

# Lumber River RPO

## P7 Project Prioritization Methodology

*Approved by the Lumber River RPO Transportation Advisory Committee on 3/25/24*

### **Introduction**

Passed in 2013, the **Strategic Transportation Investments** law allows the N.C. Department of Transportation to use its funding more efficiently and effectively to enhance the state's infrastructure, while supporting economic growth, job creation and a higher quality of life. This process encourages thinking from a statewide and regional perspective while also providing flexibility to address local needs.

STI also established the Strategic Mobility Formula, which allocates available revenues based on data-driven scoring and local input. It is used to develop NCDOT's State Transportation Improvement Program, which identifies the transportation projects that will receive funding during a specified 10-year period.

The Strategic Mobility Formula funds projects in three categories: **Statewide Mobility, Regional Impact, and Division Needs**. Please see [Appendix A](#) for explanation of what is eligible in each category.

**Statewide Mobility** projects receive 40 percent of available revenue. The project selection process is based 100 percent on data.

**Regional Impact** projects receive 30 percent of available revenue. Projects on this level compete within regions made up of two NCDOT transportation divisions, with funding divided among the regions based on population. The Lumber River RPO is located in Regions C and E. Project scores are based 70 percent on quantitative data and 30 percent on rankings by local planning organization and the NCDOT Transportation Divisions.

**Division Needs** projects will receive 30 percent of the available revenue, shared equally over NCDOT's 14 Transportation Divisions, which are groupings of local counties. The Lumber River RPO is located in Division 6 and Division 8. Project scores are based 50 percent on quantitative data and 50 percent on rankings by local planning organizations and the NCDOT Transportation Divisions.

Statewide Mobility projects not funded in the Statewide Mobility category can “cascade” down and be considered for funding in the Regional Impact Category; if not funded in the Regional Impact Category they can cascade down to the Division Needs category. Regional Impact projects not funded in the Regional Impact category can also cascade down to the Division Needs category.

The Lumber River RPO (LRRPO) is allotted 1,500 Local Input points to indicate its ranking of projects in the **Regional Impact** category and another 1,500 Local Input points to indicate its ranking of projects in the **Division Needs** category. This Project Prioritization Methodology document describes the process that the Lumber River RPO will use to determine how these Local Input points are allocated.

This process is intended to be open and transparent. All meetings of the Lumber River RPO Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) and Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) are open to the public. Public participation will be solicited in accordance with the steps listed in the Schedule on pages 5-7 of this Methodology. Relevant documents will be posted at the RPO's website at <https://www.lumberrivercog.org/copy-of-rural-transportation-planni>. Relevant documents include this draft/final methodology, County priority lists, and preliminary and final point assignments. Additionally, instructions for submitting public comments will be provided on the LRRPO website and in Appendix B. Comments will be collected by RPO staff and distributed to the TCC and TAC.

## **DESCRIPTION OF CRITERIA AND WEIGHTS**

STI requires that the RPO use at least two criteria, with at least one being qualitative, to rank the transportation projects in its area. The Lumber River RPO Prioritization Methodology utilizes one Quantitative criterion and two Qualitative criteria to comprise the "Base Score". A third Qualitative criteria provides supplemental points that are added to the "Base Score" to equal the "Total Score". This process is described below.

### **QUANTITATIVE SCORE**

The NCDOT SPOT Workgroup has developed an extensive set of quantitative criteria for each mode of transportation that is used to calculate the SPOT Quantitative Scores for all projects. The Lumber River RPO will use the respective SPOT Quantitative Score in each category as the Lumber River Quantitative criterion.

*The SPOT score will be 35% of the Lumber River "Base Score".*

### **QUALITATIVE SCORES**

#### **County Priority Score**

A list will be compiled for each County of all the projects in all transportation modes contained in the NCDOT database that are located within that County. This list will include the SPOT quantitative score for each project and will indicate projects that have been funded at the Statewide Mobility tier. The TAC and TCC representatives from each County will work together with representatives from the County, all municipalities, all modes, and RPO staff to rank the projects in order from highest priority (#1) to lowest priority (#20). It is up to the local jurisdictions and the RPO to determine the best method for achieving this within each County, however the following rules must be followed:

- All jurisdictions and representatives from all modes must be given an opportunity to participate in the development of the prioritized list of projects.
- The process must include at least one meeting open to the public and advertised on the RPO's website that allows for public comment.

Each county's prioritized list will be posted on the RPO website and made available for additional public comment.

