

Isothermal Rural Planning Organization Prioritization 3.0 Project Solicitation, Local Point Assignment, and Ranking Process

Introduction: The North Carolina legislature and NC Department of Transportation require all rural and metropolitan planning organizations (RPOs and MPOs) to develop a local ranking process for projects across all modes of transportation (highway, bicycle/pedestrian, public transit, aviation, rail, and ferry). The following process will need to be approved by the NCDOT's Strategic Prioritization Office of Transportation (SPOT), be made available to the public for their comment and finally, adopted by Isothermal RPO's Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), to ensure compliance with the legislative mandate.

Applicability: This process applies to all projects ranked by Isothermal RPO in McDowell, Polk or Rutherford counties that are ranked as "Regional" or "Division" funding level projects. Funding levels are as defined in the 2013 Strategic Transportation Investments law.

SCHEDULE

Project Solicitation: Isothermal RPO has solicited candidate projects from local government entities and departments (counties, towns, transit departments, airports, etc.) since Fall 2013. The RPO Coordinator has also made herself available for direct receipt of proposed projects from all local government entities and departments.

The results of the project solicitation were reviewed by the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) at their December 4 meeting. The TAC then endorsed this project list for submittal to the NCDOT on December 17. Since the new project submissions did not exceed the allowed 11 new highway projects or the maximum of twenty (20) bicycle/pedestrian projects, the TAC stated that the RPO Director could accept additional projects for submission on a first come first served basis until January 17, 2014.

Local Point Assignment Methodologies: This process and the point assignment methodology described herein will be presented to the TAC for their approval at the February 26 meeting. Before that meeting, a sub-committee of IRPO will have developed a draft methodology. This draft methodology will be then be sent to the SPOT office for their comment. By January 21, the draft methodology will be made available for public comment. The comment period will be for a minimum of 30 days. The final, approved methodology will be sent to the SPOT office for their final approval no later than May 1, 2014.

Project Ranking: The TCC and TAC will evaluate the full list of new and previously-evaluated projects for the three counties from March to May 2014. Final approval, point assignment, and submission to the SPOT office will occur by July 31, 2014.

PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

Local Methodology: On January 21, 2014, the RPO will release the draft methodology for a 30-day public comment period. This 30-day period will be advertised on the RPO website and via local media, and the methodology will be available on the RPO website. The process will be conducted in accordance with the RPO's Public Involvement Plan, which was updated in December 2013. The results of the public comment period will be presented to the TCC and TAC at their February 2014 meeting, during which the public will also be permitted to submit comments. All public comment will be documented and reasonable edits to the methodology may be made prior to final approval by the TAC and submission to the Strategic Prioritization Office of Transportation.

Project Ranking: The RPO will present the recommended local points assignments and total scores of all projects to the TCC and TAC at their May 2014 meetings. Upon approval of the TAC, the RPO will release the recommended projects and points assignments for a 30-day public comment period. This 30-day period will be advertised on the RPO website and via local media, and all relevant documents will be available on the RPO website. The process will be conducted in accordance with the RPO's Public Involvement Plan. The results of the public comment period will be presented to the TCC and TAC at their July 2014 meeting, during which the public will also be permitted to submit comments. All public comment will be documented. In July 2014, the TAC will be asked to approve the project list and final points assignment after which the list and assignment will be available on the RPO website.

Statewide Projects: Entirely determined by quantitative score. For IRPO, the types of projects that are Statewide category are highway and rail. The Statewide routes in IRPO are US 221, north of US 74 in Rutherford County; US 74; I-26 and I-40. Any project that scores well enough will be removed from the process before IRPO assigns local input points. All other routes will be included in the Regional level process.

Regional Level Projects: US 70, US 64, US 176, US 221 south of US 74, US 221, US 221 Business, all NC routes, and multicounty passenger rail service are evaluated on the Regional Level. Existing congestion, crash frequency, and freight volume are for the highway being ranked, or for the highway that is or would be "bypassed" by the rail service being ranked. The other metrics above apply directly to the highway or rail service being ranked.

Division Level Projects: Projects involving SR routes, bicycle and pedestrian transportation, transit, and airports are evaluated at the Division Level.

