

The Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization’s Local Input Point Methodology for the North Carolina Department of Transportation Strategic Prioritization 8.0 Process

Introduction

The Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) law is the formula to determine how the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), in partnership with local governments, will fund and prioritize transportation projects in the state of North Carolina. Under this formula, all modes will compete for the same funding based on a data-driven process called Prioritization.

The Strategic Transportation Investments places projects into three categories: Statewide, Regional and Division levels. The Statewide level is based solely on quantitative data such as benefit cost and safety ratios. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) and Division Engineers will assign local input points to projects in the Regional and Division levels. These points will be included in the calculation of the final project scores for Prioritization 8.0 (P 8.0) for the Regional and Division categories. MPOs and RPOs are required to develop a methodology for the assignment of local input points, and NCDOT must approve this methodology.

Figure 1, below, illustrates the three funding categories defined by the Strategic Transportation Investments law. Table 1 and Figure 2 that follow provide details on the data type, weighting, and corresponding geographic areas associated with each funding category to evaluate projects.

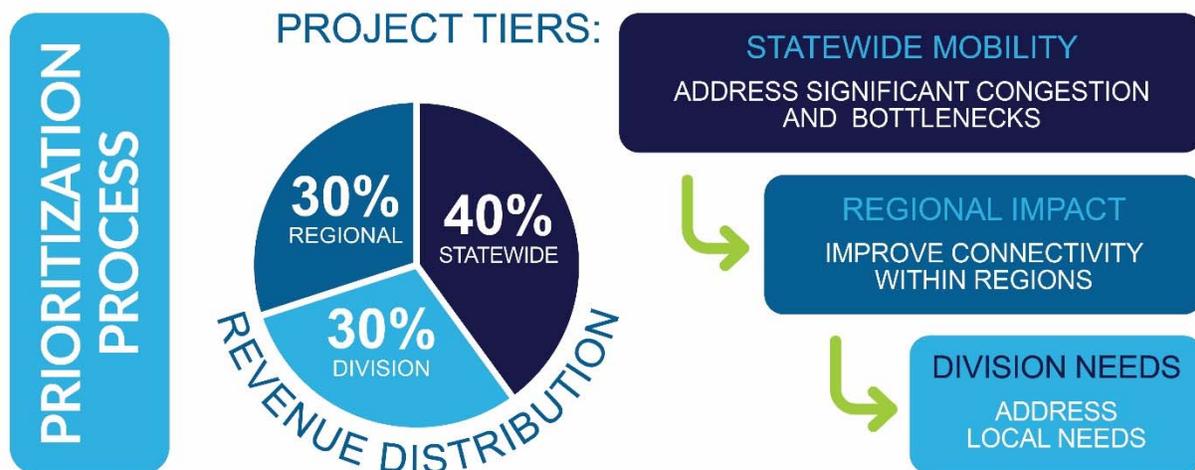


Figure 1. NCDOT Strategic Prioritization Funding Categories

| Statewide Mobility (40% of total revenue funding) | Regional Impact (30% of total revenue funding) | Division Needs (30% of total revenue funding) |
|--|--|--|
| The project selection process will be 100% data-driven/quantitative scoring. | Data/ quantitative scoring will comprise 70% of the decision-making process and local rankings will comprise of the remaining 30%. This 30% local input will be shared 15% by the Division Engineers and 15% MPO/RPO input. The Wilmington MPO is located in Region B, made up of Divisions 2 and 3. | The Department will choose projects based 50% on data and 50% on local rankings. This 50% local input will be shared 25% by the Division Engineers and 25% MPO/RPO input. The Wilmington MPO is located in NCDOT Division 3. |

Table 1. NCDOT Strategic Prioritization Data Type Weighting by Funding Category



Figure 2. NCDOT Highway Divisions

Each of the three funding categories identified under the Strategic Transportation Investments has its own scoring criteria, weighting, and project eligibility. An overview of these funding category specific details can be reviewed in Appendix A, Strategic Transportation Investments; Highway Scoring Details, and Appendix B, Strategic Transportation Investments; Non-Highway Scoring Details.

