



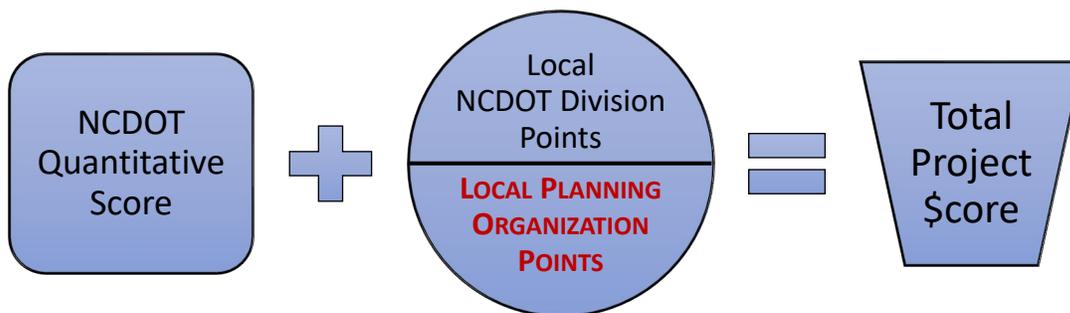
SOUTHWESTERN RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

PRIORITIZATION 6.0 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 few years through a process called "Prioritization". Work is currently underway to update the STIP for 2023-2032 through the sixth iteration of Prioritization (Prioritization 6.0).

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.

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 6.0.

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. 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. 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. 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. SWRPO SCORING CRITERIA

Projects in the Prioritization 6.0 database include carryovers from P5.0 and new submittals from SWRPO and Division 14. These projects will be scored to determine which ones will receive the SWRPO’s Local Input Points. The following four criteria will be used.

Criterion #1, Prioritization 6.0 Quantitative Score. This score is generated by the NCDOT Strategic 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, pavement condition, lane width, and shoulder width. 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 Impact Quantitative Score will be equal to 70% of the Project Regional Score and the NCDOT Division Needs 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 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. SWRPO 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 6.0 Quantitative Score – Regional Impact			
Local Priority	20	Priority #4 5 points	Priority #3 10 points	Priority #2 15 points	Priority #1 20 points
Plan Consistency	5	Project is <i>not</i> in a locally adopted plan 0 points			Project is in a locally adopted plan 5 points
Project Development	5	Feasibility Study completed within 10 years 2 points	Sibling project is programmed in current STIP 3 points	Project is programmed (but not committed) in current STIP 4 points	Environmental document complete 5 points
Total	100				

Division Needs Category Scoring

CRITERIA	MAX SCORE	POINTS ALLOCATED TOWARD DIVISION NEEDS SCORE			
Quantitative Score - Division	50	Prioritization 6.0 Quantitative Score – Division Needs			
Local Priority	40	Priority #4 10 points	Priority #3 20 points	Priority #2 30 points	Priority #1 40 points
Plan Consistency	5	Project is <i>not</i> in a locally adopted plan 0 points			Project is in a locally adopted plan 5 points
Project Development	5	Feasibility Study completed within 10 years 2 points	Sibling project is programmed in current STIP 3 points	Project is programmed (but not committed) in current STIP 4 points	Environmental document complete 5 points
Total	100				

IV. LOCAL INPUT POINT ASSIGNMENT

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.

Point Flexing Policy

Southwestern RPO has the option to apply the Local Input Point Flexing Policy. Up to 500 Local Input Points can be transferred from one funding category to the other. If the point flexing option is used, SWRPO will provide written documentation to the NCDOT prior to assigning Regional Impact Local Input Points.

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 Needs points.

Division Needs Point Assignments:

All projects not funded at the Statewide Mobility and Regional Impact categories will cascade down and be eligible for Division Needs Local Input Points along with the Division Needs 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, and public comment. Final Local Input Point assignments and any justification/rationale for point assignments which deviate from this Local Methodology will be posted on the SWRPO website: <https://regiona.org/rpo-funding/>.

V. TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

The schedule for P6.0 has been modified multiple times due to budget shortfalls resulting from cost overruns on projects already programmed in the current STIP. Availability of funding for new projects in the 2023-2032 STIP is uncertain. The schedule below is tentative and subject to change.

Timeframe	Activity
July 2021	SWRPO P6.0 Local Input Point Methodology is adopted by the TAC and submitted to NCDOT.
July 2021	NCDOT completes quantitative scoring for all projects.
August 2021	P6.0 Prioritization Workgroup meets to determine remainder of P6.0 process.
August 2021	Quantitative scores for all projects are released. Draft list of programmed Statewide Mobility projects is released.
September – November 2021	SWRPO Local Input Point Methodology is applied to all P6.0 projects. Draft Local Input Point assignments are published for public comment.
November 2021	SWRPO Regional Impact Local Input Point assignments are adopted and submitted to NCDOT.
January 2022	NCDOT publishes projects funded at Regional Impact category.
February – April 2022	Regional Impact programming results will be evaluated for effects on the Division Local Input Point assignments; any changes will be published for public comment.
March 2022	Division Local Input Point assignments are adopted and submitted to NCDOT.
August 2022	NCDOT releases Draft 2023-2032 STIP, including projects funded at the Division category.

VI. PUBLIC OUTREACH/MATERIAL SHARING

All Prioritization 6.0 materials will be posted on the Southwestern RPO website at the following address: <https://regiona.org/rpo-funding/>. SWRPO will also solicit informal public input on all candidate transportation projects via an online survey. 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

Criterion as described in Section II, above. Once the Draft Local Input Point Assignments are developed, 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 May 24, 2021.

Patrick Taylor, TAC Chair

Rose Bauguess, SWRPO Director