



MID-EAST
Rural Planning Organization

**Local Input Point Assignment Methodology
Prioritization 7.0**

May 2024

PRIORITIZATION 7.0 LOCAL INPUT POINT
ASSIGNMENT METHODOLOGY

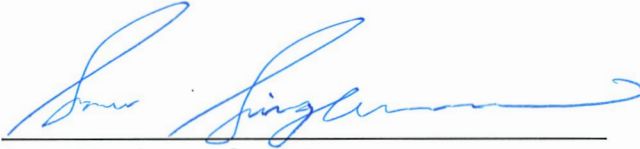
Upon recommendation by the Technical Coordinating Committee, the Transportation Advisory Committee voted in favor of adopting the Mid-East Rural Planning Organization's Local Input Point Assignment Methodology for Prioritization 7.0 at their May 16, 2024 Regular Meeting.



5 / 16 / 2024

Charlotte Griffin, Vice-Chairwoman
Transportation Advisory Committee
Mid-East Rural Planning Organization

ATTEST:



5 / 16 / 2024

Sam Singleton, Secretary
Mid-East Rural Planning Organization

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Mid-East RPO

In 2000, the State of North Carolina recognized the need for more coordinated transportation planning in rural areas of the state not within a Metropolitan Planning Organization by enacting G.S. Chapter 136, Article 17, Section 136-210-213. This legislation provided for the development of Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs). As a result, in 2002, the Mid-East Rural Planning Organization was established through a Memorandum of Understanding between Beaufort County, Martin County, Pitt County, and the North Carolina Department of Transportation. Within this MOU, the Mid-East Commission, a Regional Council of Governments was designated as the Lead Planning Agency responsible for the administration and operation of the Mid-East RPO.

The Mid-East RPO is one of 18 Rural Planning Organizations in North Carolina, and provides the following core services to Beaufort County, Martin County, and the areas of Pitt County not within the Greenville Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization:

- ***Coordinate, Assist, and Develop Local & Regional Plans***
- ***Provide a forum for public participation in the transportation planning and implementation process***
- ***Provided transportation-related information to local governments***
- ***Develop and prioritize projects that the organization believes should be included in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)***

B. Local Input Point Assignment Methodology

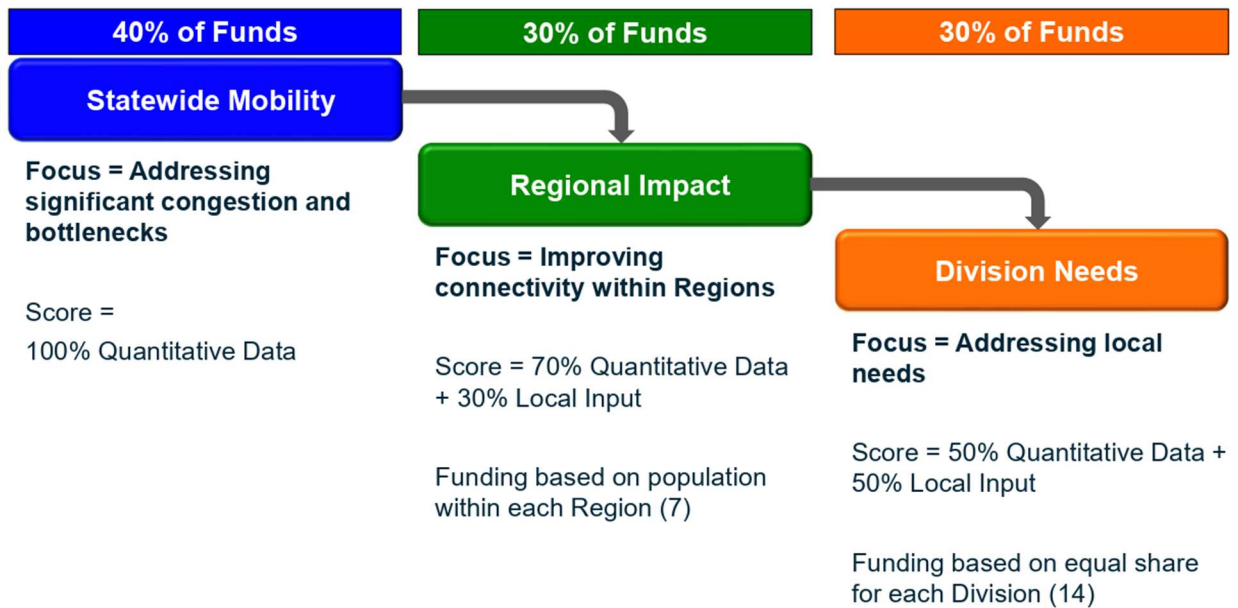
The following methodology has been developed by the Mid-East Rural Planning Organization for the purpose of determining regional priorities for transportation funding, as carried out through the State of North Carolina's Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) law and the associated "SPOT" Prioritization Process. This methodology is intended to incorporate both measurable, objective data and information about priorities from local jurisdictions, to ensure a process that is both data-driven and responsive to local needs. The Mid-East Rural Planning Organization (MERPO) serves Beaufort and Martin Counties, as well as the portions of Pitt County that are not within the planning area of a Metropolitan Planning Organization.