This methodology is intended to ensure a process that is both data-driven and responsive to local needs. The 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 that includes at least two criteria, with at least one being qualitative, for determining project prioritization. The North Carolina Department of Transportation will be developing quantitative scores for all projects based on adopted criteria from the P8.0 Workgroup.

The WMPO’s participation in the Strategic Transportation Investments process consists of the following steps:

1. Selection and submittal of projects for consideration in the Statewide, Regional, and Division levels.

2. Develop qualitative scoring methodology (Local Input Point Methodology) for projects eligible for evaluation in the Regional Impact and Division Needs funding categories.
3. Receive quantitative scoring of submitted projects that have been determined by NCDOT’s Strategic Prioritization Office of Transportation (SPOT).
4. Apply local input point methodology for scoring projects in the Regional Impact and Division Needs categories.
5. Public involvement process reviewing the draft results for local input point assignment in the Regional Impact and Division Needs categories; and
6. Finalize project scoring and local input point assignment in the Regional Impact and Division Needs categories.

The following methodology has been developed by the WMPO for determining transportation funding priorities in Prioritization 8.0.

Selection of Projects for Prioritization 8.0

The projects submitted from the WMPO to NCDOT for Prioritization 8.0 were selected as priorities by the WMPO Board from the MPO’s adopted Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Cape Fear Moving Forward 2045. The WMPO plans for six modes of transportation in its region: aviation, bicycle and pedestrian, ferry and water transportation, freight rail, public transportation, and roadway. Cape Fear Moving Forward 2045 was developed using mode-specific prioritization tools to evaluate and prioritize future projects for inclusion in the plan. These modal prioritization tools were derived from mode-specific goals and objectives that were developed by the public, elected officials, subject matter experts, and local planning partners. The evaluative criteria and metrics of the tools were based on both quantitative (objective) and qualitative (subjective) data. Modal ranked lists of projects were then used as the basis for the fiscal constraint analysis, which determined which projects could receive a portion of the anticipated funding in the region between 2020 and 2045.

Description of Criteria and Weights

The WMPO will evaluate projects for the assignment of local input points based on the following criteria: the Prioritization 8.0 quantitative score; coordination of point assignment with Division 3; consistency with WMPO adopted plans; status of project in development; and the number of Prioritization cycles the project has been submitted by the WMPO.

A scoring matrix of these criteria will be used to evaluate P 8.0 scored projects and develop the draft Local Input point assignments for the WMPO. Table 2 provides an example of this matrix:

| | Prioritization 8.0 Quantitative Score | WMPO and NCDOT Div. 3 Coordination | Consistency with Plans | Status of Project in Development | Number of Prioritization Cycles | Total |
|------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|---|--|-------------------|
| | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 500) |
| Project X | | | | | | |

Table 2. P 8.0 Local Input Point Assignment Scoring Criteria Matrix

Prioritization 8.0 Quantitative Score - The Prioritization 8.0 Quantitative score is the score provided by SPOT for each project. The MPO will convert the data/quantitative based Regional and Divisional level scores to a 100-point scale.

Coordination of Points with NCDOT Division 3 - This criterion is dependent upon if Division 3 seeks to assign input points to the project. Assignment of points by both the WMPO and Division will represent a coordinated effort and recognized regional priority.

- Projects receiving points from Division 3 - 100 points
- Projects not receiving points from Division 3 - 0 points

Consistency with Plans - This criterion is used to determine if the proposed project is in a WMPO adopted plan. Each project will be evaluated with the points assigned as follows:

- Projects included in the adopted Metropolitan Transportation Plan - 100 points
- Projects included in Plans adopted by the WMPO - 50 points
- Projects that are adopted in plans by member jurisdictions and/or NCDOT but not adopted by the WMPO - 0 points

Status of the Project in Development - This criterion will identify which phase the project is in development. Each project will be evaluated with the criteria as outlined below:

- Projects that are in the right-of-way acquisition or property already acquired by the State of North Carolina - 100 points
- Projects that are in the Design phase (engineering, construction document preparation, or surveying) - 50 points
- Projects that are in the Planning phase (feasibility study or environmental permitting/permitting phases) - 25 points

Number of NCDOT Prioritization Cycles - This criterion will award points to projects based on the number of Prioritization cycles in which the WMPO has submitted the project. Projects will be assigned points as follows:

- Projects submitted in four (4) or more consecutive Prioritization cycles (beginning in P4.0 or earlier) - 100 points
- Projects submitted in three (3) consecutive Prioritization cycles (beginning in P5.0) - 75 points
- Projects submitted in two (2) consecutive Prioritization cycles (beginning in P6.0) - 50 points
- Projects submitted in beginning in P8.0 - 25 points

Scoring Projects

All modes of projects will be evaluated utilizing the matrix and criteria scoring outlined in the previous section. The following provides an example of how a project will be scored utilizing this method.

