

8

**DURHAM-CHAPEL HILL-CARRBORO MPO
METHODOLOGY FOR RANKING
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
PRIORITY PROJECT REQUESTS (FY2007-2013)**

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Regional Priority List is to facilitate determination of the region's project priorities to be used in development of a fiscally constrained Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) calls for a TIP development process that documents a methodology for ranking project requests, reflects local and metropolitan goals, and addresses mobility, environmental and air quality goals.

OBJECTIVE

The methodology outlined below is designed to address multi-modal transportation needs and to ensure regional balance. Specific technical criteria are used to rank projects. The Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) will use the methodology to develop a draft Regional Priority List. This draft Priority List is to be used as a starting point or a reference base by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) for the approval of a final Regional Priority List.

The TAC may reorder projects at its discretion to promote jurisdictional and geographical balance, or based upon the TAC members' knowledge of the urban area and the policies of their communities. Therefore, the TCC will make its technical recommendation on a draft Priority List based on the methodology described in this document, and the TAC will then be afforded the opportunity to make any changes it deems appropriate.

METHODOLOGY GOALS

- Produce a program of projects (or project priorities) which satisfies MPO, local and State goals, and addresses TEA 21 policies of system preservation, operational efficiency in the movement of people and goods, multi/inter-modalism, and air quality mandates.
- Address projects on equal footing, regardless of mode or project type.
- Be simple enough for project-level analysis without requiring unnecessary data collection.
- Be understandable by the general public.

PROCEDURE FOR RANKING PROJECTS

1. Goal Setting For Project Priority List

The TAC will formulate an overall goal or set of goals for the Regional Priority List. The annual goal setting should reflect the TIP Preamble adopted by the TAC. It states that the DCHC urban area "is committed to developing a balanced transportation system within the region." The MPO should begin the annual TIP process with goal setting, which could merely be a reaffirmation of previous

goals or development of new goals arising out of the Transportation Plan. This annual goal setting will ensure that any change in “need” can be captured in the TIP goals.

2. **Ranking Criteria**

The screening criteria for project ranking fall into four broad groups:

- a. **Regional Goals** - How well does the project meet the adopted regional goals? Is the project an element of the current long-range plan? Does it implement community objectives (for the intrastate system, does it meet NCDOT mobility objectives)? Does the project have a broad base of local support?
- b. **Cost Effectiveness** - How much benefit does the project offer compared to the estimated cost?
- c. **Timing Factor** - Is timing a critical element for the project (one-time opportunity)? Will the opportunity to do the project be lost if it is not in the current priority cycle?
- d. **Specific Project Merits** - How many points does a project receive using scoring criteria?

The scoring criteria are described below in the “Application of The Methodology” section.

APPLICATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

- 1. The TCC first examines the consistency in which local jurisdictions have responded to the ten (10) project criteria. If the criteria are not applied consistently, the TCC can agree to change some criteria responses for consistency among all projects.
- 2. Project Criteria Points are totaled for each project request using the point system outlined on pages 5 and 6 of this document.

Degree of Congestion - This category awards points to roadway projects base on the congestion level as measured in the volume to capacity (V/C) ratio. For new road facilities in which traffic counts are not available, volumes on a parallel existing facility may be used.

Safety (Accidents/100 Million Vehicle Miles) - Safety points are awarded to projects with reported accident rates significantly greater than statewide averages for urban road segments – the statewide average is 330 to 370 accidents per 100 million vehicle miles (or, 330-370 ACC/100 MVM). Points may be awarded to transit, non-motorized and Transportation Demand Management (TDA) projects using the accident rate of the roadway on which they operate, or of a parallel roadway.

Coordinate with National Highway System - Points are awarded for this item if the project is part of the existing or future National Highway System (NHS) or an intermodal facility on an NHS route.

Reduces Use of Single Occupant Vehicles - Points are awarded for this category if the project is a bike, pedestrian, transit or High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) project. Conventional roadway project do not qualify.

Expands Transportation Choices - Points are awarded for road projects that provide each of the following alternative modes: 1) transit; 2) bicycle; and, 3) pedestrian.

Addresses Air Quality Concerns - Points are awarded for this item based on the gross reduction of vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Standard VMT formulas for the different travel modes will be used to calculate VMT reductions.

Has Minimal Impacts on the Natural Environment - Points are awarded if the transportation project does not expand into or adversely affect documented environmentally sensitive areas.

Encourages Economic Development - Points are awarded for this item if the primary purpose of the project is economic development or redevelopment.

Adverse Impacts Do Not Disproportionately Affect Low Income Populations - Points are awarded if the project does not affect low income groups disproportionately. This item is designed to penalize projects that may have negative impacts on low income areas or federally recognized disadvantaged groups.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Status - Points are awarded to projects based on the percentage of the total project cost that is funded in the currently adopted Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), or if the project has post year status in the TIP. Transit projects listed in the TIP as “unfunded” receive points.

3. Projects receiving the same number of project criteria points are ordered by generally giving priority to projects included in last year’s Regional Priority List. A lower priority is given to new project requests with the same number of criteria points.
4. When the resulting order of the projects with the same number of criteria points is inconsistent with the order of local priorities, these projects may be reordered.
5. The draft Regional Priority List is created by drawing projects from each of the enhancement, highway, and transit category lists. Projects with the highest number of project criteria points are selected first - considering local priority rankings, geographical balance, and a mixture of project types.
6. The draft priority list is then forwarded to the TAC, as the TCC’s recommended project priorities for the urban area.

OBSERVATIONS

The order of transit priorities could vary significantly from year to year if anticipated funding sources are reduced or eliminated by Congress.

- Mandates (e.g., the American’s with Disabilities Act) may take precedence when programming projects from the Regional Priority List in the TIP.
- The fiscal constraints of programming projects in the TIP may result in the programming of less expensive, lower ranked projects.

(11)

- Some lower ranking projects may be implemented earlier than a higher ranked, large project due to the time constraints associated with a more complex project (i.e., major investment studies, preparing environmental documents, designing the project, right-of way acquisition, etc.).
- The significance of ranking more than 25 projects is minimal, at best due to the availability of project funds.