This methodology has been developed to meet the requirements of Session Law 2012-84 (Senate Bill 890), which requires that MPOs and RPOs have a process for determining project prioritization.

STI divides available state and federal transportation funding into three categories: Statewide Mobility, Regional Impact, and Division Needs. For each category, NCDOT calculates quantitative scores based on a variety of criteria. In the Statewide Mobility category, projects are selected for funding based entirely on the NCDOT quantitative score. However, in the Regional Impact and Division Needs categories, part of the final score is based on local points assigned by the MPO or RPO and/or the NCDOT Division Engineer in that area. The local input points assigned by MERPO (and other MPOs and RPOs) represent 15% of the final score for Regional Impact projects and 25% of the final score for Division Needs projects. The local input points assigned by the Division Engineer also represent 15% of the final score for Regional Impact projects and 25% of the final score for Division Needs projects.

Therefore, scores for Statewide Mobility category projects are 100% quantitative (NCDOT score), Regional Impact category projects are 70% quantitative and 30% local input points (15% MPO/RPO and 15% Division Engineer), and Division Needs category projects are 50% quantitative and 50% local input points (25% MPO/RPO and 25% Division Engineer). The highest scoring projects will be programmed for funding by NCDOT in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

The STI law includes a component known as cascading, where projects not funded in the Statewide Mobility category are eligible for funding in the Regional Impact category. Similarly, projects not funded in the Regional Impact category are eligible for Division Needs funds. Projects that cascade down are then subject to the scoring criteria and local input for the respective funding category.



Only a small set of projects are eligible for Statewide Mobility funding – highway projects on routes that were designated as part of the National Highway System (NHS) prior to the passage of the Federal MAP- 21 legislation, four-lane widening projects on unfinished segments of the 1989 “intrastate” system, aviation projects at large commercial airports, and freight rail projects on Class I railroads. All Statewide eligible projects are also eligible for Regional Impact funding,

in addition to highway projects on all other US- and NC- numbered routes, aviation projects at small commercial service airports, non-station passenger rail projects, transit projects that serve more than one county, and all ferry projects except replacement vehicles. All types of projects are eligible in the Division Needs category.

Mode	Statewide Mobility	Regional Impact	Division Needs
Highway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interstates (existing & future) National Highway System routes (as of 2013) STRAHNET¹ Designated Toll Facilities 	Other US and NC Routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Secondary Roads (SR) Federal-Aid Eligible Local Roads
Aviation	Large Commercial Service Airports	Other Commercial Service Airports not in Statewide	All Airports without Commercial Service (General Aviation)
Bicycle-Pedestrian	N/A	N/A	All projects (\$0 state highway trust funds)
Public Transportation	N/A	Service spanning two or more counties	All other service, including terminals and stations
Ferry	N/A	Vessel or infrastructure expansion	Replacement vessels
Rail	Freight Service on Class-I Railroad Corridors	Rail service spanning two or more counties not in Statewide	All other service, including terminals and stations (no short lines)

¹ STRAHNET – Strategic Highway Network, system of roads deemed necessary for emergency mobilization and peacetime movement of personnel and equipment to support U.S. military operations

The Mid-East RPO is split between two regions for Regional Impact funding:

Martin County: Region A

Beaufort & Pitt Counties: Region B

The Mid-East RPO is also split between two Divisions for Division Needs funding:

Martin County: Division 1

Beaufort & Pitt Counties: Division 2



MERPO has 1300 local input points to assign in both the Regional Impact and Division Needs categories. Up to 50% of the Mid-East RPO’s Local Input Points (650 Points Max) can be flexed between the Regional Impact and Division Needs categories. This document describes the method for selecting projects to which to assign these points.