Example:

Project X is a widening project that includes two transit stop shelters, a bike lane, and 5' sidewalks on both sides of the street. The project received a Prioritization 8.0 quantitative score of 56.8 and has been identified by Division 3 as a priority project to receive 100 of their input points. The project is in the design phase and is a supported project within the currently adopted MTP. The project was first submitted by the WMPO in Prioritization 5.0.

Utilizing the scoring method outlined previously, the following is a breakdown of the point assignment for Project X:

| | Prioritization 8.0 Quantitative Score | WMPO and NCDOT Div. 3 Coordination | Consistency with Plans | Status of Project in Development | Number of Prioritization Cycles | Total |
|-----------|--|--|---------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 500) |
| Project X | 56.8 | 100 | 100 | 50 | 75 | 381.8 |

Table 3. P 8.0 Local Input Point Assignment Scoring for Example Project X

Final Local Input Point Assignment

All projects will be ranked based on their evaluated scores. Higher evaluated scores will result in a higher ranking of the project. The WMPO will be able to assign up to 1,600 total local input points for each funding category (**1600 for the Regional Impact and 1600 for the Division Needs categories**). The maximum number of points that can be assigned to a project is 100 points. The top **sixteen** scoring projects will be assigned 100 points each from the WMPO.

To represent the multi-modal needs and interests of its members, the WMPO will maintain a modal project mix standard for point assignment. This minimum standard is the assignment of Local Input Points to at least one project in each of the eligible non-highway modes in the Regional Impact and Division Needs categories. If aviation, bicycle and pedestrian, ferry, public transportation, and rail projects are not included within the WMPO’s top sixteen ranked projects, the highest scoring project from each eligible non-highway mode will be elevated to replace the lowest ranking highway project(s) within the top sixteen.

The WMPO Board may also consider the option to apply the Local Input Point Flexing Policy. This means that up to 500 Local Input Points can be transferred from the Regional Impact category to the Division Needs category, and visa-versa. If the organization chooses to flex Local Input Points, the WMPO will provide written documentation to the SPOT Office prior to assigning Regional Impact Local Input Points.

The WMPO Board reserves the option to deviate from the local input methodology point assignment process to award points to projects of priority or importance. In these instances, justification and/or rationale shall be given at an advertised, open meeting of the WMPO Board.

Schedule and Public Outreach

The WMPO adopted the most current Public Involvement Policy on January 25, 2023 and is located on the WMPO’s website at www.wmpo.org. The Public Involvement Policy is an umbrella policy encompassing the plans and programs of the WMPO’s transportation planning process. This policy serves as an integral part of the MPO’s planning efforts. The WMPO will utilize this adopted policy to solicit comments on the “draft” Project Ranking and Scoring. These outreach efforts will include regular public input opportunities at Board meetings, and the draft project ranking and scoring will be posted on

the WMPO’s website. Both efforts will help the WMPO solicit public comments through verbal comments at a public meeting or via mail or email. Following the closing of the public participation process, staff will review any comments received with the TCC and the Board. All public comments received will be documented. The local input scores and project rankings, and all draft and final point assignments with any justification/rationale for point assignment that deviates from this Local Methodology, will be placed on the WMPO’s website at www.wmpo.org until after the adoption of the final STIP/MPO TIP by the Board of Transportation.

During each point assignment period, the WMPO’s TCC and the Board will develop a “draft” project ranking and scoring to assign points based on the criteria. The WMPO will hold a 30-day public comment period and invite in-person comments about the draft assignment to be made at the Board’s meeting immediately following this period. Written comments will be provided to the TCC and Board for consideration. No additional projects will be submitted based on the public participation effort, but comments will be considered prior to the final adoption of the scores. The Board will adopt a Final Project Ranking and Scoring for the WMPO. This information will then be submitted to the NCDOT SPOT office.

