

**North Carolina**  
**Rural Planning Organizations**  
**Prospectus 2012**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Prospectus is a reference document for transportation planning activities carried out by the state's Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs). The purpose of the Prospectus is to describe the RPO planning tasks involved in the transportation planning, prioritization/TIP, and project development processes. As described in the Prospectus, and further detailed in other RPO guidance documents, the RPO shall provide work products that enhance these processes. The RPO supports North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) planning process in the non-Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) areas and may not be responsible for all activities in this Prospectus.

Work carried out by the RPOs may be divided into three categories: Data Collection and Assessment; Transportation Planning; and Administration of Transportation Planning and Policies. Together, these categories provide the framework and contents of the RPO's annual Planning Work Program (PWP). The PWP identifies the planning work tasks and products that are to be accomplished in the upcoming fiscal year and further serves as a document by which funding through the North Carolina Department of Transportation can be documented and justified.

North Carolina's transportation planning process is a cooperative effort between NCDOT and the RPOs to ensure that the long-range transportation needs of the state's rural areas are addressed and the local interests are integrated into the transportation planning process. The RPOs assist NCDOT and local governments in the transportation planning process through four core duties as defined by North Carolina General Statutes:

### G.S 136-212

- Developing, in cooperation with the Department, long-range local and regional multimodal transportation plans.
- Providing a forum for public participation in the transportation planning process.
- Developing and prioritizing suggestions for transportation projects the organization believes should be included in the State's Transportation Improvement Program.
- Providing transportation-related information to local governments and other interested organizations and persons. (2000-123, s. 2.)

Together, NCDOT and the RPOs are working to improve safety and mobility of the transportation system. This is carried out through transportation planning activities and the development of Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTP). The CTP process is accomplished through five high-level steps: Develop CTP Vision, Needs Assessment, Analysis of Alternatives, Development of Final Plan, and Adoption of Plan. NCDOT, the RPOs, and local governments work collaboratively through each of the five steps.

The RPOs assist NCDOT staff in various capacities. As NCDOT identifies infrastructure deficiencies and transportation projects are proposed to address these needs within a study area; the RPOs' local expertise and strong relationships with the local government agencies benefit the transportation planning process.

Information collected and developed by the RPO is transferred to NCDOT, or other requesting entities, in the form of **work products** that are designed to expedite and supplement planning/engineering studies, analyses, or grant applications. Work products are defined in the annual work program and should be developed to benefit NCDOT, RPO member agencies, and/or the citizens residing within the

RPO's jurisdiction and should directly contribute to the development of viable transportation projects, services, and/or recommendations.

Additionally, work products developed for NCDOT shall use the templates indicated in the work product descriptions of this Prospectus. The details and data specified in these descriptions for inclusion should be considered minimum criteria. Those work products developed for non-NCDOT recipients should be submitted in accordance to the standards and formats specified by the recipient. *However, all work products are subject to review on the basis of quality and recipient satisfaction.* Templates, guidelines, and examples pertinent to work product development are provided at the following RPO Guidance Webpage:

[\\*http://www.ncdot.org/COMINGSOON](http://www.ncdot.org/COMINGSOON)

To assist NCDOT and the RPOs in tracking the effectiveness and efficiency of the RPO, all work products shall be assigned a PWP work product number that shall be used for the life of the work product and referenced in the Budget Report (PWP, Quarterly Invoice Spreadsheet Tables, and Amendment Table) with the task and line item charged. Guidelines for creating PWP work product numbers are provided at the RPO Guidance Webpage referenced above. All work products should be delivered to appropriate NCDOT staff. A bulleted summary of the work product should be included in the Quarterly Invoice Spreadsheet Tables associated with the line-item charges.

The RPO may assist NCDOT in the identification and notification of local transportation needs and conditions. The RPO may assist in these endeavors through data collection and the delivery of planning tasks that identify transportation facility needs and aid in the development of recommendations for transportation improvements.

## DATA COLLECTION AND ASSESSMENT

Data collection and assessment refers to the collection and processing of information directly related to transportation planning, its impacts, and/or transportation funding. Surveillance and inventory of transportation data may be submitted as work products to NCDOT or used to support other transportation planning work tasks.

### I-1. DATA COLLECTION AND ASSESSMENT

Data collection usually takes place in the initial stages of plan development and may include the warehousing and assessment of data for review and dissemination. RPOs assist NCDOT and other local agencies in the collection, maintenance, and dissemination of transportation and socioeconomic data. The data provided by RPOs is used to support NCDOT staff in the development of CTP studies and planning forecasts as well as local agencies and stakeholders in the development of other transportation related tasks. Work tasks for this section are further detailed below.

#### I-1.1 CTP Inventory and Assessment

A current library of CTPs and land use plans is required to effectively assist local governments, businesses, and residents in planning for growth and development. The RPO should assemble and maintain an inventory of all current local land use plans, thoroughfare plans, public transportation plans, bicycle and pedestrian plans, and/or CTPs within the jurisdiction of the RPO. *The inventory is an **annual expectation** within the PWP and should be current by the end of each planning cycle.* Plans should be available upon request and a spreadsheet inventory should be delivered to the TPB area coordinator with the fourth quarter invoice unless no changes have occurred within the PWP year. Additionally, NCDOT relies upon both, its field staff and the RPOs to monitor and relay information about changes in growth and development that impact either current or future transportation facilities.

On an annual basis, each RPO may review its local and regional transportation planning needs and present a prioritized list of study needs to the designated NCDOT staff. This task requires RPO member consensus verified by the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) and the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) approval.

**Provided:** Template Spreadsheet, Guidelines

**Work products:** An in-house library of local plans; a spreadsheet inventory detailing the plan collection; a summary of transportation related visions, goals and objectives for the region or focus area, and/or, if applicable, a summary of changes in growth and development that may impact current or future transportation facilities, other.