II. PUBLIC OUTREACH & SCHEDULE

A. Public Participation in Project Scoring Process

This process is intended to be open and transparent. As such, all meetings of the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) and Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) will be open to the public, with public participation being solicited. In addition, relevant documents will be posted to the Mid-East RPO’s website at www.mideastrpo.com in a logical, easy to find location. Relevant documents include, but are not limited to:

- Draft Mid-East RPO Local Input Point Assignment Methodology
- Final Mid-East RPO Local Input Point Assignment Methodology (including records of deviations as applicable)
- Preliminary & Final Local Input Point Assignments
- Link to the NCDOT STI Prioritization Resources Website
- Highlights of Schedule Milestones
- Specific Public Comment & Public Meeting Schedules (when available)

All posted materials will be available within one week of completion and will remain available on the Mid-East RPO website until the final 2026-2035 STIP is adopted by the North Carolina

Board of Transportation. Instructions for submitting public comments will be provided on the Mid-East RPO website. Comments will be collected by Mid-East RPO Staff and distributed to members of the TCC and TAC within their meeting agenda packets.

The public is invited to submit comments through the Mid-East RPO website, email, phone, or mail, as well as in-person at TCC & TAC meetings at any point throughout the process. Additionally, a public hearing will be held at a time after the initial staff-recommended scoring is developed, but before the TCC & TAC approve the assignment of local input points.

Any comments provided by the public will be addressed by the TCC & TAC before the vote on the assignment of local input points. All comments and discussions will be documented in the meeting minutes.

B. Prioritization Process & Timeline

The Prioritization process adopted by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and approved by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) will not be modified without adequate notice and opportunity and public comment. However, the timeline is subject to change for a variety of reasons, many of which are beyond the control of the Mid-East RPO. Any change to the timeline will be reflected on the Mid-East RPO website and this document, which will also be available on the MERPO website; however, modification to the timeline will not require public notice or comment, nor adoption by the TAC, nor approval from NCDOT.

1. **[January-February 2024]** Draft Local Input Point Assignment (LIP) Methodology will be developed by MERPO Staff.
2. **[March 2024]** Draft LIP Methodology will be submitted by MERPO Staff to the TCC & TAC for preliminary approval.
3. **[March 2024]** Preliminarily-approved LIP Methodology will be submitted by MERPO Staff to NCDOT for approval.
4. **[May 2024]** NCDOT-approved LIP Methodology will be submitted by MERPO Staff to the TCC & TAC for final adoption. Adopted LIP Methodology will be posted to MERPO website.
5. **[May 2024]** NCDOT will release Quantitative Scores and Statewide Mobility-programmed projects.
6. **[May-June 2024]** MERPO Staff will determine whether any projects were funded in the Statewide Mobility Category. Projects funded in the Statewide Mobility Category will not be considered for Local Input Points in the Regional Impact Category. Projects not funded in the Statewide Mobility Category will be eligible for Local Input Points in the Regional Impact Category.
7. **[June 2024]** MERPO Staff will review the Regional Impact quantitative scores for each qualifying project in MERPO boundaries relative to other qualifying projects in the project's STIP Region. Projects in Martin County fall within STIP Region A. Projects in Beaufort & Pitt Counties fall within STIP Region B.

