

Cabarrus-Rowan MPO

Prioritization 8.0 STIP/MTIP Project Solicitation and Ranking Process

Introduction: The NCDOT and the North Carolina General Assembly are requiring that all metropolitan and rural planning organizations develop a project solicitation and ranking process to evaluate all eligible project categories (highway, non-motorized, public transportation, aviation, rail, and ferry). The following process has been approved by the NCDOT to ensure compliance with the legislative intent of this new requirement as stated in Session Law 2012-84.

Applicability: This process would apply to all projects ranked by the MPO in Cabarrus and Rowan counties that are eligible for “regional” and “division” tier funding, as defined in the 2013 Strategic Highway Investments (STI) legislation. Statewide tier eligible projects would be evaluated quantitatively by NCDOT prior to this process. Should those statewide projects not receive statewide tier funds, they would be eligible for regional and division tier evaluation by NCDOT and the MPO local MTIP evaluation process.

Schedule

Project Solicitation: The MPO will solicit candidate projects for a minimum of 28 days beginning in February 2025. Those candidate projects will be presented to the TAC at the May 28, 2025 meeting, where the TAC endorsed the project list for submittal and evaluation by NCDOT. In the event that the number of new projects exceeded the maximum acceptable to NCDOT, the TAC would endorse projects based on technical review by the TCC, Division 9 and 10 staff recommendations. MPO staff will subsequently submit the MPO’s endorsed projects into NCDOT’s SPOT On!ine tool (web-based system) for project evaluation and quantitative scoring.

Project Ranking: The TCC and TAC will evaluate the full list of new and previously-scored projects for the two counties between May 2025 and December 2025, with local points assigned and submitted to the SPOT office by the December 31, 2026 deadline.

Schedule Summary:

February 2025 to May 2025 – Public solicitation of new candidate projects

July 2025 to October 2025 – Submit candidate projects to NCDOT for evaluation

November 2025 to April 2026 – TCC and TAC receive public comments and review data and costs

April 2026 to June 2026 – Review of SPOT evaluation results of proposed regional tier projects

June 24, 2026 MPO meeting – Allocate local points to regional tier projects and develop NCDOT project submittal list / post results to CRMPO website for public comments

August 26, 2026 - review public comments and endorse final regional tier project’s list for submittal to NCDOT

August 2026 to September 2026 – Review of SPOT evaluation results of proposed division tier projects

September 23, 2026 MPO meeting – Allocate local points to division tier projects and develop NCDOT project submittal list / post results to CRMPO website for public comments

November 18, 2026 - review public comments and endorse final division tier project’s list for submittal to NCDOT

November 19, 2026 – Submit SPOT projects and publish information on CRMPO website

Public Input Process

Project Solicitation: The MPO will announce a 28-day new project solicitation period to all member governments and interested persons. The MPO will publicize the project solicitation on the MPO's website. Any new project will be presented to the TCC and TAC for their approval prior to submission to NCDOT's Strategic Prioritization Office for Transportation (SPOT) for technical evaluation and scoring.

Project Ranking: The MPO will present the recommended local point assignments to the TCC at their June 2026 and September 2026 meeting(s). Upon the approval of the TAC, the MPO will release the recommended projects, point assignments, and a narrative of how the points are assigned for a 28-day public comment period. The 28-day period will be advertised on the MPO website and in newspapers of general circulation in Cabarrus and Rowan counties as well as the County Planning Offices in Salisbury and Concord. The results of the public input will be presented to the TCC and TAC at their August 2026 and November 2026 meeting(s). At that time the TAC will be asked to approve a project list and final point assignment, which will be published on the MPO website (www.crmmpo.org).

Local Input Point Flexing: The MPO has the option to apply the Local Input Point Flexing Policy, which means that up to 500 Local Input Points can be transferred from one category to the other. The MPO will provide written documentation to the SPOT Office prior to assigning Regional Tier Local Input Points. The MPO may elect not to exercise this flexibility depending upon the volume of eligible candidate projects.