#### I-1.2 Bicycle and Pedestrian Inventory and Assessment

This PWP task is designed to provide supportive information and data for the development of bicycle and pedestrian plans, educational programs, economic development endeavors, and/or funding alternatives. The RPO may conduct bicycle or pedestrian counts to determine baseline levels of current use, identify user demand, as well as establish travel times and patterns. This PWP task should also include the recording of key user interests and destinations such as universities, schools, parks, local service centers, and existing corridors frequently used by bicyclists and pedestrians.

**Work products:** Counts, database, and/or ArcGIS mapping detailing locations, other.

### **I-1.3 Parking Inventories**

Parking inventories, for both on-street and off-street parking, provide useful insight for local facility needs assessments and aids in the identification of locations where on-street parking or central parking capacities can be increased by implementing simple geometric improvements or facility re-classification. The RPOs may assist NCDOT and other local agencies in the development and improvement of parking inventories. Relevant data includes inventory of existing parking, projected needs, parking policies and ordinances, ownership, and rate.

**Provided:** Guidelines, Template Spreadsheet

**Work products:** Spreadsheet, ArcGIS mapping or database, Facility Needs Assessment detailing current parking deficiencies and projected needs, agency coordination, data collection, other.

### **I-1.4 Vehicle Occupancy Rates (VOR) Counts and Assessment**

Average Vehicle Occupancy rates and analyses are one measure of performance that is associated with the efficiency and effectiveness of a transportation system. This information may be used by NCDOT in the development of travel demand models and calculating motor vehicle emissions for Air Quality Analysis. Average VOR and analyses are applicable across many modes of transportation (passenger cars, rail, buses and coaches, and air) and are defined as the average number of occupants per vehicle.

Methods for data collection may include, but are not limited to, the traditional roadside/windshield method, photographic surveillance, local surveys including service provider ridership data, or accident data extraction. The RPO may elect to conduct vehicle occupancy counts or surveys across a specified service area to measure effectiveness of multimodal projects or public transportation services. This task may be used to quantify utilization of transit routes, HOV lanes, as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

**Work products:** Written VOR report with accompanying counts, surveys, locations, Arc GIS maps and/or database, other.

### **I-1.5 Traffic Volume Counts and Assessment**

TPB is responsible for obtaining counts at specified locations on the state's major street and highway system, for updating the count location map biennially to reflect changes to the state's major street system, for preparing the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) map, and for the dissemination of this information. The RPO may analyze traffic volume counts for isolated locations or corridors for NCDOT, local governing agencies, or local stakeholders. Work products submitted to NCDOT may include ArcGIS map or database formats. Special counts, analyses, and maps in support of regional transportation planning initiatives may also be submitted to NCDOT as work products.

**Work products:** Counts in ArcGIS map format, database, spreadsheet, documentation, and dissemination of information upon request to local stakeholders, other.

### **I-1.6 Crash Data and Assessment**

NCDOT's Transportation Mobility and Safety Division (TMS) develops safety related products for the state's transportation system. The RPO may request existing or special products from TMS to inform members of their RPO or to assist in the identification of sites where the crash rate exceeds the statewide average possibly indicating the need for investigation and/or

mitigating action by the Division offices. The RPO may also use NCDOT's Traffic Engineering Accident Analysis System (TEAAS) system to run individual crash reports.

RPO work products may include the preparation of an annual report identifying high-frequency crash sites within the jurisdictional boundaries of the RPO. The report may also compare these locations with those identified in the previous calendar year. The deliverable may be submitted to the TPB area coordinator per request.

**Reference:** [www.ncdot.gov/doh/preconstruct/traffic/safety/](http://www.ncdot.gov/doh/preconstruct/traffic/safety/)

**Provided:** Template, Guidelines

**Work products:** The assemblage, documentation, and dissemination of information upon request to local stakeholders; TEAAS training; report with accompanying ArcGIS map and/or database, other.

### **I-1.7 Public Transportation Service Data and Assessment**

An RPO may assist NCDOT's Public Transit Division and transit providers in conducting field investigations and surveys to support service providers in evaluating the effectiveness of their services. Pertinent data should detail connectivity to primary destinations, general public accessibility, perceived infrastructure deficiencies, pedestrian barriers or hazards, location of facilities servicing elderly and disabled, and service access points. Data may also include, but is not limited to, the following: current service providers and routes, relevant demographic information, neighborhoods where transit operation could target demographic needs, route changes, service miles, load factors, route ridership changes, boarding and alighting counts, headways, frequency, and service hours.

The RPO may assist local agencies, service providers, and NCDOT by providing an assessment of transit and rail services and facilities that includes the visions and goals of local stakeholders. The RPO may develop a survey to poll stakeholders and/or residents on the opportunity for new or expanded services. In addition to data collection, the RPO may also assess future needs and/or develop local transit coordinated plans. The assessment should consider the current availability of services to primary local destinations, activity centers, and trip generators.

Assumptions and impacts related to land use, travel behavior, parking centers, and local policies should be clearly defined. Additionally, assessments may include proposed recommendations focused on improvements or alternatives that bridge periods of transitional growth. Facilities located outside of regional boundaries may be considered where connectivity is reasonable. The RPO must provide written documentation of the agency request.

**Work products:** Requests should meet recipient's specifications; submittals to NCDOT should be provided in the following formats: spreadsheet, ArcGIS map, and/or database with written summary, report, other.

