

## Prioritization Subcommittee

### *Meeting Agenda*

June 1, 2021

9:00 AM

**Meeting to be held via Zoom:** <https://zoom.us/j/91373453789>

**Voting Members on the Committee:** Dan Baechtold (City of Asheville), Larry Harris (Black Mountain), Peyton O’Conner (Buncombe County, Chair), Autumn Radcliff (Henderson County), Anthony Sutton (Town of Waynesville), Elizabeth Teague (Town of Waynesville, Vice-Chair), Jerry Vebaun (Town of Woodfin)

<b>1. Welcome and Introductions</b>	Peyton O’Conner
<b>2. Public Comment</b>	Peyton O’Conner
<b>3. Approval of April, 2021 Meeting Minutes</b>	Peyton O’Conner
<b>4. Business</b>	
Prioritization Local Input Methodology for P 6.0	MPO Staff
Prioritizing Existing Committed Projects	MPO Staff
<b>5. News, Events, Updates</b>	Peyton O’Conner
<b>6. Public Comment</b>	Peyton O’Conner
<b>7. Adjournment</b>	Peyton O’Conner

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## Item 3

April, 2021 Meeting Minutes

### **Prioritization Subcommittee Meeting Minutes\* May 4, 2021**

\*Meeting held virtually via Zoom. All votes held by roll-call.

#### **ATTENDING**

##### **Voting Members**

- Peyton O'Conner, Buncombe County
- Autumn Radcliff, Henderson County
- Larry B. Harris, Town of Black Mountain
- Anthony Sutton, Town of Waynesville
- Jerry Vehaun, Town of Woodfin
- Dan Baechtold, City of Asheville

##### **Non-Voting**

- Tristan Winkler, FBRMPO
- Emily Scott Cruz, FBRMPO
- Hannah Bagli, FBRMPO
- John Ridout, FBRMPO
- Janna Peterson, Henderson County
- Steve Williams, NCDOT
- William High, Buncombe County
- Troy Wilson, NCDOT
- Hannah Cook, NCDOT
- Daniel Sellers, NCDOT

## **I. Welcome and Introductions**

Prioritization Chair, Peyton O’Conner, presided calling meeting to order at 9:00 am. Members gave their introduction. The Agenda was approved.

## **II. Public Comment**

None at this time.

## **III. Approval of April 2021 Minutes and Approval of Agenda**

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed. Autumn Radcliff made a motion to approve. Anthony Sutton seconded the motion. All approved.

## **IV. Business**

### **IV-A // LAPP Requests: Split Black Mountain Greenway**

John Rideout brought up the item. The Town of Black Mountain is looking to re-split Riverwalk Greenway into separate sections as a result of the no-rise railroad crossing being unfeasible, so the Town is looking to explore alternative options. In the process, the Town does not want to delay the Into The Oaks to Black Mountain Ave section (formerly Phase III, now noted as Section B) while the former Phase II, now Section A, is exploring alternatives. Right now, we don’t have a break down in the cost split between PE, ROW, and CST, but since this project was previously split into two sections then combined later, we are looking to re-split the project into two sections and are looking for a comment from the Committee on this request.

Larry Harris noted that the Town Council supported the re-splitting unanimously, pointing out that Section B will provide strong connectivity and benefits to the Town.

Collective head nods are sufficient to represent Prioritization Subcommittee’s support to move the re-splitting into the TIP amendments to be brought before the TCC and Board later in May.

### **IV -B // LAPP Stimulus Funds –**

Tristan Winkler introduced the item. The MPO received an additional \$1.9 million in STBG-DA funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA),

which are put towards sidewalk and greenway projects. MPO Staff requests two decisions be made by Prioritization Subcommittee regarding the application of these funds. The funds may be applied at 100% federal match and the funds must be obligated by FY24 (October 2023, federal fiscal year). Staff wants to discuss whether we want to go with the 100% federal match and how to program the funds. So, two decisions must be made based on the different discussion points. Staff recommends programming funds with the 80/20 split, requiring the 20% match rather than programming funds at 100% federal match. Tristan noted that there are some projects that have a harder time getting the 20% match than other projects.

Anthony Sutton asked for clarity regarding obligation. Tristan clarified that with transportation funds, obligation is required, which means that the state and federal government has approvals in lined by FY24 for the project to begin requesting reimbursements. Hannah Cook stated that obligation means funds have been authorized to be spent. Peyton O'Connor stated that they agree with option A but from an equity standpoint, they understand the equity issue with smaller projects struggling to make the match and proposed a hybrid option: if you're above \$50,000, you must have the match, but below \$50,000 you don't need to provide a local match.

The other part is considering that funds need to be obligated by FY24, leaving us with 2 clear options:

**Option A:** Funding can be programmed to LAPP projects selected and programmed by MPO. The carryover balance would then be applied to the next call for projects (January 2022). Tristan noted this feels like the safest option and would not require amendments to local agreements. We would use the ARPA funds first, instead of current funds because of the obligation time frame.

