



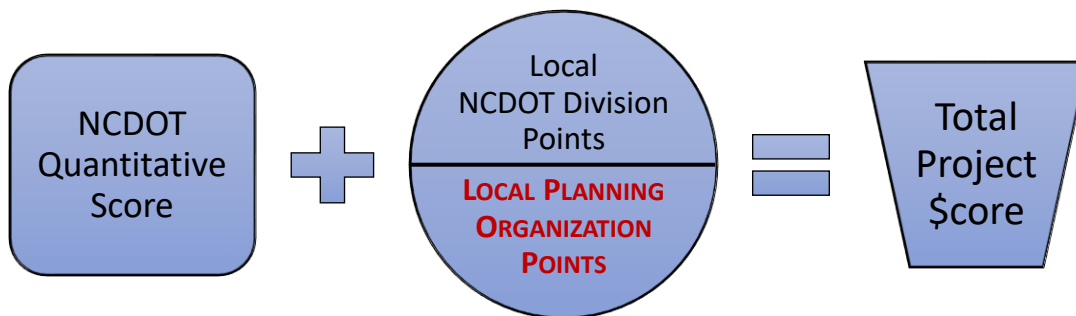
# SOUTHWESTERN RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

## PRIORITIZATION 5.0 LOCAL INPUT METHODOLOGY

### I. INTRODUCTION

North Carolina's Strategic Transportation Investments Law, passed in 2013, establishes the process by which transportation projects are prioritized for funding. The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) produces a State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) outlining the funding and scheduling of transportation projects for a 10-year period. The STIP is updated every two years through a process called "Prioritization". Work is currently underway to update the STIP for 2020-2029 through the fifth iteration of Prioritization (Prioritization 5.0).

During the first phase of the Prioritization process, potential transportation improvement projects are scored and evaluated based on data-driven measures such as safety, congestion, freight volumes, and benefit-cost. During the second phase of Prioritization, local priorities are incorporated into the process through the assignment of Local Input Points. Each of the NCDOT's 14 Divisions as well as all Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are allotted a certain number of Local Input Points to assign to their highest priority projects in order to boost the total score and increase the likelihood of being funded in the STIP.



The six western-most counties in North Carolina, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon, and Swain, belong to the Southwestern Rural Planning Organization (SWRPO). Local elected officials and staff from each of these counties and the towns within them provide local input into the transportation planning process through the SWRPO.

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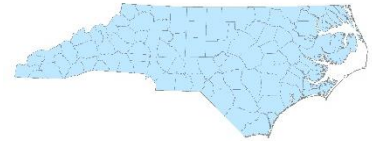
*The purpose of this document is to specify the method the Southwestern Rural Planning Organization will use when assigning Local Input Points for transportation projects during Prioritization 5.0.*

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### **Funding Categories.**

The Strategic Transportation Investments Law establishes three categories of funding, Statewide Mobility, Regional Impact, and Division Needs. All modes of travel (highway, bicycle, pedestrian, aviation, rail, transit, and ferry) are eligible for funding under different categories based on the function of the facility. For additional details on these categories, visit <https://www.ncdot.gov/strategictransportationinvestments/>.

The **Statewide Mobility** funding category is designated for Interstates and major US routes across the state. The SWRPO area competes with all of North Carolina's 100 counties for Statewide funds. Projects in our area that are eligible for statewide funds include US 74 and US 441. Statewide scores are based on 100% quantitative data, with no local input points.



The **Regional Impact** funding category focuses on regional connectivity on smaller US Highways and NC routes. Projects in our area that are eligible for these funds include US 64, US 19, NC 106, NC 107, and NC 294.

There are seven funding regions in the state; SWRPO is part of Region G, which includes the 17 western counties in NCDOT Divisions 13 and 14. Regional Impact scores are based on 70% quantitative score and 30% local input. The 30% local input is divided equally between the SWRPO (15%) and NCDOT Division 14 (15%).



The **Division Needs** category funds projects on secondary roads such as SR 1140 (Alarka Rd.) and SR 1326 (Joe Brown Highway). Within the SWRPO, all our non-highway modes (aviation, bicycle/pedestrian, public transit, and rail) are eligible for funding in the Division Needs category. The SWRPO's six counties compete with the 10 western counties within NCDOT Division 14 for these funds. Division Needs scores are based on 50% quantitative data and 50% local input. The 50% local input is divided equally between the SWRPO (25%) and NCDOT Division 14 (25%).