Points will be assigned to each project in the prioritized list as follows:

Project Ranking	Points	Project Ranking	Points
# 1	100	# 11	50
# 2	95	# 12	45
# 3	90	# 13	40
# 4	85	# 14	35
# 5	80	# 15	30
# 6	75	# 16	25
# 7	70	# 17	20
# 8	65	# 18	15
# 9	60	# 19	10
# 10	55	# 20	5

All projects that are not ranked within the top 20 projects in each county will receive one (1) point for this criterion.

If a project is prioritized by more than one County, the points assignment from each County will be averaged together. The resulting Average will be the number of points that is assigned to the project as the County Priority Score.

*All projects in all modes will be assigned 35% of their Lumber River “Base Score” based on the County ranking assigned to each project from the process described above.*

**Division Priority Score**

A project will have a better chance of receiving funding if both the RPO and the NCDOT Division Office assign Local Input Points to that project. RPO staff will discuss each project with the Division Engineer(s) and/or Division Planning Engineer(s) to determine which projects are a high priority for both the Division and the RPO and explain to the Division why the RPO feels a project should receive a high priority. The Division Engineer/Planning Engineer and RPO staff will coordinate to determine the priority projects for both the Division and the RPO.

After discussion with the RPO, the Division Engineer/Planning Engineer will assign each project a HIGH, MEDIUM, or LOW priority classification for each category in which the project competes. A HIGH priority classification indicates that the Division plans to assign Local Input Points to that project. A MEDIUM priority classification indicates that the project is a strong project that will receive consideration for assignment of Local Input Points in the Prioritization Processes that will take place in future years.

Projects that receive a HIGH priority classification will receive a Division Priority Score of “100” for this portion of the Methodology. Projects that receive a MEDIUM priority classification will receive a Division Priority Score of “50” and projects that receive a LOW priority classification will receive a Division Priority Score of “25” for this portion of the methodology.

All projects in all modes will be assigned 30% of their Lumber River “Base Score” based on the Division Priority Score assigned to each project from the process described above.

### **Project Development Points**

Projects that have had significant planning or development activities completed will be given supplemental points to distinguish them from projects that are simply conceptual.

Supplemental points will be given cumulatively to projects for each of the following criteria as indicated for a maximum of 25 points:

- a completed feasibility study: 2 pts.;
- an adopted corridor plan or other project-specific plan: 2 pts.;
- preliminary design or engineering: 3 pts.;
- project in development/merger process (i.e. active or prior development by PDEA or preliminary design has begun): 3 pts.;
- project or sibling funded in current STIP or previously completed: 5 pts.;
- right-of-way attainment (i.e. acquisition has begun) or right-of-way not required: 5 pts.;
- project is in the Developmental (6-10 year) portion of the current STIP: 5 pts.

Project Development points will be added to the “Base Score” to equal the Lumber River “Total Score”.

## **LUMBER RIVER TOTAL SCORE AND PROJECT RANKING**

### **APPROACH**

#### **WEIGHT APPLIED TO EACH CRITERIA**

**Base Score:** The Quantitative Score will be 35% of the Base Score, the County Priority Score will be 35% of the Base Score, and the Division Priority Score will be 30% of the Base Score to equal 100%.

$$\text{Base Score} = (\text{Quantitative Score} \times 35\%) + (\text{County Priority Score} \times 35\%) + (\text{Division Priority Score} \times 30\%)$$

The Project Development points will then be added to the Base Score to equal the Total Score.

$$\text{Lumber River Total Score} = \text{Base Score} + \text{Project Development Points}$$

### **POINT ASSIGNMENT PROCESS**

Once the Lumber River Total Score for all projects in each mode has been determined, RPO staff will develop a Preliminary Ranked List of projects within the RPO as determined by the Lumber River Total Score. This Preliminary Ranked List of all projects in all modes will be used to assist in developing the

recommended local input point assignments that are presented to the public for comment and to the TCC and TAC for approval.

The Lumber River RPO has 1,500 points in the Regional Impact category and 1,500 points in the Division Needs category that can be assigned. Preliminary points will be assigned as follows in both categories.