8. **[June-July 2024]** MERPO Staff will determine Project Development Points for all projects eligible to compete in the Regional Impact Category.
9. **[June-July 2024]** MERPO Staff will meet with the County Priority Officials from Beaufort County, Martin County and Pitt County to discuss projects competing in the Regional Impact Category. Each County's TCC Representative will be responsible for assigning a County Priority for each project within the County competing in the Regional Impact Category according to the Project Scoring Criteria within this document.
10. **[June-July 2024]** MERPO Staff will meet with the Division Engineer(s) and/or Division Planning Engineer(s) from NCDOT Divisions 1 & 2 to discuss projects competing in the Regional Impact Category. MERPO Staff & each Division Engineer and/or Division Planning Engineer will ensure that mutual high-priorities are prioritized appropriately. The Division Engineers will assign a Division Priority to each project competing in the Regional Impact Category according to the Project Scoring Criteria within this document.
11. **[July 2024]** MERPO Staff will meet with staff from adjacent RPOs and MPOs to discuss point sharing for projects competing in the Regional Impact Category. Projects that cross MERPO boundaries will be eligible for local input points in excess of the percentage of the project within the RPO boundaries, up to 100 points, if the adjacent RPO/MPO provides less than their full share of points. MERPO Staff will endeavor to assign points shared by adjacent RPOs and MPOs for projects crossing MERPO boundaries that would otherwise not receive MERPO Local Input Points according to the Project Scoring Criteria. If point sharing is approved, both MERPO and the adjacent RPO/MPO must agree to the number of points donated and provide the arrangement in writing to the NCDOT SPOT Office.
12. **[July-August 2024]** MERPO Staff will generate preliminary Regional Impact Project scores and point assignments according to the Scoring Criteria. Results will be posted to the MERPO website.
13. **[August 2024]** The TCC will recommend, and the TAC will approve the final Regional Impact Point Assignments at their August meeting. TCC & TAC meetings are public meetings where public comment will specifically be sought on the preliminary scores. The TAC is free to modify final point assignments 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. Anticipated justifications include project cost, point sharing arrangements, estimated points required for funding, geographic equity, modal distribution, new information, methodology failures, and public comment.
14. **[August 2024]** MERPO Staff will enter the final Regional Impact Point Assignments into SPOT Online and will post on the MERPO website.
15. **[September 2024]** NCDOT will release Regional Impact Total Scores and Programmed Projects.
16. **[September-October 2024]** MERPO Staff will determine whether any projects were funded in the Regional Impact Category. Projects funded in the Regional Impact Category will not be considered for Local Input Points in the Division Needs Category. Statewide Mobility and

Regional Impact Projects not funded in the Regional Impact Category will be eligible for Local Input Points in the Division Needs Category.

17. **[October 2024]** MERPO Staff will review the Division Needs quantitative scores for each qualifying project in MERPO boundaries relative to other qualifying projects in the project's Division. Projects in Martin County fall within Division 1. Projects in Beaufort & Pitt Counties fall within Division 2.
18. **[October 2024]** MERPO Staff will determine Project Development Points for Division Needs Category Projects.
19. **[October 2024]** MERPO Staff will meet with the County Priority Officials from Beaufort County, Martin County and Pitt County to discuss projects competing in the Division Needs Category. Each County's TCC Representative will be responsible for assigning a County Priority for each project within the County competing in the Division Needs Category according to the Project Scoring Criteria within this document.
20. **[October 2024]** MERPO Staff will meet with the Division Engineer(s) and/or Division Planning Engineer(s) from NCDOT Divisions 1 & 2 to discuss projects competing in the Division Needs Category. MERPO Staff & each Division Engineer and/or Division Planning Engineer will ensure that mutual high-priorities are prioritized appropriately. The Division Engineers will assign a Division Priority to each project competing in the Division Needs Category according to the Project Scoring Criteria within this document.
21. **[October 2024]** MERPO Staff will meet with staff from adjacent RPOs and MPOs to discuss point sharing for projects competing in the Division Needs Category. Projects that cross MERPO boundaries will be eligible for Local Input Points, consistent with #11 above.
22. **[October-November 2024]** MERPO Staff will generate preliminary Division Needs Project scores and point assignments according to the Scoring Criteria. Results will be posted to the MERPO website.
23. **[November 2024]** The TCC will recommend, and the TAC will approve the final Division Needs Point Assignments at their December meeting, consistent with #13 above.
24. **[November 2024]** MERPO Staff will enter the final Division Needs Point Assignments into SPOT Online and will post on the MERPO website.
25. **[November-December 2024]** NCDOT Staff will develop the draft 2026-2035 STIP.
26. **[January 2025]** NCDOT will release the draft 2026-2035 STIP.
27. **[January-June 2025]** NCDOT Staff will prepare the final draft 2026-2035 STIP.
28. **[June 2025]** Adoption of the 2026-2035 STIP by the North Carolina Board of Transportation.