### **I-1.8 Transportation Modes Data Collection and Assessment**

The RPO may develop an inventory of all current regional and local multimodal facilities where multimodal refers to the use, provision, connectivity with, or consideration of more than one mode of transportation including highway, railroad, bicycle, pedestrian, ferry, and/or public transit services. The term "facilities" includes, but is not limited to, multimodal centers such as airports, transit hubs, and ferry terminals.

Work products may include an inventory of all current regional and local multimodal service providers and agencies along with their contact information, services, and active routes within the jurisdictional boundaries of the RPO should be included. The assessment may be presented in the form of a written summary with accompanying ArcGIS map or ArcGIS database. For mapping purposes, locations of multimodal carriers and primary routes should be shown.

**Work products:** Written summary or report, ArcGIS map and/or database, other.

### **I-1.9 Freight Data Collection and Assessment**

The RPO may develop an inventory of all current regional and local freight carriers, distribution centers, and agencies to provide NCDOT with general, functional recommendations for transportation system improvements that support local and regional freight mobility. An inventory of all current regional and local freight carriers, distribution centers, and agencies along with their contact information, services, and active routes within the jurisdictional boundaries of the RPO should be included. The assessment may be presented in the form of a written summary with accompanying ArcGIS map or ArcGIS database. For mapping purposes, locations of freight carriers, distribution centers, and primary routes should be shown.

**Work products:** Written summary or report, ArcGIS map and/or database, other.

### **I-1.10 Socioeconomic Data Inventory**

Transportation planning uses a variety of socioeconomic data such as population, employment, land use, housing, and travel behavior to build a localized profile of current conditions and future infrastructure needs. To assist NCDOT and local agencies, the RPO should collect and maintain socioeconomic data as a regional repository for use in CTPs and other transportation planning tasks. Additional tasks may also include verifying data accuracy and projecting socioeconomic data into future years.

**Work products:** Annual collection and maintenance of current socioeconomic data, compilation and review of data for transportation planning tasks, database, ArcGIS mapping, meetings, other.

### **I-1.11 Environmental and Land Use Data Inventory and Assessment**

The RPO may provide the NCDOT project engineers and local governments with data collection and/or ArcGIS mapping of locally significant built and environmental features including, but not limited to, the following: local landmarks or areas of avoidance; centerlines, parcels, land use, zoning, schools, libraries, universities, environmentally sensitive areas, and significant agricultural and/or research sites.

**Work products:** Annual collection and maintenance of current environmental data, compilation and review of data for transportation planning tasks; database; ArcGIS mapping, other.

### **I-1.12 Demographic Data Collection and Assessment**

An RPO may assist NCDOT in locating and identifying concentrations of minority and low-income populations by developing an ArcGIS map and/or database that illustrates the relationship between protected groups defined under Title VI provisions and their proximity to local and regional transportation projects during CTP or NEPA studies. Additionally, since

transportation planning activities mandate public involvement on the non-MPO level, RPOs must incorporate initiatives and strategies to engage these protected populations in statewide transportation planning processes.

**Work products:** ArcGIS map, database, summary, and/or reports, other.

## II. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Transportation Planning tasks support and assist NCDOT, local governing agencies, and stakeholders in the transportation planning process. These may include mapping, system assessment, and the dissemination of information.

### II-1. COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (CTP) DEVELOPMENT

NCDOT develops CTPs in partnership with the RPOs, municipalities, and counties to serve present and anticipated travel demand within the study area. The work products delivered under this PWP category should relate specifically to the development or revision of CTP studies and be supported by data collected and analyzed in Section I.

Work products shall be submitted in accordance with the templates, guidelines, and standards provided by NCDOT to ensure the most efficient and productive transfer of information during the CTP planning process. The RPO may assist in the development of the work product. The following work elements may be required as part of the CTP or be delivered to NCDOT as separate work products in accordance with the RPO's PWP. Work tasks for this section are further detailed below.

#### II-1.1 Develop CTP Vision

At the onset of the study, local stakeholders, NCDOT staff, county and/or municipal representatives, and the RPO come together to initiate the CTP study. Preliminary preparations include establishment of public involvement strategies; formation of committees suitable to address local transportation concerns; establishment of RPO roles, and setting of tentative schedules, milestones, goals, and objectives for the progression of the CTP study.

##### II-1.1.a CTP Study Setup

CTP study setup refers to the initial coordination efforts expended in the identification of CTP partners and stakeholders as well as the administrative responsibilities associated with the start-up of the CTP process. Following issuance of the Start of Study Letter, NCDOT, and RPO representatives should define the roles and responsibilities assigned to each agency.

- RPO may assist NCDOT in developing a CTP Participation Agreement to define delivery expectations, quality of work product, procedures required in development of work product, and responsibilities included in local coordination.
- RPO may assist in the formation of a CTP steering committee including the identification of appropriate local representatives. These individuals should represent an equitable distribution of the area's diversity. See also Title VI section for additional guidance.
- RPO may collaboratively develop with TPB's project engineer the CTP milestones, schedules, and roles associated with the study.

**Provided:** CTP Participation Agreement Example, Milestones and Schedules Template

**Work products:** Summary of CTP tasks, contacts, efforts and outcomes, other.

### II-1.1.b Local CTP Vision

The RPO may assist NCDOT in the development of the local vision statement, defining goals and objectives, and identifying performance measures. Working with the CTP Steering Committee, the RPO may also coordinate with, and/or survey, local representatives to define the characteristics, features, and attributes of the future transportation system desired by the community. Surveys may include the polling of local governing agencies, transportation affiliated groups such as the regional TCC and TAC committees, and/or residents to define local vision for multimodal facilities. Surveys may also be used to solicit local input on facilities conducive to the introduction of multimodal alternatives. Surveys should be compiled with a brief summary detailing survey process and parameters, targeted survey recipients, and include both the original survey and all responses.