### **Cascading.**

Statewide projects are programmed first, and are based entirely on the project quantitative score, with no local input points. Any projects that are not funded at the Statewide category can “cascade” down and be eligible for local input points at the Regional category. Regional projects are programmed next, and any projects not funded at the Regional category can cascade down to the Division category and be eligible for local input points again. In essence, a project in the Statewide category has three opportunities to receive funding; a project in the Regional category has two opportunities to receive funding, and a project in the Division category has one opportunity to receive funding.

## II. SCORING CRITERIA AND WEIGHTS

Projects in the Prioritization 5.0 database will be scored using the following four criteria. These criteria will be used to score projects for all modes of transportation and for both Regional Impact and Division Needs funding categories.

**Criterion #1, Prioritization 5.0 Quantitative Score.** This score is generated by the NCDOT Prioritization Office and incorporates multiple metrics from a data-driven process. Data measured to produce the quantitative score include traffic volume, congestion, benefit-cost, safety, accessibility/connectivity, and freight. Scores are calculated separately for each funding category, so each project will have a different score for each category, if eligible for funding in that category (see above).

Weight: The NCDOT Regional Quantitative Score will be equal to 70% of the Project Regional Score and the NCDOT Division Quantitative Score will be equal to 50% of the Project Division Score.

**Criterion #2, Local Priority.** Local Priority is a qualitative measure of the highest priority projects within each county. Members of the SWRPO Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) are expected to collaborate with other county/municipal elected officials, staff, and other stakeholders to develop consensus on the ranked priority of projects within each county. Additional stakeholders consulted may include emergency management, law enforcement, economic development directors, tourism authorities, water and sewer authorities, tribal governments, major education or healthcare institutions, major employers, transit directors, airport managers, bicycle/pedestrian advocates, rail officials, etc. The Local Priority ranking will incorporate the most current local knowledge such as economic development information, destinations served, citizens' concerns, public safety, access, etc. Local stakeholders will meet to gain consensus on the priorities and will submit a list of ranked projects in order of priority along with a brief rationale for the ranking.

Weight: The Local Priority will be equal to 20% of the Regional Score and 40% of the Division Score.

**Criterion #3, Plan Consistency.** Projects that have been identified in a locally-adopted plan with public input will be given additional points.

Weight: Plan Consistency will comprise 5% of the Regional Score and 5% of the Division score.

**Criterion #4, Project Development.** Projects that have had significant planning or development activities completed will be given additional points.

Weight: Project Development will comprise 5% of the Regional Score and 5% of the Division Score.

### III. TOTAL SCORES AND PROJECT RANKING

The total score for each project will be calculated as illustrated in the following tables.

#### *Regional Impact Category Scoring*

CRITERIA	MAX SCORE	POINTS ALLOCATED TOWARD REGIONAL IMPACT SCORE			
Quantitative Score - Regional	70	Prioritization 5.0 Quantitative Score – Regional Impact			
Local Priority	20	Priority #4 <b>5 points</b>	Priority #3 <b>10 points</b>	Priority #2 <b>15 points</b>	Priority #1 <b>20 points</b>
Plan Consistency	5	Project is <i>not</i> in a locally adopted plan <b>0 points</b>			Project is in a locally adopted plan <b>5 points</b>
Project Development	5	Feasibility Study completed within 10 years* <b>2 points</b>	Sibling project is programmed in current STIP <b>3 points</b>	Project is programmed (but not committed) in current STIP <b>4 points</b>	Environmental document complete <b>5 points</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>				

#### *Division Needs Category Scoring*

CRITERIA	MAX SCORE	POINTS ALLOCATED TOWARD DIVISION NEEDS SCORE			
Quantitative Score - Division	50	Prioritization 5.0 Quantitative Score – Division Needs			
Local Priority	40	Priority #4 <b>10 points</b>	Priority #3 <b>20 points</b>	Priority #2 <b>30 points</b>	Priority #1 <b>40 points</b>
Plan Consistency	5	Project is <i>not</i> in a locally adopted plan <b>0 points</b>			Project is in a locally adopted plan <b>5 points</b>
Project Development	5	Feasibility Study completed within 10 years <b>2 points</b>	Sibling project is programmed in current STIP <b>3 points</b>	Project is programmed (but not committed) in current STIP <b>4 points</b>	Environmental document complete <b>5 points</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>				

### IV. LOCAL POINT ASSIGNMENT PROCESS

Once all projects have been scored using the criteria above, SWRPO staff will rank the projects from highest to lowest within each county and within the RPO as a whole. This ranked list will be used to develop the recommended point assignments that are presented to the public for comment and to the TCC and TAC for approval. The final local point assignments will be adopted by the TAC and submitted to NCDOT.

The SWRPO has a total of 1300 Local Input Points to assign at the Regional Impact category and 1300 Local Input Points to assign at the Division Needs category. The maximum number of points any project can receive is 100.

