

Prioritization Subcommittee Meeting Minutes February 7, 2017 Land of Sky Regional Council Offices

Voting Members Present

Matt Champion, Henderson County
John Dockendorf, Village of Flat Rock
Julie Mayfield, City of Asheville
Josh O'Conner, Buncombe County
Elizabeth Teague, Town of Waynesville

Non-Voting Member and Staff Present

Kristina Solberg, NCDOT Division 13
Autumn Radcliff, Henderson County
Tristan Winkler, FBRMPO
Lyuba Zuyeva, FBRMPO

I. Welcome and Introductions

Josh O'Conner started the meeting with a round of introductions. Adoption of meeting minutes followed. Elizabeth Teague-motion, Matt Champion-second. All in favor, motion carried.

II. Public Comment

No public comment at this time.

III. Business

III-A STBG-DA Call for Projects and Updates

Tristan Winkler gave an overview of STBG-DA call for projects background. \$8.7 million is available for the current call for projects for FY 2018 and FY 2019, of which around \$5 million is available in FY 2018.

A word of caution to jurisdictions applying for PE, ROW or CST, there is a significant delay between when the projects are awarded funding , and when the final agreements with NCDOT are signed and the project can move forward. Projects funded for FY 2018 will be under a tight deadline to be let in FY2018. The call for projects will be open through March 31st, after which applications will come back to Prioritization for selection.

Also Tristan Winkler noted that there is a small change being made to a Town of Black Mountain greenway project, with approximately \$120,000 being added for additional PE cost. This was requested during the last STBG call for projects but



the change will now be reflected in the TIP, after the MPO Board approval on February 23rd. The subcommittee was in favor of proceeding with the call for projects and the changes to the Town of Black Mountain greenway project as discussed.

III-B SPOT 5.0

Tristan Winkler provided an update regarding SPOT Prioritization 5.0—the draft schedule is out and the initial project input meetings will be starting later in February-March. The SPOT Workgroup is still finalizing criteria changes, expected to be done by June. July-September is the timeframe for MPOs and RPOs to enter projects into SPOT.

Tristan Winkler indicated that there are 3 pools of projects for SPOT 5.0:

1. Committed (ROW or CST by 2022)—do not have to go through prioritization
2. Carry-over projects: siblings of committed projects, projects with NEPA documents active (finished in the last 10 years)—the MPO could request to remove one of those projects (with Division agreement); projects that had MPO local input points assigned during the last round are no longer an automatic carry-over. There are currently some mistakes in the SPOT database and I-26 Connector Section A and I-4400 sections B and C need to be shown as carry-over, MPO staff working with NCDOT to clarify this issue.
3. Holding tank—projects that are not committed or carry-over

The MPO has 25 new projects to submit for each mode (compared with 18 in SPOT 4.0), not accounting for committed and carry-over projects. Divisions have 14 new projects to submit for each mode. This round of SPOT will have the lowest amount of funding available, so the MPO will likely have few projects funded. Cost-effective projects, such as intersection improvements, might be a good fit for this round. Tristan Winkler noted that 25 projects is a lot for the FBRMPO.

MPO staff will be setting up local meetings to discuss new project submittals between now and May 2017; those project lists will go through Prioritization in May, will go out for public comment and come back to TCC and Board in August.

Elizabeth Teague noted that this should allow sufficient time for local staff to meet with their elected officials and discuss what kind of input to provide. Tristan Winkler—a giant spreadsheet of all the projects sent out. In response to a question from Julie Mayfield about the spreadsheet formatting, it was noted that green color in the database signifies regional impact tier, and black-unfunded projects.

Kristina Solberg noted that the LOSRPO has a local input meeting already scheduled in Madison County.

Tristan Winkler explained that the Prioritization Subcommittee will need to discuss changes to the methodology. For example, bike ped points were added for corridors that overlapped with a bike ped plan, but that presented a question. Additionally, public input could be taken into account before the projects are



scored—the public can be asked “which projects are most important to you?”. This would shift the timing of the larger public engagement element more upfront, rather than doing public input at the end as a simple review of what has already been selected. The second phase of public input will take place after the projects are selected. MPO second public input opportunity will be in April 2018 for a final score in May-June 2018.