**Required:** *CTP Committee Consensus*

**Reference:** *Guidance for Crafting a Comprehensive Transportation Plan: Vision Statement, Goals, Objectives & Performance Measures (FHWA) can be found on RPO Guidance Webpage, in the RPO public involvement plan, and in Title VI Requirements.*

**Work products:** *Coordination of meetings, educational materials, consultations, surveys with compilation of results, and/or written reports, summaries of outcomes, other.*

## II-1.2 Conduct CTP Needs Assessment

“Conduct Needs Assessment” in the CTP primarily includes data collection and projection, analysis of the current transportation system, and identification of deficiencies in the transportation system.

### II-1.2.a Data Collection and Assessment

RPOs may assist NCDOT in collection, mapping, and analysis of existing data as well as the projection of data necessary for the development of the CTP. The RPO may also assist NCDOT in identifying future planned development and coordinating with local agencies on growth expected in relation to established land use plans. This may include the development of educational material and presentations to local officials and/or Steering Committee meetings. Refer to Section I for detailed work product descriptions.

**Work products:** *As defined in Section I or as requested by TPB project engineer, other.*

### II-1.2.b Current and Future Year Data Endorsements

Following data collection and analysis, preliminary decisions regarding expected growth, land use, employment opportunities, socio-economic projections and predicted changes in the local demographics are developed. These decisions shall be endorsed by the participating communities. The RPO may assist TPB project engineer in obtaining consensus by coordinating with local agencies, developing educational materials, and presenting findings to local officials.

**Required:** *Steering Committee and Policy Board endorsements*

**Work products:** *Summary of tasks, contacts, efforts expended, and outcomes, other.*

### II-1.2.c Deficiency Assessment

Following data collection and analysis, the RPO may assist the TPB project engineer in existing and future year deficiency analysis. NCDOT’s analysis may include an evaluation of

individual modes (highway, public transportation, rail, bicycle, pedestrian) or intermodal connectivity (how modes interact with one another). The RPO may identify existing locations, facilities, and/or services where individual modes are deficient. For each deficiency there should be a documented problem that will be addressed during the alternatives analysis step of the CTP process by TPB's project engineer.

The RPO may provide an assessment of local and/or regional facilities and modal elements based upon local visions, current user demand, travel patterns, agency consensus, safety, and connectivity. Work products should be in the form of a written document and include relevant information such as, but not limited to, the identified problem (which will become the basis for the Problem Statement and ultimately the Purpose and Need), specific information that led to the identification of the deficiency, and stakeholder contact information. The assessment may be focused on one specific mode or on a comprehensive view of all modes.

The RPO may develop educational material, presentations, and/or promotional programs to encourage general awareness of services or facility benefits; usage of multimodal facilities; and/or participation in associated local/regional events. Materials may be focused on one specific mode or on a comprehensive view of all modes applicable to the facility: highway, public transportation and rail, bicycle, and pedestrian.

**Work products:** Summary of assumptions, methodology and findings, conditions, accompanying spreadsheets, counts, reports and supportive maps, ArcGIS maps or databases with accompanying documentation, PowerPoint presentation with accompanying script, the "Identified Problem," and/or CTP Inventory and Recommendations Table and Guidance document, other.

## **II-1.3 Analyze Alternatives and Environmental Screening**

Once deficiencies have been identified, TPB staff shall work with the CTP steering committee to identify and evaluate possible solutions. The RPO's knowledge of local transportation facilities and planning expertise provides a significant resource during this CTP development step.

### **II-1.3.a Alternatives Assessment**

During the CTP study, the RPO may assist TPB staff in developing the Alternative Analysis Comparison Matrix upon request. See Section I for work product descriptions associated with applicable data collection and planning tasks.

**Work products:** ArcGIS mapping, database, Alternative Assessment summary, other.

### **II-1.3.b Local Alternative Consensus**

The RPO may assist TPB staff by coordinating with local officials, governmental agencies, and the general public to gain consensus on alternative scenarios preferred for CTP recommendations.

**Work products:** Summary detailing stakeholders, facility, preferred alternatives considered and local comments, public workshops, and/or coordinating meetings, other.

## II-1.4 Develop Final Plan

With the draft CTP complete, the RPO may assist TPB staff in preparation for local adoption.

### II-1.4.a Develop CTP Maps

Draft CTP maps represent the recommendations required to meet the area's travel demand due to growth and development. RPOs may assist TPB staff in the development of CTP maps through quality control and verification of data; comparison assessment of CTP recommendations to vision statement and evaluation criteria; provision of workshops for public comment; and the presentation of draft CTP maps to participating municipal and local governmental agencies for endorsement.

**Work products:** Summary of tasks and outcomes per request, other.

### II-1.4.b Local Endorsement

RPO tasks may include, but are not limited to, the organization of public workshops, notification of public meetings, presentations, promotion of local consensus and subsequent documentation of public comment and the presentation of draft CTP to participating local governmental agencies for final review. All public meetings organized by the RPO should follow the procedures and regulations outlined in Section III.

**Work products:** Summary of tasks and outcomes per request, other.

### II-1.4.c Adopt Plan

In order for the CTP maps to have legal standing for local implementation, the participating municipalities and counties, and NCDOT must mutually adopt the CTP maps (NC G. S. 136-66.2).

The RPO may assist by: provision of public forum and presentation of final CTP; documentation of public and agency input; and the presentation of final CTP maps to participating local governmental agencies and the RPO for adoption. All public meetings organized by the RPO should follow the procedures and regulations outlined in Section III. Work products may be limited to 'time spent' with a summary of process undertaken and outcomes provided in the Quarterly Invoice Tables.