***Statewide Mobility Funding Category:***

Statewide projects are programmed based solely on the NCDOT quantitative score. Any projects funded at the statewide category will be removed from the process before the SWRPO assigns local input points.

***Regional Impact Point Assignments:***

Any projects in the Statewide category that are not funded at the Statewide category will cascade down and be available for local point assignments at the Regional category. The two top-scoring Regional projects within each of our six counties will be initially assigned 100 points each, which will account for 1200 of the 1300 available points. The remaining 100 points will be assigned to the next highest scoring project according to the SWRPO methodology, regardless of location. Any projects that are programmed at the Regional category will be removed from the process prior to assigning Division points.

***Division Needs Point Assignments:***

All projects not funded at the Statewide and Regional categories will cascade down and be eligible for Division Local Points along with the Division category projects. Projects involving public transit, bicycle and pedestrian transportation, aviation, and rail are evaluated at the Division level in addition to highway projects on secondary routes.

The two top-scoring projects within each of our six counties will be initially assigned 100 points each, which will account for 1200 of the 1300 available points. If a non-highway project receives points from the initial 1200 allotment, the remaining 100 points will be assigned to the next highest scoring project, regardless of mode and location. However, if the initial 1200 points are all assigned to highway projects, the last 100 points will be assigned to the highest scoring non-highway project that is also supported by the local government. No local points will be assigned to any project requiring local match if the local government expresses no commitment to provide the required match.

***Tied Scores:***

In the event scores are tied, the SWRPO will work with the Division 14 Engineer to align Division priorities with RPO priorities and ensure mutual needs are prioritized appropriately. If only one of the tied projects will also be receiving points from the Division Engineer, that project will be awarded the RPO points. However, if both or neither of the projects will be receiving Division points, the project with the highest NCDOT quantitative score will receive the RPO points.

***Deviations from Methodology:***

The SWRPO TAC may modify final point assignments to provide local oversight to the data-driven process, to better align county priorities with the priorities of the RPO and Division 14 and to ensure appropriate projects at the relevant funding category. Any variations in point assignments from the initial point assignments will be justified and documented. Potential justifications may include: project cost, estimated points required for funding, geographic equity, distribution between modes, new information, potential reconsideration of the limits of a programmed project, and public

comment. All public comments received, all final point assignments and any justification/rationale for point assignments which deviate from this Local Methodology will be posted on the SWRPO website.

<http://regiona.org/our-work/transportation-planning/project-prioritization-and-funding/#p5.0>

## V. SCHEDULE

Timeframe	Activity
September 2017	TAC approves list of projects to be scored by the NCDOT Prioritization Office.
March 2018	SWRPO Local Methodology is approved by NCDOT and TAC.
April 2018	NCDOT releases quantitative scores for all projects; NCDOT releases list of projects funded at the Statewide category.
April-July 2018	SWRPO Staff solicits public input on project priorities; Local governments determine Local Priority rankings; SWRPO staff applies Local Methodology to all projects and publishes draft Local Point Assignments on Regional and Division projects for public comment
July, 2018	TAC adopts final Local Point Assignments for Regional projects.
July 30, 2018	SWRPO staff submits Regional Local Input Points assignments to NCDOT.
September 1, 2018	NCDOT publishes projects funded at the Regional category.
September 2018	SWRPO staff and local governments review projects funded at Regional category; re-evaluate final Local Point Assignments on Division category projects.
September 24, 2018	TAC approves final Local Point Assignments for Division Projects.
October 30, 2018	RPO Staff submits local points for Division Projects to NCDOT.
January 2019	NCDOT releases Draft STIP, including projects funded at the Division category.

## VI. PUBLIC OUTREACH/MATERIAL SHARING

All Prioritization 5.0 materials will be posted on the Southwestern RPO website at the following address:

<http://regiona.org/our-work/transportation-planning/project-prioritization-and-funding/#p5.0>.


SWRPO will also conduct public outreach via the SWRPO Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Southwestern-NC-RPO-1499723303640879/>.

SWRPO will also solicit informal public input on all candidate transportation projects via an online survey prior to publishing the Draft Local Input Points. The results of the public input survey will be distributed to the local officials and staff to be used qualitatively in developing the Local Priority Ranking as described in Section II, above. Once the Draft Local Input Point Assignments are made, the list will be distributed for public comment for 14 days prior to the adoption date. Public comments are also welcomed at all SWRPO TCC and TAC meetings.

## VII. ADOPTION

The Southwestern RPO Transportation Advisory Committee adopted this policy on March 26, 2018.

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Mike Fitzgerald, TAC Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rose Bauguess", written over a horizontal line.

Rose Bauguess, SWRPO Secretary