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ECRPO Prioritization 3.0 Methodology

Introduction

Session Law 2012-84 requires Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Rural Planning Organizations (MPOs and RPOs) to develop a ranking process for highway, bicycle/pedestrian, public transit, aviation, rail and ferry projects. The ranking process must be data driven and include a combination of quantitative data, qualitative data and local input. The following process applies to all projects ranked as “regional impact” and “division needs” funding in the Eastern Carolina RPO (ECRPO) consisting of Duplin, Greene, Lenoir and Wayne counties. Funding levels are as defined in the 2013 Strategic Transportation Investment Law. Following is a timeline for the ECRPO’s project solicitation, local input point assignment and prioritization process.

Schedule Overview

November 2013-January 2014	Project solicitation. Formation of SPOT Subcommittee.
January-February 2014	Projects entered into SPOT Online.
March-April 2014	SPOT Subcommittee final approval of local input point assignment and prioritization methodology. Methodology submission to the SPOT office by April 30, 2014.
May-June 2014	Local input point assignment and prioritization by SPOT subcommittee.
July-August 2014	30-day public comment period on initial SPOT prioritization.
August 2014	Final TAC approval of project prioritization given public comment.
August 2014	Final project submission to SPOT office by July 31, 2014.
August 2014	Final scores posted on website.

Schedule Details

In **November 2013-January 2014**, ECRPO staff reviews the SPOT schedule at regular Technical Coordination Committee (TCC) and Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings and requests any new SPOT projects be submitted to ECRPO staff for inclusion in the SPOT Online system for preliminary SPOT scoring. These TCC and TAC meetings are open to the public. The ECRPO forms a SPOT subcommittee with 1-2 representatives from each county. The subcommittee reviews all potential SPOT projects, staff recommendations and division comments.

In **January-February 2014**, ECRPO staff enters new projects to NCDOT through the SPOT Online system. The SPOT subcommittee reviews all potential SPOT projects and preliminary SPOT scores. ECRPO staff reviews past prioritizations and each project with respect to cost, schedule, permitting,

project competition within the Division, and capacity/deficiency analysis from transportation plan. Staff prepares comments and preliminary recommendations for each project and any potential regional prioritization projects outside the ECRPO region.

In **March-April 2014**, ECRPO staff and the SPOT subcommittee develop the RPO's local input point assignment and prioritization methodology. ECRPO staff will send the draft methodology to the SPOT office for comments. ECRPO staff will submit the SPOT subcommittee approved methodology to the NCDOT SPOT office for their final approval no later than **April 30, 2014**. ECRPO staff will meet with each Division Engineer to discuss Division priorities and the status of each project. Projects are reviewed for issues involving schedules, permits, and cost to determine which projects are not feasible for prioritization at this time. Projects outside the ECRPO region are also discussed for potential regional prioritization and point-sharing. ECRPO staff and Division Engineers review the preliminary SPOT scores for each project.

In **May 2014**, the SPOT subcommittee assigns preliminary local input points to each project from the 1,300 that are available to the RPO. The local input point assignment and prioritization process will include both quantitative and qualitative criteria as required by the Strategic Transportation Investments legislation and will be discussed in detail later.

Once the SPOT subcommittee has developed an initial project prioritization, the ECRPO TCC and TAC review the subcommittee recommendations, SPOT scores and approve the initial project prioritization for public comment.

In **late June/July 2014**, following approval from the ECRPO TCC and TAC, ECRPO staff posts the initial project prioritization methodology and scores on the ECRPO website at <http://www.ecrpo.org/> and notifies member governments of the 30-day public comment period via email and will provide the prioritization for posting on websites and publishing in local newspapers.

In **August 2014**, the ECRPO TCC and TAC review all public comments, revise the prioritization if needed and approve the final project prioritization. ECRPO staff submits the final project prioritization to the NCDOT SPOT office by **August 30, 2014**. All final project rankings, points assigned per project and any rationale/justification for point adjustments which deviate from this methodology will be available on the RPO website by **August 2014**.

In the **fall of 2014**, NCDOT will release the Draft STIP

Public Input Process

Project Prioritization

ECPRO staff will present the recommended local input point assignments and scores of all projects at the TCC and TAC meetings scheduled for July/August. These scheduled TCC and TAC meetings will be advertized on the on the ECRPO website at <http://www.ecrpo.org/> and will be open to the public. ECRPO staff will also post the initial local point assignment, prioritization and scores of all projects on the ECRPO website at <http://www.ecrpo.org/> and notify member governments of the 30-day public comment period via email and will provide the prioritization for posting on websites and publishing in local newspapers. Comments may be submitted via email, phone call or hand written. Once the 30-day public comment period closes, the ECRPO TCC and TAC will review all public comments, revise the prioritization if needed and approve the final project prioritization.

Local Input Point Assignment and Prioritization Process

Quantitative Criteria

The quantitative criteria used in ranking will be the total score generated by the Strategic Prioritization Office, inclusive of all data used to in the methodology except the inclusion of local input points. The quantitative score will account for 50% of the weight of the local input point assignment.