**Provided:** Sample resolutions for adoption/endorsement

**Required:** TCC and TAC endorsement, MPO adoption required where applicable, Municipal and County Adoption

**Work products:** Summary of tasks and outcomes in the Quarterly Invoice Tables, other.

### II-1.4.d CTP Document

The Final CTP document includes all pertinent study information, data collection and analysis, plan development, and the record of public involvement. Depending on roles and responsibilities defined at the start of study; the RPO may assist TPB staff in the development of the report by providing one or more of the following: formatting of data, maps, illustrations for the Appendices, and quality control review. The RPO may further aid the Department by disseminating the document to partners and stakeholders within the jurisdictional boundaries of the RPO for final review.

**Work products:** Written documentation, ArcGIS mapping, summary of tasks and outcomes in the Quarterly Invoice Tables, other.

#### **II-1.4.e CTP and Local Land Use Revisions**

Once the CTP adoption process is complete, it is essential to periodically revisit the land use plans of participating municipal and county agencies in reference to compatibility between the newly adopted CTP and the existing local land use plan. The RPO may assist TPB staff and the local government agencies in making sure that the local land use plan continues to support the goals and visions of the CTP. Work products may include: the provision of feedback to the land use agencies on noted inconsistencies between the CTP and local land use plans, development of a local land use strategy for CTP support, and/or the surveillance and mapping of significant changes to land use that potentially impact the recommendations of an adopted CTP.

**Required:** TCC and TAC endorsement (Required for all CTP updates and revisions)

**Work products:** Summary of findings, documentation of agency notification, ArcGIS mapping and/or database, other.

#### **II-1.4.f Development of Local Implementation Strategies**

Municipalities, counties, and NCDOT are responsible for the implementation of the CTP. The RPO may assist the local agencies in this effort through the organization of public meetings, the provision of educational materials or presentations, coordination between resource agencies and the local representatives, and the provision of the planning resources. The RPO may tailor work products to fit the needs and requirements of the recipient agency with inclusion in the annual PWP.

**Work products:** Documentation of request and summary of task, educational materials, provision of public workshops, and agency coordination, other.

## **II-2. PRIORITIZATION AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**

The RPO is responsible for the development of prioritized lists of its region's transportation projects (including highway, public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian, and rail projects) and the entry of those projects into the state's prioritization process.

### **II-2.1 Local Project Prioritization**

The RPO is responsible for the development of a single, prioritized list of its region's transportation projects (including highway, public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian, and rail projects) and the entry of those projects into the state's prioritization process.

#### **II-2.1.a Local Project Prioritization**

Local project prioritization requires the RPO to engage in a public involvement process in order to identify and prioritize transportation needs. To support project prioritization, the RPO may, in conjunction with TPB staff, update project concepts, develop minimum problem statements, and assemble data relevant to the prioritization process.

The RPO must then work collaboratively with regional and local transportation stakeholders and agencies to review the region's proposed transportation projects and rank them according to local priorities. The RPO is responsible for the organization of meetings, provision of educational workshops, developing surveys and tallies, leading public drop-in sessions, coordination with contiguous planning organizations, and development of tasks associated with the procurement of the TCC and TAC endorsement/approval of final list of

locally prioritized projects. The final list of RPO projects submitted should be forwarded to TPB staff. TPB staff will support this effort.

**Reference:** [www.ncdot.gov/performance/reform/prioritization/default.html](http://www.ncdot.gov/performance/reform/prioritization/default.html)

**Required:** TCC and TAC endorsement/approval of final prioritization list

**Work products:** Summary of tasks and outcomes per request; List of locally prioritized projects; Minimum problem statements, other.

#### **II-2.1.b Project Entry and SPOT Prioritization Process**

All candidate project proposals must be submitted through the NCDOT Prioritization Template.

**Work products:** Summary of tasks and outcomes per request, other.

### **II-2.2 STIP Participation**

After the draft STIP has been released by NCDOT for public comment; the RPO acts as a liaison between the Department's Program Development Branch and the regional stakeholders on any issues resulting from the programming of the region's projects.

#### **II-2.2.a STIP Participation**

The RPO should review all information related to its regional transportation projects for accuracy and in regards to local interests and/or concerns. The RPO should notify the Program Development Branch regarding discrepancies found within the draft STIP, coordinate meetings representing the region's stakeholders, and/or inform the Program Development Branch when amendments to the STIP may be necessary.

**Work products:** Projects entered, other.

## **II-3. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

The RPO's role in NCDOT's project development process includes dissemination of information to project stakeholders, assistance with the identification of current/future deficiencies as perceived locally, assistance with project purpose and need development, assistance with the identification of possible community impacts, surveillance of local land use plan compatibility with proposed projects, meeting attendance with NCDOT as the local representative, and documentation of the public involvement process. Work tasks for this section are further detailed below.

### **II-3.1 Problem Statement and Purpose and Need**

A problem statement is utilized to define transportation planning recommendations in the CTP and is provided to the Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch (PDEA) for use in the project development and prioritization process to further develop a project's Purpose and Need. The RPO may assist NCDOT staff in the project development process by collecting and processing data needed to develop a project's Purpose and Need, representing the local interests during the project development process, and providing agencies with critical information about the local project area.

#### **II-3.1.a Purpose and Need Data**

The RPO may collect and/or disseminate local data needed by NCDOT in the development of Problem Statements and/or Purpose and Need Statements. Submittals should be made to TPB or PDEA staff. The RPO should review Purpose and Need statements to ensure local

interests and priorities have been adequately identified and addressed within the statement content. The RPO deliverables include time spent and work products required for the quality control, research, dissemination of local socioeconomic data, and/or comment summary as a representative of the communities the RPO serves. Submittals should be made to TPB or PDEA staff.