Ranking Process

Highway Projects: All highway projects both division tier and regional tier will be scored using the following local criteria. The NCDOT has determined that MPO input will be weighted at 15 percent of the total score for regional tier projects and 25 percent of the total score for division tier projects. The NCDOT Division Engineer's will be afforded the same level of influence through their project point assignment for regional tier and division tier eligible projects.

The total maximum qualitative highway project score would be 50 points. Because the congestion score and safety score will be generated quantitatively by NCDOT, these scores will fluctuate with each version of SPOT's quantitative formula. Under SPOT version 7.0, the highest congestion score was an 96.24, weighted to a score of 29 in the local methodology. The highest safety score was an 74.97, weighted to a score of 11. Therefore, the maximum theoretical score for a highway project would be 76.4 under this scenario.

1. **Element of the Metropolitan TIP** - The project must be in the CR MPO Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP). (If project is fully funded =10 points; Partially funded = 7 points; Unfunded = 5 points)
2. **Element of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan** - The project must be in the CR MPO Comprehensive Transportation Plan. (Yes=5 points; No=0 points)

3. **Element of an Economic or Land Development Plan** - The project must be in a locally adopted economic or land development plan. (Yes=5 points; No=0 points)
4. **Element of the 2055 Metropolitan Transportation Plan** - The project must be in the fiscally constrained CR MPO 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. (Yes=10 points; No=0 points)
5. **Congestion Score** - This item refers to the Volume to Capacity (V/C) ratio for road projects using a score from the SPOT database. This numerical score will be multiplied by 30 percent to produce the final congestion score. This score will come from the SPOT database.
6. **Safety Score** - For safety, the numerical crash score is determined by the NCDOT Mobility and Safety Division. The score is based on the crash density, crash severity, and critical crash rate long the roadway where the project is located. A higher score (up to 100) are considered to have poorer highway safety performance. This numerical score will be multiplied by 15 percent to produce the final safety score. This score will come from the SPOT database.
7. **Promotes Interstate or Intrastate Connections** - Points are awarded for this item if the project provides connections or enhancements to the interstate or intrastate highway system. (Yes=10 points; No=0 points)
8. **Has Minimal Impacts on the Natural or Built Environment** - Points are awarded if the road project is on a recognized alignment where there is minimal right-of-way impact. This criteria is a qualitative assessment by local staff and will not include a statistical evaluation of disturbed acres. (Yes=5 points; No=0 points)
9. **Has Minimal Impacts on the Human Environment** - Points are awarded if the road project is on a recognized alignment where there is minimal right-of-way impact to residential properties, particularly minority or low income residents. This criteria is a qualitative assessment by local staff and will not include a statistical evaluation of displaced residents. (Yes=5 points; No=0 points)

Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects: All bicycle and pedestrian projects will be scored using the following local criteria. All data for each criteria will be locally generated for each prospective bicycle and pedestrian project. The total maximum qualitative bicycle and pedestrian project score would be 100 points. Under the previous SPOT submittal process, the maximum local score for a bicycle project was 66 and the maximum local score for a pedestrian project was 74.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA			
Criteria	Points Allowed	Points Awarded	Notes
1. % of ROW, easements, and or real property owned	25	1 point per 10%	Amount of publicly owned land easements, and/or real property for the proposed project improvement. Additional 15 points if 100 percent of ROW, easement, and/or real property are owned publicly.

2. Amount of local funding available as a percentage of the total project costs	10	5 pts for up to 20%; 10 pts greater than 20%	The amount of local funding available for the project.
3. Access to School, Park, Transit stop, or Library	15	Yes/No	Project improvement is within ½ mile of a school, park, transit stop, or library.
4. Access to population density	10	Relative rank	The persons per square mile within ½ mile of the project improvement.
5. Network, which could include sidewalk, greenway, transit route, or trail, existing to support improvement	10	1 point per access point	The number of road and non-road physical access points per mile to the project improvement. (Driveways are not included).
6. Mix of residential and employment uses for potential to provide non-auto work trip and related travel	10	5 points for planned;10 points for existing	Does the project improvement connect residential development with shopping or employment center?
7. Included on a local greenway, pedestrian or other Plan	10	Yes/No	Identified in a planning document with local government approval.
8. Project design	10	Yes/No	Has there been a preliminary plan or design completed on the project improvement?
Total	100		

Aviation Projects: All aviation projects will be scored using the following local criteria. All data for each criteria will be locally generated for each prospective aviation project, although items 1, 4, 5, and 6 will require information from external sources to the MPO and local membership. The total maximum qualitative aviation project score would be 40 points. Under the previous SPOT submittal process, the maximum local score for an aviation project was 26.