- A. The top two highway projects in each RPO County will be eligible for 100 points each (800 points maximum). If a project is only partially within the RPO boundaries, the number of points equal to the percentage of the project that is located in the RPO will be assigned to the Lumber River RPO. RPO staff will discuss sharing the balance of points that would equal 100% with the RPO/MPO in which the rest of the project is located.
- B. The top scoring non-highway projects in Richmond, Robeson, and Scotland Counties will be eligible for 100 points each (300 points maximum). There are no non-highway projects located within the RPO portion of Hoke County.
- C. The remaining points and/or unused points will cascade to the next highest scoring projects, regardless of mode or location, up to 100 points each.
- D. This Preliminary Ranked List will be used by the TCC to make its recommendation of points assignment to the TAC for each tier, which the TAC will utilize to develop its final assignment of points. TCC and TAC meetings are public meetings where public comment will specifically be sought on the preliminary assignment.

***DEVIATION CLAUSE:*** The TCC and TAC are free to deviate from the preliminary points assignment when making the final point assignments in order to provide local oversight to the data-driven process, to compensate for situations where the methodology does not accurately reflect the TAC's priorities, and to ensure appropriate projects at the relevant category . Any variation in point assignments from the preliminary point assignments must have justifications documented in the meeting minutes and posted on the LRRPO website. Anticipated justifications include but are not limited to: project cost, point sharing arrangements, estimated points required for funding, geographic equity, modal distribution, new information, methodology failures, potential reconsideration of the limits of a programmed project, public comment, and changes in total number of points in each category due to use of the Flex Policy.

### **FLEX POLICY**

The LRRPO has the option to apply the Local Input Point Flexing Policy. This means that up to 500 Local Input Points can be transferred from one category to the other. If the organization chooses to flex Local Input Points, LRRPO will provide written documentation to the SPOT Office prior to assigning Regional Impact Local Input Points. If the Flex Policy is implemented, the ***DEVIATION CLAUSE*** noted above may be applicable because of changes in the number of points per category.

## **SCHEDULE AND PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The schedule is subject to change for a variety of reasons, many of which are beyond the control of the RPO. Any change to the schedule will be reflected on the RPO website and in this document, which will also be available on the LRRPO website; however modification to the schedule will not require public notice or comment, nor adoption by the TAC nor approval by NCDOT.

- 1) Staff reviewed the Methodology from P6 and recommends that no revisions be made for P7 other than making date changes. ***[December 2023]*** *The TCC and TAC will review and recommend the Methodology for submittal to NCDOT for initial review. ( January 2024)*
- 2) The draft P7 Prioritization Methodology will be submitted to NCDOT for approval. If necessary, RPO staff will make revisions. ***[February 2024]***
- 3) The draft P7 Prioritization Methodology will be submitted to the TCC for recommendation to the TAC for approval at the March TAC meeting. The Methodology will then be submitted to NCDOT. ***[March 2024]***
- 4) NCDOT will release Quantitative Scores and the list of projects programmed in the Statewide Mobility tier. ***[May 2024]***
- 5) RPO staff will compile a list and description of all projects in each County, including the SPOT Quantitative Score when available. Each County's list will indicate which projects have been funded at the Statewide Mobility category. The lists will be posted on the LRRPO website. ***[May and June 2024]***
- 6) For each County, the RPO staff and County TCC/TAC representatives will organize a meeting of all jurisdictions and representatives of all modes to determine the County Priority Score (see pages 2 and 3 for details). These meetings will be advertised on the LRRPO website and will provide time for public input. Directions for submitting public comments prior to the meetings for those who cannot attend the meetings are listed in Appendix B and on the LRRPO website. After each County meeting, the finalized County Priority List will be posted on the LRRPO website. ***[June and July 2024]***
- 7) RPO staff will discuss projects competing at the Regional Impact category with the NCDOT Division Engineer and/or Planning Engineer to determine the Regional Division Priority Score (see pages 3 and 4 for details). ***[June 2024]***
- 8) RPO staff will determine Project Development points for all Regional Impact category projects (see page 4). ***[June 2024]***
- 9) RPO staff will discuss project point sharing with staff of other RPOs/MPOs. (See Item A. on page 4). The RPO will consider accepting points shared by adjacent RPOs/MPOs for projects that cross the RPO boundary that would otherwise not receive Lumber River RPO points. If points sharing is

approved, both the Lumber River RPO and the adjacent RPO/MPO must agree to the amount of points donated and provide this arrangement in writing to NCDOT's SPOT office. **[June 2024]**