**Work products:** Delivery of requested data, review and comment on NCDOT draft problem statements, summary of tasks and outcomes in the Quarterly Invoice Tables, other.

### II-3.1.b Public Involvement Strategies

The RPO may assist TPB and PDEA with the implementation of public involvement strategies, in compliance with the RPO Public Involvement Plan (PIP), during the project development process by organizing public workshops, disseminating information amongst local stakeholders, and obtaining local consensus on content of Purpose and Need Statements.

**Work products:** Delivery of comments to PDEA, verification of time and event held with the Quarterly Invoice Tables, other.

## II-3.2 Merger Process

During the project development process for major projects, Merger Meetings are scheduled to discuss the progression of the project, the issues, and steps going forward. RPO participation in these meetings ensures representation of local interests in the development of the project and that local stakeholders receive the most accurate and current information available on projects that impact their communities.

### II-3.2.a Meeting Attendance

The RPO should attend all meetings where RPO attendance is beneficial to either the NCDOT project team in regards to local representation or to local transportation stakeholders in regards to the dissemination of information. The RPO should prepare a meeting attendance summary for presentation to the RPO's TCC and TAC.

For RPOs participating in the Merger process with concurrence signature authority, the RPO planner will be expected to attend Merger process training and adhere to the Project Team Member Roles and Responsibilities at all times. Additional information can be found at NCDOT's Merger Process Website.

**Reference:** <http://www.ncdot.gov/doh/preconstruct/pe/MERGER01>

### II-3.2.b Review and Comment

Merger meetings are held by NCDOT staff to discuss background data, Purpose and Need, alternatives, design and environmental impacts, the proposed scope of the project, and potential substantial project issues. The RPOs can assist PDEA by reviewing information presented at these meetings for quality control, need for additional research, completeness/correctness of local demographics, and/or comment as a representative of the communities the RPO serves.

**Work products:** Meeting attendance, summary of tasks and outcomes in the Quarterly Invoice Tables, other.

### **II-3.3 Indirect and Cumulative Effects**

Indirect and Cumulative Effects (ICE) assessment provides an estimate of the indirect effects of a transportation project and the combined or cumulative effects of the project along with other past, present, or foreseeable future development activities. The primary focus is on the project's potential to induce growth and change land use (e.g., urban and suburban growth), that could in turn affect natural and socioeconomic resources of the study area.

#### **II-3.3.a ICE Assessment of Probable Growth**

The assessment of a project's area of influence includes a review of local land use planning, demographic trends, market forces, and infrastructure and other factors that influence urban and suburban development. The RPO may assist PDEA in the assessment of a local project's indirect and cumulative impacts on the area's probable growth trends and boundaries.

**Work products:** Assessment documenting the expected effects, ArcGIS map or database with accompanying summary of findings, data collection methodologies, and resources used, other.

## **II-4. GENERAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

General planning refers to those planning initiatives that may not relate directly to the CTP process. These initiatives may be owned by local governing agencies, or service providers for which the RPO provides technical support and work product development. Work tasks for this section are further detailed below.

### **II-4.1 General Transportation Planning Tasks**

In performance of General Transportation Planning duties, the RPO may be engaged to assist in the collection of data required for study and analysis, the pursuit of alternative or supplemental funding, and/or for review and comment on transportation related issues.

#### **II-4.1.a Regional or Statewide Planning**

An RPO may coordinate with state and federal agencies involved in transportation planning activities on the regional, state, and national levels. This may include reviewing the functional classification of roads; reviewing Urban Cluster Boundaries; assisting with, or review of, traffic analysis zones (TAZ's) for CTP models; reviewing National Highway System (NHS); regional model coordination; assisting with air quality conformity; and/or regional transit coordination. Involvement may include, but is not limited to: collection and compilation of data; participation in related workshops, conferences, and meetings; and administrative approval or endorsement of documentation.

**Work products:** Compiled data, reports, ArcGIS map or database, meeting summaries, dissemination of information, or other dependent upon request, other.

#### **II-4.1.b Special Studies and Projects**

An RPO may develop a work product to address a local area's specific needs that are not part of an on-going study or plan under development. An example may include, but is not limited to, assisting NCDOT with a facility deficiency assessment along a specified corridor. Other examples of subject matter for special studies may originate from significant changes in land use that impact the area traffic model patterns such as the introduction or termination of

large-scale traffic generators (hospitals, regional malls, etc.). Notable changes that impact local transportation infrastructure should be reported to TPB staff. Changes may also warrant further investigation by RPO staff as impacts may potentially affect the regional distribution and/or anticipated traffic volumes, requiring revision of the local CTP to accommodate the newly forecasted growth.

Prior to the initiation of special studies, work product extent, responsibilities, roles, and allowable cost for the study should be approved by TPB staff and the TAC.

**Work products:** Dependent upon study, other.

#### II-4.1.c CMAQ Planning

Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) is a Federal program that funds transportation projects and programs in air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas. The program is intended to help achieve and maintain national standards for air quality pollutants. Counties and municipalities pursuing CMAQ funding may enlist the RPOs in the preparation of the CMAQ applications and project submittals for Project Prioritization. For those RPOs with non-attainment counties, the following work products may be developed in the pursuit of CMAQ funding. RPO staff may assist local governing agencies with the development or review of CMAQ applications including assistance with emissions analysis. The RPO must endorse all candidate project proposals through resolution or letter of support. An RPO near, or within, a non-attainment area may provide public outreach and educational material pertaining to non-attainment area boundaries in North Carolina, funding opportunities, and potential projects to their member jurisdictions.