Josh O’Conner-concern that the public input does not elevate a project that does not score well otherwise. Tristan Winkler responded that this earlier public input window would give the public an opportunity to rank projects that are already in consideration. There might be a difficulty in ranking projects proportionately, for each county.

Autumn Radcliff provided a suggestion to ask participants to rank top projects for each area. Tristan Winkler noted that the top projects could also be separated by county. Discussion followed regarding separating out responses by county of home location of respondent.

Tristan Winkler noted that the subcommittee will need to talk about local input points as well. During the last round, this local input did not account for fiscal constraint. If the local input points were tied to funding that is likely to be apportioned to our region, this might create more realistic expectations. Discussion followed about large projects and the example of Rutherford Bypass came up, which was funded because the I-26 Connector Section A did not get cascaded.

The group suggested that generally the SPOT 4.0 methodology was good, with the exception of bike ped points for highway projects. Elizabeth Teague—suggestion for the MPO staff to bring back a couple suggestions to tinker with the methodology. Josh Harrold and John Dockendorf-in agreement. Julie Mayfield—further comment regarding the local input points being so plentiful in the last round to make it almost meaningless. Tristan Winkler—local input points gives an out for local political considerations. Also some corridors like South Main Street in Waynesville, where the Town has done a lot of preliminary study and analysis, and those projects might not pop up high in other methodology criteria, but it could be highlighted through local input points. Kristina Solberg noted that from the Division perspective, Division 13 assigns points to the the best-scoring projects. Smaller intersection projects are likely to score really well.

Further discussion followed regarding the fact that the MPO Board has a prerogative to advance a project separately from how the methodology assigns a score to it. However, the NC Board of Transportation does not have any direct impact on selecting which projects get funded through the STI SPOT Prioritization. A question came up about changing the Division, MPO and RPO points allocation in SPOT—there has been a special Legislative committee on transportation funding, which came out with a report that recommended adjusting the MPO/RPO points to be



slightly higher than Division input points. In addition, a suggestion for “super-projects” has been put forward.

III-C MTP Amendments

Tristan Winkler reminded the Subcommittee members about the MTP Amendments steps completed earlier. The MPO staff in coordination with MPO Committees has put together an updated financial forecast for the MTP and scored existing projects in the CTP. The next step will be to select projects for MTP Amendments. MPO staff are suggesting that SPOT 5.0 be used for MTP Amendment project development as well—the top priority projects for SPOT 5.0 will be used as input for MTP Amendments. The target date would be to look at MTP Amendments adoption in August of 2017.

Elizabeth Teague expressed a concern about congestion at NC 191 and Long Shoals Road intersection. There are several large industrial parks there. Tristan Winkler noted that while originally this project was not funded at the regional level in SPOT 4.0, but after NCDOT has updated its financial forecast, the project-NC 191 widening from Long Shoals to north of the Blue Ridge Parkway, has been funded in the draft 2018-2027 STIP. There are other projects in that area are still in the works. Tristan Winkler added that this intersection was included in an Answer Man article and it led to the MPO staff receiving a number of calls and emails. Elizabeth Teague commended that if somebody has a breakdown on this corridor, there is nowhere for them to go, no shoulder.

A discussion followed about an endangered species, the bog turtle, which might impact this project. More detailed environmental studies will be done to determine the impact on endangered species as the project moves through PE and environmental review process.

III-D 5307 Formula Study

Tristan Winkler noted that this item has been brought up at the MPO TCC and Board in January, will be coming back in February, and MPO staff also wanted to bring it to Prioritization Subcommittee’s attention. 5307 are FTA urban transit funds. In our region, possible users include Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties, in addition to the City of Asheville. The current formula study is seeking to update the 5307 formula to include Buncombe and Haywood Counties, in addition to the City of Asheville and Henderson County. In-depth discussion followed about the study outcome and the differences between Alternatives 1 and 9.

Announcements

MPO staff made several announcements. New Board Member orientation is expected to be scheduled soon. In addition, staff are working on setting up several smaller workshops on bike ped topics—Waynesville meeting is likely to occur in April, date and location TBD.



Topics for next meeting

MPO staff will bring the CMP Network to the Subcommittee for review and discussion.