PRIORITIZATION 7.0 LOCAL INPUT POINT
ASSIGNMENT METHODOLOGY

PHASE	ACTION	2024												2025								
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J			
LIP Assignment Methodology Development & Adoption	1 Staff Develops Draft Methodology	1																				
	2 TCC & TAC Approve Draft Methodology			2																		
	3 Staff Submits Approved Draft Methodology to NCDOT			3																		
	4 Final Adoption of Methodology by TCC & TAC					4																
Regional Impact LIP Assignments	5 Quantitative Scores & SM-Programmed Projects Released					5																
	6 Staff Reviews SM-Programmed Projects					6																
	7 Staff Reviews RI Quantitative Scores					7																
	8 Staff Prepares RI Project Development Points					8																
	9 Staff Meets with each County Priority Official					9																
	10 Staff Meets with NCDOT Divisions 1 & 2					10																
	11 Staff Meets with Adjacent TPOs					11																
	12 Staff Prepares Preliminary Scores					12																
	13 TCC & TAC Approve Regional Impact LIPs					13																
	14 Staff Enters Regional Impact LIPs into SPOT Online					14																
Division Needs LIP Assignments	15 Regional Impact Scores Released												15									
	16 Staff Reviews RI-Programmed Projects												16									
	17 Staff Reviews Division Needs Quantitative Scores												17									
	18 Staff Prepares DN Project Development Points												18									
	19 Staff Meets with each County Priority Official												19									
	20 Staff Meets with NCDOT Divisions 1 & 2												20									
	21 Staff Meets with Adjacent TPOs												21									
	22 Staff Prepares Preliminary Scores												22									
	23 TCC & TAC Adopt Division Needs LIPs												23									
	24 Staff Enters Division Needs LIPs into SPOT Online												24									
Draft 2026-2035 STIP Development, Release & Adoption	25 NCDOT Prepares Draft 2026-2035 STIP												25									
	26 NCDOT Releases Draft 2026-2035 STIP												26									
	27 NCDOT Prepares Final 2026-2035 STIP													27								
	28 NC Board of Transportation Adopts 2026-2035 STIP																					28

MERPO Staff Action
TCC/TAC Action
NCDOT Staff Action
NC BOT Action

III. DESCRIPTION OF CRITERIA AND WEIGHTS

The following scoring criteria will be used to generate a score for each project submitted by MERPO in Prioritization 7.0, regardless of transportation mode. Each project will receive a score in the Regional Impact Category and/or Division Needs Category if it competes in that category.

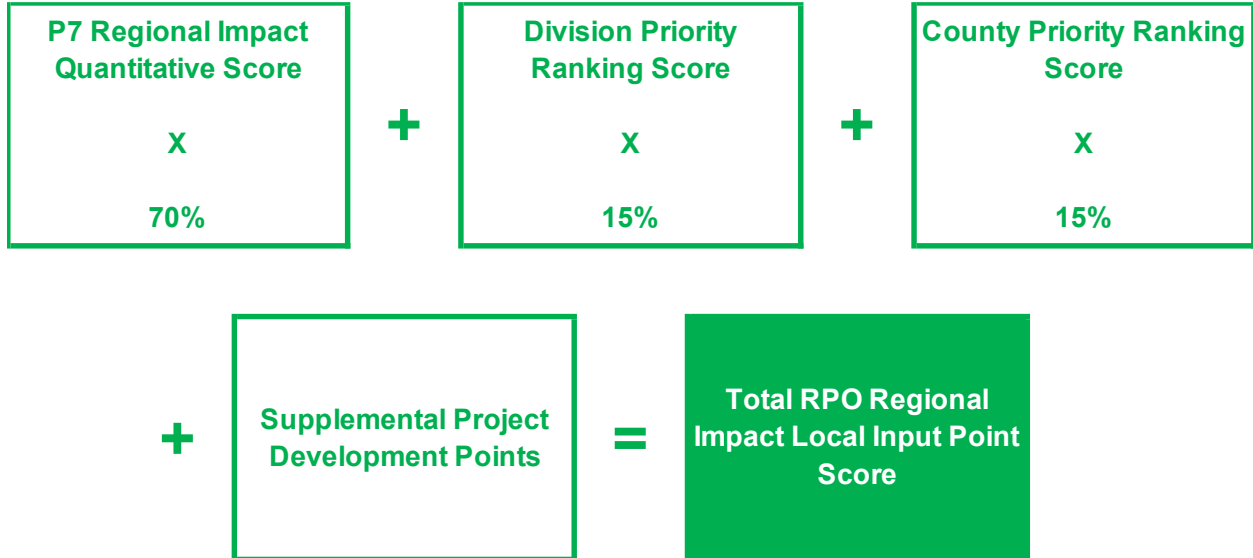
REGIONAL IMPACT SCORING CRITERIA		
Criteria	Weight	Methodology
SPOT Quantitative Score (Quantitative)	70%	<p>The Mid-East RPO believes that the Prioritization 7.0 Quantitative Score, calculated using either the default or alternative criteria, is the best quantitative criterion to maximize the funding potential for MERPO transportation projects. Projects that receive lower Prioritization 7.0 Quantitative Scores will have difficulty being competitive. As such, the project's Prioritization 7.0 Quantitative Score will serve as MERPO's Local Quantitative Criteria.</p>
Division Priority (Qualitative)	15%	<p>Projects will not compete well in the Regional Impact category unless they have the support of the Division Engineer and rank well by the Division Engineer's scoring criteria. Division Engineers will assign each project one of the following priority classifications: HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW, or NONE. The priority classifications shall equate to the following points:</p> <p>HIGH: 100 MEDIUM: 75 LOW: 50 NONE: 0</p> <p>Division Engineers should ensure that an equal number of projects are assigned to each priority classification.</p>
County Priority (Qualitative)	15%	<p>Projects should have local support. The TCC Representative for each County is expected to collaborate with other County Staff, County Elected Officials, Municipal Staff & Elected Officials within their respective County, and other stakeholders representing County transportation modes or systems, as deemed appropriate by the County TCC Representative to develop County Priorities. Each County TCC Representative will assign every project within their respective County a HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW, or NONE priority classification. The priority classifications shall equate to the following points:</p> <p>HIGH: 100 MEDIUM: 75 LOW: 50 NONE: 0</p> <p>County TCC Representatives should ensure that an equal number of projects are assigned to each priority classification. If a project is prioritized by more than one County, it will be assigned the average of the points received.</p>
Project Development (Qualitative)	Supplemental Points	<p>Projects that have completed or are currently undergoing planning or development activities will be given supplemental points to distinguish them from projects that are simply conceptual. Points will be given cumulative to projects for each of the following criteria as indicated:</p> <p>Identified in CTP or other Adopted Plan: +10 Points Completed Feasibility Study and/or Express Design: +10 Points Completed Preliminary Engineering: +10 Points Project and/or Sibling of Project in Current STIP: +10 Points</p>