**Reference:** <http://ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/tpb/services/air.html>

**Provided:** Endorsement Example

**Work products:** CMAQ Application; summary of review comments; CMAQ Application endorsement letter, other.

#### II-4.1.d Air Quality Assessment

RPOs in the vicinity of non-attainment areas may provide the following services related to Air Quality Conformity: collect data including, but not limited to socio-economic data and transportation network data, participate in statewide air quality conference calls, coordinate attainment efforts with regional partners, contribute to the regional model, provide public outreach and educational material pertaining to non-attainment area boundaries in North Carolina, funding opportunities, and potential projects.

**Work products:** PowerPoint presentation, conformity resolutions, network map updates, socio-economic data, socio-economic maps, meeting with local officials and staff to gather socio-economic data, attending Model Team meetings, brochures, or public workshops, other.

#### II-4.1.e Alternative Funding

The RPO may provide governing agencies and service providers within the RPO's jurisdiction with assistance in identifying alternative and supplementary funding streams for multimodal or single mode transportation projects. Work products may include grant writing assistance as well as the assemblage of necessary data.

**Work products:** Research and identification of alternative funding opportunities, grant writing assistance, and development of all accompanying materials such as mapping and/or visualizations, other.

#### II-4.1.f Training and Certification

The RPO is responsible for acquiring and maintaining the skill sets needed to perform the administrative duties and long-range planning tasks associated with the RPO's transportation services. The RPO may participate in training and/or certification processes to maintain technical proficiency in the performance of their duties.

**Work products:** Training and certification.

### II-4.2 Title VI

It is NCDOT's policy that Title VI regulations will be upheld in all aspects and levels of its operation and programming without regard to funding source. The RPOs must show due diligence in their compliance and the provision of documentation as described by the work products below as a sub-recipient of state funding for all work submitted to TPB. It is the RPO's responsibility to make sure that its representation business practices meet Title VI requirements.

#### II-4.2.a RPO Affirmation of Title VI Compliance

Each RPO shall sign the Standard DOT Title VI Assurances that affirms its understanding of compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This includes, at a minimum, the following tasks: adopting a Title VI policy statement, notifying the public of their rights under Title VI, and maintaining a record of complaints (against the area or its vendor/service provider) or concerns raised regarding the denial of services or benefits to any group protected under Title VI (race, color, national origin, minority status, low-income, age, disability, sex).

**References:** For FTA funds through NCDOT see the following guidance:

<http://www.fta.dot.gov>

**Work products:** Signed Title VI policy statement, documentation of compliance with regulations submitted with associated work product, other.

#### II-4.2.b Transportation Initiatives and ADA Compliance

Each RPO shall document and maintain records of efforts to comply with ADA regulations regarding all elements of the planning process. The RPOs should conduct an ADA Compliance Review for all transportation planning initiatives originating with or impacting areas inside the RPO in relation to CTP, SPOT, or STIP projects. The review should include any concerns, conflicts, or relative information to ADA compliance for proposed projects; an inventory of facilities (or agencies) that serve/house the elderly or disabled in the vicinity of the proposed projects, any potential or imposed barriers, and/or special transportation services needed because of the project.

**Work products:** Written summary or report, ArcGIS map and/or database, RPO documentation compliance, other.

#### **II-4.2.c Environmental Justice Assessment**

The RPOs may assist NCDOT staff in conducting an environmental justice impact assessment for all proposed projects planned within the RPO's jurisdiction. The RPO's role is to assist TPB and/or PDEA staff in the identification of socioeconomic groups, specifically low-income and minority populations, located within the vicinity of proposed projects. The RPO may further assist TPB and PDEA staff in the identification of potentially adverse impacts due to future transportation projects that warrant further evaluation of resulting benefits and burdens. Assessment should address each socioeconomic groups identified and be submitted in written format. The assessment may also include ArcGIS mapping and/or databases that depict the relationship between the identified groups and the proposed transportation project.

**Work products:** Written summary or report, ArcGIS map and/or database, other.

#### **II-4.2.d Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Assessment**

RPOs may assist TPB and PDEA staff in the identification of LEP populations in either written or ArcGIS formats depicting the relationship between identified groups and proposed transportation project or studies. Work products may also include the development of programs, services, and activities that promote compliance with federal and state regulations for the inclusion of LEPs in the transportation planning process such as the provision of translated educational materials as well as all other translation and interpretation requirements for participants during public meetings.

**Work products:** Written summary or report of findings, programs, dissemination of information, services implemented, ArcGIS map and/or database, other.

### **III. ADMINISTRATION OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND POLICIES**

Administrative functions consist of those tasks performed by the RPO related to the management of work performed for NCDOT in compliance with state and federal law; standardized practices and best practices; and accounting for the distribution of public funds for work done within the RPO.

#### **III-1. ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Administration includes those activities associated with carrying out the transportation planning process within the RPO. Work products include the development/revision of the RPO's PWP and 5-Year Calendar; Quarterly Invoice Tables and Final Yearly Narrative development; and those tasks required in the organization and provision of public meetings and the region's TCC/TAC meetings. Work tasks for this section are further detailed below.

##### **III-1.1 Administrative**

The RPO is responsible for the development of the following documents which define the annual work, schedules, and planning priorities of the RPO: the PWP, 5-Year Planning Calendar, Quarterly Invoice Tables and Final Yearly Narrative, Funding Agreement, Memorandum of Understanding, Bylaws, and other regulatory documents.

###### **III-1.1.a Planning Work Program**

The RPO shall prepare an annual PWP to define the planning work products and activities to be carried out by the RPO. In the event revisions to the PWP become necessary, the RPO

should amend the PWP as specified in the RPO Manual. Amendments to the PWP require TCC/TAC and TPB approvals.

