

Bicycle & Pedestrian Project Prioritization

One of the goals of the TARPO Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning Framework is to provide guidance for future prioritization of bicycle and pedestrian projects through the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) process of the NCDOT. STI is the data-driven process that NCDOT uses to select which proposed capital projects will receive funding. As part of the STI process, TARPO has two key roles: (1) project submittal for consideration; and (2) assignment of RPO local input points, which make up 25% of the final score for bicycle and pedestrian projects.

In the last iteration of STI project submittals, each county within TARPO was permitted to submit up to five bicycle and pedestrian projects of their choosing for consideration. The only limitations on this were the requirements imposed by NCDOT that the projects come from adopted plans and that they have a minimum cost of at least \$100,000.

A state law passed in 2012 required TARPO to develop a documented methodology for assigning its STI local input points. The methodology developed by TARPO for scoring bicycle and pedestrian projects is as follows:

- Up to 100 points based on the subjective ranking placed on that project by elected officials in the community (50% of score)
- Up to 40 points based on the potential safety benefits of the project in reducing crash potential (20% of score)
- Up to 20 points based on whether the project was connected to other parts of the bicycle/pedestrian network or filling gaps in the network (10% of score)
- Up to 30 points based on whether the project was consistent with an adopted plan (15% of score)
- Up to 10 points based on whether the project required collaboration between multiple jurisdictions (5% of score)

After scoring, all bicycle and pedestrian projects were placed in their rank order along with projects from other transportation modes (which used different scoring criteria), and the top ranking projects were selected to receive TARPO's local points.

While this method has been effective in some respects, several potential improvements were noted by members of the steering committee for this project. Whereas *plan consistency* was an important factor in the past, recent changes in STI policy that require all bicycle and pedestrian projects submitted for consideration to come from an adopted plan make this criterion unnecessary. Similarly, *jurisdictional collaboration* may be seen as a "bonus" for some projects rather than a measure of the actual benefit or worthiness of the project, and is likewise a candidate for removal as a criterion.

The steering committee identified the following criteria as important in the prioritization of bicycle and pedestrian projects:

- Higher priority for projects that serve a utilitarian/transportation purpose rather than (or in addition to) a purely recreational purpose
- Higher priority for projects that provide access/connections for areas with “underserved” populations (such as low income populations) and improve connections to transit
- Higher priority for projects with greater safety benefits
- Higher priority for projects that connect to employment, schools, parks, activity centers, and the existing bicycle/pedestrian network
- Higher priority for projects with greater health benefits – it was acknowledged that this may be harder to measure and may be incorporated into aspects of other criteria, such as providing access to schools

The steering committee also recommended that a subset of all planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the region be identified as a priority network for implementation, and that future project submittals for STI be limited to this subset of projects.

The following scoring criteria have been developed based on the principles listed above:

- Up to 100 points based on **subjective ranking** by the community (50%) – UNCHANGED
- Up to 25 points based on **project purpose/need** (12.5%)
 - 25 points for projects with a primarily transportation-related purpose
 - 15 points for projects with some transportation use, but primarily for recreational use
 - 5 points for projects with little transportation utility
 - 0 points for projects with only recreational utility (example: loop within a park)
- Up to 25 points based on **access to underserved populations** (12.5%)
 - Percent of population living in poverty in that census tract / 2 (the highest percentage of any census tract within TARPO at this time is 40%)
 - 5 additional points (up to the cap of 25 total for this category) for projects that improve access to permanent bus stop locations
- Up to 25 points based on **safety/crash exposure** (12.5%) – NO CHANGE TO CALCULATION METHODOLOGY, JUST A CHANGE IN WEIGHT
 - Off-road greenway projects that are physically separated from roadways (independent alignment) – 25 points
 - Off-road greenway projects that are parallel to roadways (sidepaths) – 12.5 points
 - Sidewalk projects on roadways with pedestrian crashes reported in the last five years – 25 points
 - On-road bicycle projects on roadways with bicycle crashes reported in the last five years – 25 points
 - Sidewalk projects on roads without any sidewalks – $AADT * 0.005$ (all roads over 5000 AADT get 25 points)
 - Sidewalk project on roads with sidewalks currently on one side – $AADT * 0.0025$ (all roads over 10000 AADT get 25 points)

- Crossing improvement projects – $\text{AADT} * 0.0025$ (all roads over 10000 AADT get 25 points)
- On-road bicycle projects – $\text{AADT} * 0.00125$ (all roads over 20000 AADT get 25 points)
- Up to 25 points based on **connectivity** (12.5%) – NO CHANGE TO CALCULATION METHODOLOGY, JUST A CHANGE IN WEIGHT
 - 25 points for connecting two previously unconnected sections of network
 - 25 points for projects that connect neighborhoods to schools
 - 12.5 points for projects that provide connections to downtowns, shopping centers, parks, hospitals, or major employment centers
 - 0 points for all other projects

These criteria are used in this Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Framework to rank the priority corridors, and are also recommended for incorporation into TARPO's STI Project Prioritization Policy.