1. Element of Statewide System Plan - Must be identified and approved by NcDOA in the STIP projects. -Yes-5 No-0
2. Airport must have an approved Master Plan and approved ultimate ALP and project must be element of Master Plan-Yes- 5 No- 0

3. Element of Governing Authority CIP plan-Project must be part of an approved Capital Improvement Plan-Yes- 5, No- 0
4. Airport FAA Classification- or General Aviation Airport Group- Commercial Service-10, General Aviation Airports by Category. National-7, Regional-5, Local-3, Basic-1.
5. Congestion-Number of Airport operations -250,00+ -10, 100,000-250,000 – 5, 50,000-100,000 – 3, Less than 50,000 – 1
6. Safety Related Projects- Is project a safety related project in accordance with FAA guidance? Yes-5, No-0. If all safety related projects are complete then project receives 5 points.

Public Transit Capital Projects: All public transit capital projects will be scored using the following local criteria. All data for each criteria will be locally generated for each prospective transit capital project. The total maximum qualitative public transit capital project score would be 45 points. Under a previous SPOT submittal process, the maximum local score for a transit project was 30.

1. Element of a current Planning Document. -5 points in STIP, 5 points in TDP/Other
2. Access to employment. Yes- 5 No- 0
3. Factor in improving safety or security. – 5 points for safety, 5 points for security
4. Intermodal Connectivity. – 5 points for (3) or more modes, 3 points for (2) or more modes.
5. Local Funding Availability. – 5 points for 50+ percent funding, 3 points for 20 to 50 percent funding, 1 point for less than 20 percent.
6. Access to Bike/Ped projects. 1 point per connection for a max of 5 pts.
7. Preservation of existing level of service. Yes -5 No-0

Rail Projects: All rail projects will be scored using the following local criteria. The total maximum rail project score would be 70 points. Under the previous SPOT submittal process, the maximum local score for a rail project was 40.

1. Element of Statewide or Local System Plan - Must be identified and approved by NCDOT Rail as a potential STIP project. Yes-15 No-0
2. Project addresses an identified facility safety issue. This quantitative score will come from the SPOT database and be multiplied by 15 percent to produce the final safety index score.

3. Project expands facility capacity. This quantitative score will come from the SPOT database and be multiplied by 30 percent to produce the final capacity index score.
4. Local support of the project as demonstrated thru an adopted resolution by a local governing Board. Yes-10 No-0

Use of Public Input and Comments in Final Rankings: The TCC and TAC will review all input received through the public input process to confirm the individual candidate project descriptions and details. (All TCC and TAC meetings are open to the public and advertised with the local media and on the MPO website.) The TCC and TAC may choose to remove or modify projects before ultimately approving the point assignments, but no projects can be modified or added after the NCDOT deadline for submitting candidate projects for evaluation through the SPOT process.

Final Ranking and Local Points Assignment: All eligible projects by tier (Regional or Division) could receive some variation of points with the maximum being 100 points per project. NCDOT has indicated that the Cabarrus-Rowan MPO will receive 1800 points to distribute for Regional tier eligible projects and 1800 points to distribute for Division tier eligible projects. The intent of the MPO is to award the maximum number of points (100) within each category (division and regional) to the top 18 highway projects. If the MPO elects to award points to projects outside the quantitative rank order and/or to non-highway projects, a justification for this adjustment will be shared with the public and interested stakeholders during the public comment period and on the MPO's website (www.crmmpo.org). As an example, some consideration may be given to competitive rank within the division (9 or 10) and funding region (D and E) by mode. Project point assignment or adjustment to non-highway mode projects based on this logic will be properly documented in the published narrative.