DIVISION NEEDS SCORING CRITERIA		
Criteria	Weight	Methodology
SPOT Quantitative Score (Quantitative)	50%	The Mid-East RPO believes that the Prioritization 7.0 Quantitative Score, calculated using either the default or alternative criteria, is the best quantitative criterion to maximize the funding potential for MERPO transportation projects. Projects that receive lower Prioritization 7.0 Quantitative Scores will have difficulty being competitive. As such, the project's Prioritization 7.0 Quantitative Score will serve as MERPO's Local Quantitative Criteria.
Division Priority (Qualitative)	25%	<p>Projects will not compete well in the Regional Impact category unless they have the support of the Division Engineer and rank well by the Division Engineer's scoring criteria. Division Engineers will assign each project one of the following priority classifications: HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW, or NONE. The priority classifications shall equate to the following points:</p> <p>HIGH: 100 MEDIUM: 75 LOW: 50 NONE: 0</p> <p>Division Engineers should ensure that an equal number of projects are assigned to each priority classification.</p>
County Priority (Qualitative)	25%	<p>Projects should have local support. The TCC Representative for each County is expected to collaborate with other County Staff, County Elected Officials, Municipal Staff & Elected Officials within their respective County, and other stakeholders representing County transportation modes or systems, as deemed appropriate by the County TCC Representative to develop County Priorities. Each County TCC Representative will assign every project within their respective County a HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW, or NONE priority classification. The priority classifications shall equate to the following points:</p> <p>HIGH: 100 MEDIUM: 75 LOW: 50 NONE: 0</p> <p>County TCC Representatives should ensure that an equal number of projects are assigned to each priority classification. If a project is prioritized by more than one County, it will be assigned the average of the points received.</p>
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IV. TOTAL SCORE AND PROJECT RANKING APPROACH

RPO Project Scores will be calculated as follows:

REGIONAL IMPACT



DIVISION NEEDS



V. POINT ASSIGNMENT PROCESS

Preliminary points will be assigned as follows at both the Regional Impact and Division Needs categories, based on each project's RPO Project Score. 1,300 Local Input Points are available for both the Regional Impact and Division Needs categories however, the Mid-East RPO reserves the option to flex up to 50% (650 Points Max) of its Local Input Points between the Regional Impact and Division Needs categories.

1. The top two scoring highway projects in each county (Beaufort, Martin & Pitt) will be eligible for 100 points each (600 points max).
2. The top three scoring non-highway projects will be eligible for 100 points each, regardless of non-highway mode or location (300 points max).
3. Maximum points remaining will be assigned to the next highest-scoring projects, regardless of modes or locations.

Final point assignments may be modified by the Transportation Advisory Committee in accordance with Prioritization Process and Timeline – Step #13.