RANKING PROCESS

Regional Level Projects

Criteria	0 points	5 points	10 points	15 points	20 points
Existing Congestion	Volume to capacity less than 0.25	Volume to capacity b/w 0.25 and 0.5	Volume to capacity b/w 0.5 and 0.75	Volume to capacity b/w 0.75 and 1.0	Volume to capacity over 1.0
	Ratio of how much traffic is on a road versus the maximum traffic that can be on a road and provide an acceptable level of service.				
Crash Frequency	0 crashes	3 or fewer crashes	4 to 19 crashes	20 to 39 crashes	40 or more crashes
	Number of automobile crashes over the most recently tabulated 3-year period.				
Transportation Plan Consistency	Project is not in STIP, nor in CTP or other locally adopted plan				Project is in STIP, or in CTP or other locally adopted plan
	Is the proposed project part of an existing, adopted transportation plan?				
Destination Served	No direct access to major destination		Direct access to ≥50 employee business, or ≥ 5,000 annual user recreation		Direct access to school, hospital, ≥100 employee business, or ≥ 10,000 annual user recreation
	Does the project connect directly to a critical educational, health care, employment, or recreation/entertainment destination?				
Freight Volume	Fewer than 100 trucks per day	100 to 499 trucks per day	500 or more trucks per day		
	Average daily number of large freight movers (tractor trailers, etc) on a road.				
Multimodal Accommodations	Project does not include bike/ped facilities or connections		Project includes bike/ped facilities or connections		
	Whether the project includes facilities such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, etc, or a connection to these type facilities.				

Division Level Projects

Criteria	0 points	10 points	15 points	30 points
Existing Deficiency	Existing facility/service available		Existing facility/service available, but contains gap with lower level of service / intermittent service	No existing facility/service available or will provide additional service or alternative capacity to an existing over capacity facility or service
	Does the project address an existing gap in the transportation system?			
Transportation Plan Consistency	Project is not in STIP, nor in CTP, LCP, or other locally adopted plan			Project is in STIP, or in CTP, LCP, or other locally adopted plan
	Is the proposed project part of an existing, adopted transportation plan?			
Destination Served	No direct access to major destination		Direct access to ≥50 employee business, or ≥ 5,000 annual user recreation	Direct access to school, hospital, ≥100 employee business, or ≥ 10,000 annual user recreation
	Does the project facilitate direct connection to a critical educational, health care, employment, or recreation/entertainment destination?			
Multimodal Accommodations	Project does not incorporate or connect to facilities of another mode	Project incorporates or connects to facilities of another mode		
	Whether the project incorporates other modes of transportation (e.g., sidewalk along a road, bike lane extending to a transit facility, etc).			

Ranked List Development:

IRPO staff will use the following process to create a pool of 25 projects, or a Regional Pool List, for the Regional level. Staff will add the SPOT quantitative score and the score from ranking process above. The 25 projects with the highest score will be added to the Regional Pool list. Next, IRPO will create the draft Regional Ranked Priority list. The top three projects in each county from the Regional Pool list will be initially assigned 100 points. Three more projects will come from the next highest ranked projects. Those projects will also be assigned 100 points each for a total of 1200 points.

The last 100 points will be available for donation to another RPO/MPO for projects that IRPO is interested in supporting. If not assigned at the initial local input points meeting, they will used for the next highest ranking project for a total of 1300 points.

Only projects that originate at the Statewide or Regional Level are eligible for scoring and local points allocation under this methodology.

The same process will be used for the Division level with the exception that one of the twelve ranked projects on the draft Division Ranked Priority list must be non-highway mode, unless no non-highway mode projects made the Division Pool List.

*Only projects that originate at the Regional or Division Level are eligible for scoring and local points allocation under this methodology; **Statewide Level projects that are not programmed at the higher levels will not be scored at the Division Level or receive Division Level local points under this methodology.***^[M1]

Use of Public Input and Comments in Final Methodologies and Rankings: Between May and July 2014, the TCC and TAC will review all public comment received. Public comments will be documented, filed by the RPO, and distributed to appropriate local entities to inform future Prioritization processes and transportation plans. No new projects will be added to the current Prioritization 3.0 list, however, as the NCDOT deadline for submitting new projects will have passed.

Final Ranking and Local Points Assignment: At the July 2014 meeting, the TAC and TCC will consider the public comments. They will be able to make changes to the draft Regional Ranked Priority lists at the Regional and Division level. They can decide to delete up to 2 projects in each list and replace them with projects from the Draft Pool List.

Isothermal RPO receives 1,300 points at the Regional Level and 1,300 points at the Division Level to allocate to projects for local prioritization. The maximum number of points any project can receive is 100.