Qualitative Criteria

The qualitative criteria and the associated point scale for each to be used to evaluate projects will include the following:

- Public input: If a project receives support from the public input process.
 - If the project does not receive any comment or receives mixed positive and negative comment = 0 points
 - If the project receives supportive public input = 10 points
- Prioritization ranking and/or assignment of points in previous rounds of the SPOT process.
 - If the project has not been ranked previously = 0 points
 - If the project has been ranked previously = 10 points
- Access to employment centers: Provides direct access to an active industrial/business park or proposed new employment center.
 - If the project will not serve an employment center = 0 points
 - If the project will serve an employment center with less than 150 employees = 5 points
 - If the project will serve an employment center with 150 or more employees = 10 points
- Capacity deficiencies based on only the congestion data score from the quantitative element of score generated by the Strategic Prioritization Office (highway projects only).
 - Congestion score of 0 to 20 = 0 points
 - Congestion score of 20.1 to 40 = 5 points
 - Congestion score of 40.1 or greater = 10 points
- Modernization of existing infrastructure: a project whose purpose is to bring the infrastructure up to current NCDOT standards.
 - If a project does not address current NCDOT standards = 0 points
 - If a project will bring an existing facility up for NCDOT standards = 10 points
- Safety concerns based on only the safety data score from the quantitative element of score generated by the Strategic Prioritization Office. Projects will qualify for this criterion based on the scale below (highway projects only).
 - Safety score of 0 to 20 = 0 points
 - Safety score of 20.1 to 40 = 5 points
 - Safety score of 40.1 or greater = 10 points
- Creating connectivity within the existing network: A project will provide redundancy for the purposes of hurricane evacuation or accessibility to population centers.
 - The project does not include a hurricane evacuation route = 0 points
 - The project includes a hurricane evacuation route = 10 points
- If the project is identified in a Comprehensive Transportation Plan or other locally adopted plan.
 - If a project is not identified in a plan = 0 points
 - If a project is identified in an adopted plan = 10 points

- Connectivity to military installations or to the STRAHNET: A project would directly connect or be adjacent to a military installation or be a part of the designated STRAHNET.
 - If a project does not directly connect or is not adjacent to a military installation or is not a part of the designated STRAHNET = 0 points
 - If a project would directly connect or be adjacent to a military installation or be a part of the designated STRAHNET = 10 points
- If a single project will serve multiple transportation modes: Project incorporates or connects to facilities of another mode.
 - If a project only serves one mode = 0 points
 - If a project will serve two modes of transportation = 5 points
 - If a project will serve three or more modes of transportation = 10 points
- Access and connections to agriculture: A project that would support agriculture and agricultural businesses will receive additional points.
 - If a project does not serve an agricultural business: 0 points
 - If a project will serve an agricultural business: 10 points

The qualitative score will account for 50% of the weight of the local input point assignment.

Sample Ranking Procedure

Quantitative Score

Highway Project A has a regional score total from the SPOT office of 23.80. This represents the quantitative 50% of the local input point assignment.

Qualitative Score

The project is scored as follows for qualitative criteria:

1. Public input: The project receives supportive public input = 10 points
2. Prioritization ranking: The project has been ranked previously = 10 points
3. Access to employment centers: The project will serve an employment center with less than 150 employees = 5 points
4. Capacity deficiencies: Congestion score of 15.2 = 0 points
5. Modernization of existing infrastructure: The project will bring an existing facility up for NCDOT standards = 10 points
6. Safety: Safety score of 66.5 = 10 points
7. Creating connectivity: The project does not include a hurricane evacuation route = 0 points
8. Comprehensive Transportation Plan: The project is identified in an adopted plan = 10 points
9. Connectivity to military installations or to the STRAHNET: The project does not connect to the STRAHNET = 0 points
10. Multiple transportation modes: The project will serve two modes of transportation = 5 points
11. Agriculture: The project will not serve an agricultural business = 0 points

And therefore would receive 60 qualitative points. This represents the qualitative 50% of the local input point assignment.

This project would receive a regional local input point assignment of:
 $(23.80 \times 50\%) + (60 \times 50\%) = 41.9$.

At this time projects are eligible for between -10 and 10 Discretionary points for projects of regional significance or other special consideration, provided that the TAC documents the rationale and that such

documentation is available for public inspection. The purpose of these points are to provide local oversight to the data-driven process, to compensate for any peculiar scores where the prioritization methodology fails to operate as expected, and to ensure appropriate projects at the relevant tier. In particular, the Discretionary points are foreseen as a way to eliminate or downgrade extremely expensive projects at the Division Needs tier where a selected project would overburden Division Needs funds. Since Discretionary points must be agreed upon by the majority of TCC and TAC members, it is envisioned as “safety net” to correct problems on which there is high concurrence, rather than a way to simply modify the adopted methodology.

All projects across all modes are then sorted in descending order from highest score to lowest score for evaluation. The projects are then assigned Local Input Points in descending order starting with the highest scoring project getting the maximum 100 points and the second highest scoring project getting 99 points etc. until the ECRPO allotment of 1300 Regional Impact Local Input Points and 1300 Division Needs Local Input Points are exhausted.