contracts take almost a year so the project sponsor has to be ready for delays; additionally project sponsors have to be clear that this is a reimbursement process-no big check goes to a jurisdiction upfront.

Tristan indicated that STP-DA and TA Application materials will go to MPO TCC and Board in March. LAPP training will take place on March 18th. Josh—would recommend to make the LAPP mandatory for jurisdictions which have not had prior experience with LAPP project management. Mariate -in support of making this training mandatory. Tristan Winkler indicated that MPO staff will make the training mandatory. Further discussion followed about timelines. MPO staff plan for STP-DA and TA projects to be approved by the MPO Board in August, with TIP Amendments to be approved in September. A project sponsor can apply for PE and ROW first, and apply for CST funds later. However, if a project sponsor utilizes federal funds for PE and then the project never goes to construction, jurisdiction might be liable for paying back federal funds.

Tristan asked for a review of geographic equity criteria. Josh posed a question about geographic equity and priority points. If Buncombe County is submitting a project on behalf of another jurisdiction, would this count against Buncombe County’s other projects in the selection. Buncombe County might provide assistance to smaller municipalities with project management and assist with funding pass-through. Group in support of geographic equity taking into account the actual jurisdiction (i.e. municipality benefitting), not the pass-through project entity. Further discussion occurred re: what is the background for geographic equity. In the last round of scoring, only geographic equity for current projects was included. Now the thinking is that past calls for projects should also be considered. Mariate-suggestion to allocate bonus points based on jurisdiction population size rather than based on previous projects funded. The group decided to use 20,000 population cut-off (and only counting population in the MPO for counties)—project sponsors with population under 20,000 would get 10 bonus points. Similar for transit projects-Madison County transit would be the only transit agency potentially eligible for bonus points if they apply for STP-DA funds for transit capital. Discussion followed about whether the total score has to add up to 100 or whether 90 would be sufficient. Josh O’Conner-suggestion to not have to use 100 points for all scoring methodologies. Keep at 90 for now. Also the group agreed that no geographic equity consideration is needed for feasibility studies, we need to have more feasibility studies to get more projects ready for the STP-DA and TA pipeline.

Tristan Winkler next discussed how to address projects submitted by a Division. Staff recommendation is to provide a letter from the local government impacted by the project to concur with the project submission from the Division. Discussion followed about previous experience with Division 14 submitting projects in Henderson County. Josh O’Conner-recommendation to allow project override by

the Prioritization Subcommittee to allow Divisions to submit a project without a jurisdiction letter of support, in case there are multiple jurisdictions involved. The compromise decided upon was that if the project involves multiple jurisdictions and there is not unanimous support, Division staff would have to get approval from the majority of jurisdictions involved; if there are two jurisdiction involved and they are split 50/50, Prioritization Subcommittee can override. If only one jurisdiction is directly impacted and it is not in support, the project does not move forward. Division staff voiced some concerns with letters of support from local jurisdictions. The subcommittee was still in support of moving forward with a letter of support from the local jurisdiction directly impacted required for Division-submitted projects.

Tristan next brought up a question about priority points being applied from neighboring jurisdictions for a project that was not submitted by them. Potential to give extra priority points to projects that are addressed both in local and in regional or county-level plans. Josh -suggestion to add to the application additional co-sponsors. Use the wording “non-impacted local governments” instead of “non-applying” to indicate that jurisdictions which are not being impacted by the project should not be able to add priority points for it. Julie Mayfield-suggestion to allow impacted jurisdictions (which are not the direct applicant) to add priority points to this project. Total priority points per project not allowed to go above any jurisdiction’s total priority points (10/15 depending on STP-DA/or TA); if the applying jurisdiction puts less than 10/15 priority points than other impacted jurisdictions can add up to 5 points per project not to exceed total priority points allowed.

II-B. SPOT Public Involvement

Tristan Winkler summarized that last time, the subcommittee discussed potential approaches to provide more clear and understandable materials for public outreach regarding SPOT methodology and prioritization by the MPO. MPO staff would like to implement the following ideas:

- Provide online interactive map of SPOT projects
- Share links to SPOT datasheets provided by NCDOT
- Share preliminary MPO scores and points assignment (and DOT scores after April 1st when NCDOT scores available)

Tristan-also a suggestion was brought for easily-digestible marketing materials to explain SPOT-NCDOT already has created a two-pager for STI process that might be easiest and best to use. The goal is to make the process transparent, although not simple to understand. Julie Mayfield—the spreadsheets with columns of various score components are not helpful, suggestion to provide just the final score. And resort the order according to project ranking.

Josh O’Conner posed a question about press releases. Lyuba Zuyeva-MPO staff have had mixed results with sending out press releases in the past, and staff do not usually put out a press release for the SPOT process. Josh-suggestion to create a story format that newspapers can easily copy and paste, rather than informational-only press release.

Tristan-in addition to online materials and handouts, last time, some ideas for public meetings were circulated, including:

- Transportation Fair

- Open House
- Green Drinks Presentation

A Transportation Fair would require a lot of staff time and coordination and probably not feasible at this point. MPO staff would be happy to attend another public input meeting that a local jurisdiction is holding. A Green Drinks in May is not possible due to NCAMPO Conference schedule. Julie-Asheville Green Drinks has become a meet-up group with small attendance (in the former Build it Naturally building). Hendersonville Green Drinks is specifically a Mountain True event and would be a better audience. Tristan Winkler-for now, MPO staff will take the online-heavy path, and will look for additional public meeting opportunities.

Mariate-concern about reaching out to low-income and minority populations. For transit, the City of Asheville generally gets good input, but during the last round of public meetings for fare changes we had limited public input. Meetings were set up in different neighborhoods around the city. Tristan Winkler-in the past, MPO staff have used the Transit Station for tabling. Mariate-suggestion to reach out to LEP populations through the Catholic Services. Josh O'Conner-suggestion to not focus as much on traditional public input meetings. Tristan-in summary, will focus on online materials and staff are open to in-person public outreach opportunities. Brendan Merithew—NCDOT TPB staff can also be a resource with public outreach if already in town for RPO and MPO meetings.

III. Housekeeping

Minutes Approval

Josh O'Conner asked for a motion and second to approve the minutes from January 25. Motion to approve: Eddie Henderson; Claudia-second, minutes approved.

Announcements

Tristan Winkler made an announcement that LAPP training will be held on March 18.

Brendan Merithew announced that there has been a calibration adjustment to the Travel Demand Model. This calibration will be included in the new Traffic Forecast development. The calibration has resulted in small positive changes but only around 0.1% change in overall growth rate for interstate corridors. Lyuba Zuyeva noted that it would be helpful to include this information as part of I-26 Traffic Forecast update presentation when those data are available. Tristan Winkler expressed gratitude to Brendan for coordinating with MPO and presenting on the Travel Demand Model results and issues.

Meeting adjourned.