Prioritization 8.0 Process Schedule 2025 – 2027

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| New project submittals to NCDOT | July – September 2025 |
| MPO’s, RPO’s, Divisions develop Input Point Methodologies | October 2025 – April 2026 |
| Quantitative Scores for all projects and Statewide Mobility programmed projects released | May 2026 |
| Regional Impact Local Input Point Assignment | June - August 2026 |
| Regional Impact total scores and programmed projects released | September 2026 |
| Division Needs Local Input Point Assignment | October - December 2026 |
| Division Needs projects programmed | January - February 2027 |
| NCDOT releases Draft 2028-2037 STIP/MPO TIP | Winter/Spring 2027 |

Point Assignment Process

The Local Input Methodology shall serve as a guide for the Board to assign 100 points to the top sixteen scoring projects located within the WMPO’s planning jurisdiction. However, **deviation** from the Local Input Methodology shall require the justification/rationale to be made during a public meeting of the Board, as advertised by the open meetings laws, and included with the sharing of the points with the public through the public outreach effort.

During the draft and final point assignments, the following information will be available on the WMPO’s website for all projects submitted to SPOT:

| | Prioritization 8.0 Quantitative Score | WMPO and NCDOT Div. 3 Coordination | Consistency with Plans | Status of Project in Development | Number of Prioritization Cycles | Total |
|------------------|--|---|-----------------------------------|---|--|----------------------|
| | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 100) | Points (x of 500) |
| Project X | | | | | | |

Table 4. P 8.0 Local Input Point Assignment Scoring Matrix

| | Draft Local Input Point Assignment | Deviation Notes (if applicable) | Final Local Input Point Assignment |
|------------------|---|--|---|
| Project X | Points (x of 100) | | Points (x of 100) |

Table 5. P 8.0 Local Input Point Assignment Results Matrix

Material Sharing

The WMPO strives to maintain complete transparency through the local input scoring process. All relevant materials will be posted on the WMPO’s website within one week of completion and will remain available until after the adoption of the STIP by the Board of Transportation and MPO TIP by the WMPO Board. The following information will be available at the WMPO’s website www.wmpo.org:

- A link to NCDOT’s STI Prioritization Resources website.
- The WMPO’s adopted methodology summary.
- A schedule of the local input process, including dates for public meetings and comment periods.
- Draft and final local input point scores and records of deviations and applicable reasoning.

Appendix A – Strategic Transportation Investments; Highway Scoring Details

Highway Project Eligibility and Scoring Criteria and Weights

| Statewide Mobility | Regional Impact | Division Needs |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interstates (existing and future) National Highway System routes (as of 2013) STRAHNET Designated Toll Facilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other US and NC routes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All secondary roads (SR) Federal-Aid eligible local roads |

Table A1 – Highway Project Eligibility

Mobility Projects

Project types include widening, intersection or interchange improvements, access management improvements, and other capacity expanding improvements.

| Funding Category | Quantitative Criteria | Data % of Total Score | Local Input Division 3 | Local Input WMPO |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Statewide Mobility | Congestion – 30% Benefit/Cost – 25% Freight – 25% Safety – 10% Economic Competitiveness – 10% | 100% | - | - |
| Regional Impact | Congestion – 20% Benefit/Cost – 20% Safety – 10% Accessibility/Connectivity – 10% Freight – 10% | 70% | 15% | 15% |
| Division Needs | Congestion – 15% Benefit/Cost – 15% Safety – 10% Accessibility/Connectivity – 5% Freight – 5% | 50% | 25% | 25% |

Table A2 – Highway Mobility Scoring Criteria and Weights

Modernization Projects

Project types include existing roadway modernizations and upgrading freeway to interstate standards. Additionally, road diets will now be scored under Modernization by default unless a request for a road diet project to be scored under Mobility is made by the project submitter.