- 10)** RPO staff will calculate **Lumber River Total Scores** (see page 4) for Regional Impact projects and compile the Preliminary Ranked List of projects (see page 4 and 5, under the **Points Assignment Process** heading). The Preliminary Ranked List will be posted on the LRRPO website. **[June 2024]**
- 11) The TCC will make a recommendation of the Regional Impact category point assignment to the TAC. This recommendation will be posted on the LRRPO website along with the advertisement of a public comment period of two weeks. Directions for submitting public comment are in **Appendix B** and will be on the LRRPO website. Submitted comments will be compiled and given to the TAC. The website will also advertise a public meeting to be held at the beginning of the TAC meeting to receive public input into the point assignment. The TAC will make its final Regional Impact category points assignment in accordance with the **Points Assignment Process** on pages 4 and 5. The TAC will adopt the final point assignment. **[July 2024]**
- 12)** Final Regional Impact category point assignments will be entered into SPOT Online and posted to the LRRPO website. **[August 2024]**
- 13)** The SPOT office of NCDOT finalizes Regional Impact scores and the TIP Unit programs Regional Impact projects. **[September 2024]**
- 14)** RPO staff will determine whether any projects were funded in the Regional Impact category. Projects funded at the Regional Impact category will not be considered for prioritization at the Division Needs category. Statewide Mobility and Regional Impact projects not funded at the Statewide or Regional Impact category will be eligible for points at the Division Needs category. **[September and October 2024]**
- 15)** RPO staff will discuss projects competing at the Division Needs category with the NCDOT Division Engineer and/or Planning Engineer to determine the Division Needs **Division Priority Score** (see pages 3 and 4). **[September and October 2024]**
- 16)** RPO staff will determine **Project Development** points for all Division Needs category projects (see page 4). **[September and October 2024]**
- 17) RPO staff will calculate **Lumber River Total Scores** for all Division Needs category projects and compile the Preliminary Ranked List of projects. The Preliminary Ranked List will be posted on the LRRPO website. **[October 2024]**
- 18) The TCC will make a recommendation of Division Needs category points assignment to the TAC. This recommendation will be posted on the LRRPO website. A public meeting to be held at the TAC meeting for public input on the point assignment will be advertised on the LRRPO website. The TAC will make its final Division Needs category point assignment in accordance with the **Points Assignment Process** on pages 4 and 5. The TAC will adopt the final point assignment. **[November 2024]**

- 19) Final Division Needs category point assignment will be entered into SPOT On!ine and posted to the LRRPO website. **[December 2024]**
- 20)** The SPOT office of NCDOT finalizes P6.0 Division Needs scores and the TIP Unit programs Division Needs projects. **[January and February 2025]**
- 21) NCDOT releases the Draft STIP. **[March 2025]**

## **MATERIALS SHARING**

The Lumber River RPO website can be found at <https://www.lumberrivercog.org/copy-of-rural-transportation-planni>. The website will include the following:

- a link to NCDOT’s STI Prioritization Resources website
- the Lumber River P5.0 Prioritization Methodology when adopted
- highlights of schedule milestones, as well as specific public comment and public meeting schedules when available
- Preliminary and final local input point assignment sheets, including record of deviations if applicable

All posted materials will be available within one week of completion and remain available on the website until adoption of the Final STIP by the Board of Transportation.

## **Appendix A**



## STI Eligibility Definitions

Mode	Statewide Mobility	Regional Impact	Division Needs
Highway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interstates (existing &amp; future)</li> <li>NHS routes (July 1, 2012)</li> <li>STRAHNET</li> <li>ADHS Routes</li> <li>Uncompleted Intrastate projects</li> <li>Designated Toll Facilities</li> </ul>	Other US and NC Routes	All County (SR) Routes
Aviation	Large Commercial Service Airports (\$500K cap)	Other Commercial Service Airports not in Statewide (\$300K cap)	All Airports without Commercial Service (\$18.5M cap)
Bicycle-Pedestrian	N/A	N/A	All projects (\$0 state funds)
Public Transportation	N/A	Service spanning two or more counties (10% cap)	All other service, including terminals and stations
Ferry	N/A	Ferry expansion	Replacement vessels
Rail	Freight Capacity Service on Class I Railroad Corridors	Rail service spanning two or more counties not Statewide	Rail service not included on Statewide or Regional

## **Appendix B**

### **Directions for Submitting Public Comment**

You may send comments by email to [jfr@lrcog.org](mailto:jfr@lrcog.org) or mail written comments to:

Lumber River Council of Governments  
Attn. Janet Robertson  
COMtech Park  
30 C.J. Walker Rd  
Pembroke, NC, 28372

You may also reach RPO staff by phone at (910) 775-9749.