**Provided:** Template PWP, PWP Work Product Number Guidelines.

**Work products:** Annual TCC/TAC approved PWP.

### III-1.1.b 5-Year Planning Calendar

The 5-Year Planning Calendar is an annually prepared document that coincides with the PWP and links the short-term goals of the annual work program to the long-term goals and priorities of the RPO. The RPO shall review on an annual basis the 5-Year Planning Calendar to align with the goals and objectives of the current PWP. Should changes in RPO priorities, or initiatives, impact the 5-Year Planning Program Calendar during the fiscal planning year, revisions should be made accordingly. Revisions to the 5-Year Planning Calendar require TCC and TAC approval. TPB Staff should provide guidance and assistance in developing this calendar as it relates to upcoming CTP studies.

**Provided:** Example

**Work products:** Approved 5-Year Planning Program Calendar.

### III-1.1.c Quarterly Invoice Table and Final Yearly Narrative

Quarterly Invoice Tables must be completed and submitted by the Lead Planning Agency (LPA) to TPB in accordance with the approved PWP and the RPO Procedures Manual. Final Yearly Narrative must be completed and submitted by the Lead Planning Agency (LPA) to TPB along with the fourth quarterly invoice table in accordance with the RPO Procedures Manual.

**Provided:** Invoice Template, Final Yearly Narrative Example

**Work products:** Quarterly Invoice Tables, Final Yearly Narrative.

### III-1.1.d TCC/TAC Work Facilitation

The RPO should organize and schedule a minimum of four (4) TCC and TAC meetings annually. These meetings should be utilized to conduct RPO business associated with transportation project prioritization; address CTP development; provide an opportunity to effectively disseminate information relating to regional transportation projects, legislation, planning strategies; and, provide updates on RPO staff activities. Work facilitation includes all tasks associated with meeting preparation; the review, approval, endorsement, and/or adoption actions taken by the TAC/TCC; and member coordination and scheduling.

**Work products:** TCC and TAC meetings preparation, agendas, meeting minutes, other.

### III-1.1.e Regulatory Documents

The RPO must adopt a funding agreement that establishes the rules for disbursements and accounting of RPO grant funds. Additionally, this work task includes development of any sub-agreements pertaining to the local match in accordance with the RPO Procedures Manual. The RPO must develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which establishes the membership, preliminary bylaws, and voting structure of the RPO. The RPO is responsible for the procurement of all necessary signatures as well as the periodic review of the document and the enforcement of all proprieties set forth in the MOU during TCC, TAC, and public meetings conducted by the RPO. **The RPOs may develop other regulatory documents/agreements.**

**Provided:** Template

**Work products:** Funding Agreement and/or sub-agreements, MOU, review and/or amendments, other.

### III-1.1.f **Miscellaneous Expenses**

Miscellaneous duties include those activities associated with the day to day operations of the RPO and the dissemination of transportation-related information to local governments and other interested organizations and persons. While the tasks associated with miscellaneous duties may be small, the RPO has to respond to a multitude of these requests for which no tangible deliverable can be produced. Examples of miscellaneous duties may include: responding to inquiries about transportation issues (i.e. construction projects, striping of bike lanes, funding for sidewalk projects, right of way acquisition, etc.), sending correspondence to local governments. (i.e. announcements for grant applications), responding to requests for copies of transportation plans, etc.

**Work products:** A description of the miscellaneous duties performed by the RPO each quarter.

## III-1.2 **Public Involvement**

NCDOT is responsible for evaluating and reporting on public involvement strategies and initiatives undertaken during its planning, programming, and project development activities. The RPO supports this process by providing the following information:

### III-1.2.a **Public Involvement Plan (PIP)**

The RPO shall develop a PIP and formally adopt this plan as the guideline by which all public involvement strategies administered by the RPO must be conducted. The PIP should provide guidance to the RPO staff and define the limits of adequate public review opportunities and techniques to be implemented based on specific activities, documents, or processes. Elements to be incorporated and addressed by the policy include outreach and education, opportunities for input, and implementation procedures. Each RPO should develop or revise their public involvement process to include strategies that target the engagement and involvement of minority representatives and low-income groups in the planning process. These strategies should be documented and incorporated into the RPO's PIP and be consistent with the Departments Title VI process and PIP. The RPO shall provide a copy of the PIP to TPB Staff.

**Provided:** Example

**Work products:** RPO PIP

### III-1.2.b **Documentation of Public Involvement**

Public involvement is intended to engage the public early, and continuously, in the transportation planning process; assist the RPO in developing specific transportation projects that reflect the interests and needs of the community; and aid the RPO in promoting community awareness and understanding of the region's transportation projects and issues. The RPO may assist TPB with the provision of meaningful opportunities for public participation in the transportation planning process.

Work products may include the attendance of RPO staff at educational workshops and regional transportation project meetings, the development of meeting minutes/summaries

for TAC/TCC dissemination. As an exception, development of meeting minutes associated with the CTP should be based upon agreement between the RPO planning staff and the TPB project engineer assigned to the study at the beginning of the CTP study process. All other public input documentation at public meetings hosted/initiated by the RPO shall be the responsibility of the RPO and should be made available upon request for consideration as a work product by the TPB area coordinator.

For event/meeting attendance to be considered as a work product, it must be included in the RPO's PWP and shown to directly benefit NCDOT, RPO member agencies, and/or the citizens residing within the RPO's jurisdictional boundaries. The RPO should submit a brief summary to the TPB area coordinator with the Quarterly Invoice Table, the reasons for attendance, and the benefiting result for RPO stakeholders.

***Work products:* Implementation of aforementioned strategies with written summary, meeting attendance, presentation of information to TAC/TCC committees, development of PowerPoint presentation, summary of meeting(s) with the Quarterly Invoice Table, brochures, website updates, press-release, newsletter, other.**