| Funding Category | Quantitative Criteria | Data % of Total Score | Local Input Division 3 | Local Input WMPO |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Statewide Mobility | Congestion – 10% Safety – 35% Freight – 25% Lane Width – 30% | 100% | - | - |
| Regional Impact | Congestion – 5% Safety – 35% Freight – 15% Lane Width – 15% | 70% | 15% | 15% |
| Division Needs | Congestion – 5% Safety – 35% Freight – 5% Lane Width – 5% | 50% | 25% | 25% |

Table A3 – Highway Modernization Scoring Criteria and Weights

Appendix B – Strategic Transportation Investments; Non-Highway Scoring Details

Aviation Project Eligibility and Scoring Criteria and Weights

| Statewide Mobility | Regional Impact | Division Needs |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large Commercial Service airports (375,000 or more enplanements annually) Funding cap: \$500k / project / year (up to 3 years) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial Service airports not included in Statewide Funding cap: \$300k / project / year (up to 3 years) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Aviation airports Funding cap: \$18.5M annually over entire category |

Table B1 – Aviation Project Eligibility

| Funding Category | Quantitative Criteria | Data % of Total Score | Local Input Division 3 | Local Input WMPO |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Statewide Mobility | NCDOA Project Rating – 40% FAA ACIP Rating – 30% Constructability Index – 10% Benefit/Cost – 20% | 100% | - | - |
| Regional Impact | NCDOA Project Rating – 30% FAA ACIP Rating – 15% Constructability Index – 10% Benefit/Cost – 15% | 70% | 15% | 15% |
| Division Needs | NCDOA Project Rating – 25% FAA ACIP Rating – 10% Constructability Index – 5% Benefit/Cost – 10% | 50% | 25% | 25% |

Table B2 – Aviation Scoring Criteria and Weights

Bicycle and Pedestrian Project Eligibility and Scoring Criteria and Weights

Bicycle and Pedestrian Project Eligibility:

- Project must be included in an adopted plan
- Minimum total project cost of \$100,000
- A 20% local, non-federal match is required

| Funding Category | Quantitative Criteria | Data % of Total Score | Local Input Division 3 | Local Input WMPO |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Statewide Mobility | N/A | - | - | - |
| Regional Impact | N/A | - | - | - |
| Division Needs | Safety – 20% Accessibility/Connectivity – 15% Demand/Density – 10% Cost Effectiveness – 5% | 50% | 25% | 25% |

Table B3 – Bicycle and Pedestrian Scoring Criteria and Weights



Ferry Project Eligibility and Scoring Criteria and Weights

| Statewide Mobility | Regional Impact | Division Needs |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not Eligible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New installation of ramp & gantry (capacity expansion) Bulkhead expansion (associated with capacity expansion) Additional mooring slips (to accommodate capacity expansion) New (capacity expansion) Ferry (River or Sound Class) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of Ferry (River, Hatteras, or Sound Class) Replacement of support vessels (barges, tugs, etc.) |

Table B4 – Ferry Project Eligibility

Replacement Projects

Project Types:

- Replace support vessels
- Replace vehicle vessels
- Replace passenger vessels
- Replace facility

| Funding Category | Quantitative Criteria | Data % of Total Score | Local Input Division 3 | Local Input WMPO |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Statewide Mobility | N/A | - | - | - |
| Regional Impact | Availability – 20% Age – 15% Asset Condition Rating – 20% Asset Efficiency – 15% | 70% | 15% | 15% |
| Division Needs | Availability – 15% Age – 10% Asset Condition Rating – 15% Asset Efficiency – 10% | 50% | 25% | 25% |

Table B5 – Ferry Replacement Vessels and Facilities Scoring Criteria and Weights

Expansion Projects

Project Types:

- Expand support vessels
- Expand vehicle vessels
- Expand passenger vessels
- Expand facility

| Funding Category | Quantitative Criteria | Data % of Total Score | Local Input Division 3 | Local Input WMPO |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Statewide Mobility | N/A | - | - | - |
| Regional Impact | Availability – 20% Benefits – 15% Capacity/Congestion – 20% Cost Effectiveness – 15% | 70% | 15% | 15% |
| Division Needs | Availability – 15% Benefits – 10% Capacity/Congestion – 15% Cost Effectiveness – 10% | 50% | 25% | 25% |