**Option B:** The \$1.9 million could be applied to projects that narrowly missed the cut in the last call for projects. This option has been discussed with the Board. These projects include Hazel Mill Sidewalks (\$1.6 million for construction) and Ecusta Trail Phase IV (the PE phase would fit within the funds we have now--\$547,297). Important to consider that the City of

Asheville has an extensive list of LAPP projects already funded.

**Option C:** hybrid of the two options

Dan Baechtold expressed support for programming funds for projects that have already been selected and programmed, to free up funds for future programming and would prefer there still be an 80/20 split. Alternatively, if there's a project that really needs to be done that we haven't been able to provide a match for and we could program them at 100%, Dan would think that should be considered.

Janna Peterson asked how to choose which jurisdiction would get the ARPA funds versus STBG-DA funds—concerned because with Ecusta, the County is working with NCDOT and expressed concerns regarding possible unknowns with the ARPA money and does not want delays based on a new funding source. Tristan understands that this funding shouldn't recommend local agreements. If this group says "apply funds to what's already programmed," we would work with local governments to figure out what's most efficient and it will be more of a programming exercise not a project selection.

Autumn Radcliff asked if we have any previously funded projects that could use the full \$1.9 million in ARPA funds. Tristan went over the funded projects that have been funded for PE and/or ROW but not CST (MPO Liabilities), which include 6 projects—Brown Ave Realignment, Champion Drive Sidewalks/MUP, Mills River Valley Trail, Reems Creek Greenway, Bent Creek Greenway, Lexington Ave. The concern there is that some of those projects are not likely to get to construction by FY24.

Autumn Radcliff is comfortable with Option A regarding the split. Larry Harris supports Option A as well. The funds will be split 80/20 and projects that have already been approved will be funded first with ARPA money.

Jerry V. made a motion to approve Option A and Anthony Sutton seconded. All approved.

#### **IV - C // Prioritization Local Input Methodology for P6.0**

Tristan brought up this item as a continuation from last month's item. The MPO has a draft methodology and noted that we will bring this back in June

to Prioritization then to TCC and Board. Tristan provided an overview of the principles in Local Input Methodology and reviewed the point-split in scoring.

Dan Baechtold has a question about the Freight category—he knows it's important but is concerned that freight helps projects that just move trucks in ways that we may or may not want. Tristan stated that interstate projects will do the best in the Freight category, so it favors larger roads.

Peyton O'Connor asked what decision points there are today. Tristan requests the Committee review the methodology and reach out with questions/concerns to be addressed before the next meeting. We will need approval in June before taking to the TCC and Board.

Larry Harris asked the group if anyone has significant issues with the document as it stands.

#### **IV - D // Prioritizing Existing Committed Projects**

Tristan introduced this item. What are our list of priorities for projects that are already funded? We are trying to enable it so there are more opportunities for MPO input in discussions on future delays or accelerations and enable those discussions to happen in a more timely manner. Tristan showed a list of existing/committed Statewide Mobility Projects (interstate projects), Regional Impact projects (some interstates and US and state routes), and Division Needs Projects (Division 13 and 14, every other kind of project).

The goal is to have a list of priorities for each of the categories of existing projects so that when delays occur, we can have a list of what our priorities are among the already committed projects. Priorities can include: Projects that are not cascaded; projects that were SPOT Priority when funded; projects that were MPO priority when funded; look at the round of SPOT when funded (older projects > newer projects); and overlap/intersection with other projects. Tristan wants feedback on whether this is a path we should go down and how to create the list.

Hannah Cook expressed that the list looked good but recommended that

projects further along in the project delivery cycle might be best prioritized. Adding project development to the priority list would be wise. Dan Baechtold noted that this list makes it deliberate so that people can see the thought process, which is helpful. He agreed with Hannah about adding project development to the list of priorities, but is concerned that it will put projects that require long PE processes on hold. Larry Harris asked if Tristan foresees taking the different categories of funded projects and prioritizing using those. Dan Baechtold thinks it will be helpful to document the projects according to the priority list so that we can see why projects are higher priority. Hannah Cook noted that cost increases are why we need to reprogram the STIP, so she thinks the MPO should take a stance on what to do with large cost increases—if one project has a substantial cost increase that compromises the overall STIP or category, the MPO should indicate whether that priority projects' cost increase negatively affects other projects or are we comfortable with that? Tristan agreed that Hannah brings up a great point. There's some incentive to hold onto projects that have cost increases.

At the next meeting, MPO Staff will present a list of projects based on the priorities discussed.

**V. News, Events, Updates -**

No news, events, or updates.

Next Meeting **June 4 at 9am.**

**VI. Public Comment** – None at this time.

**VII. Adjournment** - The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 A.M.