Table B6 – Ferry Expansion Vessels and Facilities Scoring Criteria and Weights

Public Transportation Project Eligibility and Scoring Criteria and Weights

| Statewide Mobility | Regional Impact | Division Needs |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not Eligible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service spanning two or more counties and servicing more than one municipality (based on route and not provider) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service not eligible in the Regional Impact category. Multimodal terminals and stations serving passenger transit systems (includes all facilities) |

Table B7 – Public Transportation Project Eligibility

Mobility Projects

Project Types:

- Route-specific vehicles (new or expansion only)
 - Fixed guideway vehicles, fixed route vehicles, deviated fixed route vehicles
- Corridors
 - Fixed guideway (commuter rail, intercity rail, light rail)
 - Bundle of vehicle + other (ex. stops / shelters, park and rides, bus pullouts)
 - Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
 - Bus on Shoulder System (BOSS) / Busway

| Funding Category | Quantitative Criteria | Data % of Total Score | Local Input Division 3 | Local Input WMPO |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Statewide Mobility | N/A | - | - | - |
| Regional Impact | Impact (# of new trips) – 15% Demand/Density – 20% Efficiency – 10% Cost Effectiveness – 25% | 70% | 15% | 15% |
| Division Needs | Impact (# of new trips) – 10% Demand/Density – 10% Efficiency – 10% Cost Effectiveness – 20% | 50% | 25% | 25% |

Table B8 – Public Transportation Mobility Scoring Criteria and Weights

Demand Response Projects

Project Types:

- Demand Response vehicles (expansion only)
 - No facilities – either submit Demand Response facilities under Facility category or under Mobility category if bundled with a vehicle
 - Includes MicroTransit service purchases (vehicles and software)

| Funding Category | Quantitative Criteria | Data % of Total Score | Local Input Division 3 | Local Input WMPO |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Statewide Mobility | N/A | - | - | - |
| Regional Impact | Impact (# of new trips) – 10% Demand/Density – 20% Efficiency – 15% Cost Effectiveness – 25% | 70% | 15% | 15% |
| Division Needs | Impact (# of new trips) – 10% Demand/Density – 15% Efficiency – 10% Cost Effectiveness – 15% | 50% | 25% | 25% |

Table B9 – Public Transportation Demand Response Scoring Criteria and Weights

Facility Projects

Project Types:

- Passenger stations
 - Includes Mobility Hubs with Transit service
- Individual or bundled stops/shelters
- Individual or bundled park and ride lots
- Administration/Maintenance buildings

| Funding Category | Quantitative Criteria | Data % of Total Score | Local Input Division 3 | Local Input WMPO |
|--------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Statewide Mobility | N/A | - | - | - |
| Regional Impact | N/A | - | - | - |
| Division Needs | Impact (# of trips affected) – 15% Demand/Density – 10% Efficiency – 10% Cost Effectiveness – 15% | 50% | 25% | 25% |

Table B10 – Public Transportation Facility Scoring Criteria and Weights



WMPO

Wilmington Urban
Area Metropolitan
Planning Organization
www.wmpo.org

Rail Project Eligibility and Scoring Criteria and Weights

| Statewide Mobility | Regional Impact | Division Needs |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freight capacity and safety improvements on Class I railroad corridors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rail lines spanning two or more counties and passenger rail also serving two or more municipalities Freight capacity and safety improvements not on Class I railroad corridors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rail lines and service not included in Statewide or Regional project eligibility Includes multimodal passenger stations |

Table B11 – Rail Project Eligibility

| Funding Category | Quantitative Criteria | Data % of Total Score | Local Input Division 3 | Local Input WMPO |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Statewide Mobility | Benefit/Cost – 35% System Opportunities – 15% Safety – 30% Capacity and Diversion – 10% Economic Competitiveness – 10% | 100% | - | - |
| Regional Impact | Benefit/Cost – 25% System Opportunities – 10% Safety – 15% Capacity and Diversion – 10% Economic Competitiveness – 10% | 70% | 15% | 15% |
| Division Needs | Benefit/Cost – 10% System Opportunities – 15% Safety – 10% Capacity and Diversion – 10% Economic Competitiveness – 5% | 50% | 25% | 25% |

Table B12 – Rail Scoring Criteria and Weights