

North Carolina Association of Rural Planning Organizations' Presentation to House Select Committee on North Carolina's Transportation Future



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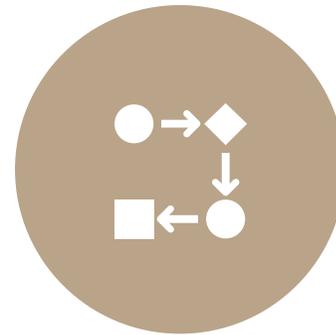
Purpose



BRIEF OVERVIEW ON NORTH
CAROLINA'S RURAL
PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS



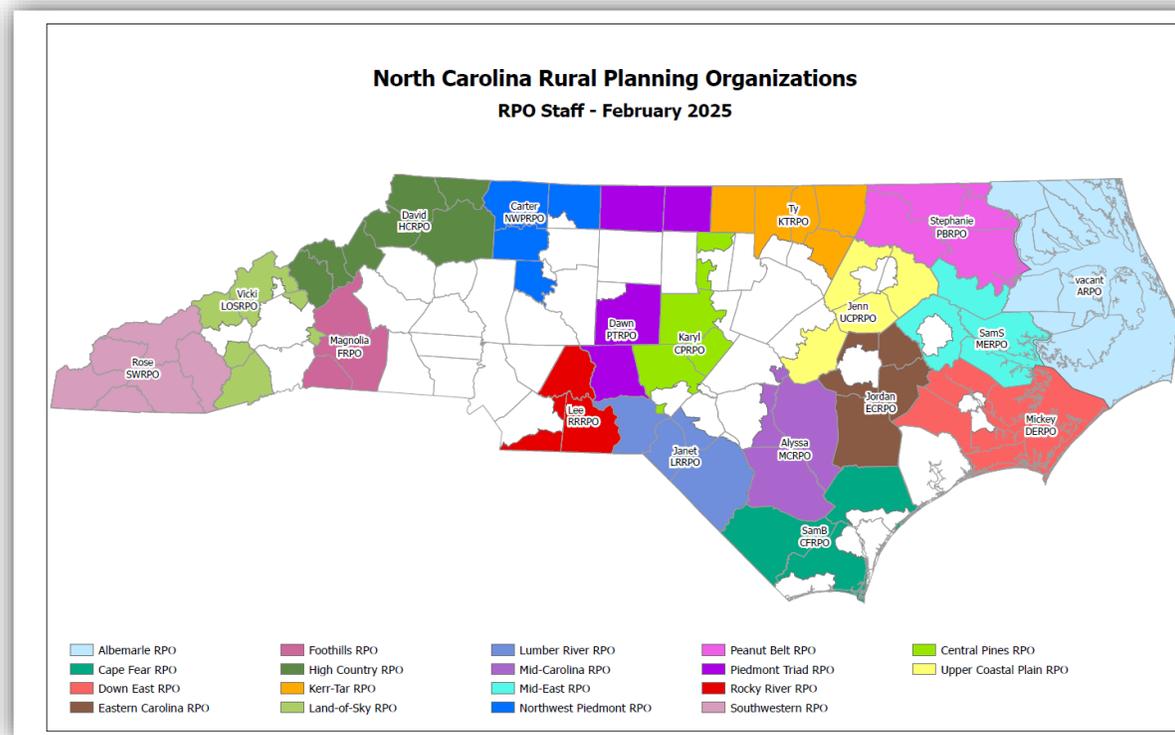
RPOS' INVOLVEMENT IN
NCDOT'S STRATEGIC
PRIORITIZATION PROCESS



RPOS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE
STI PROCESS

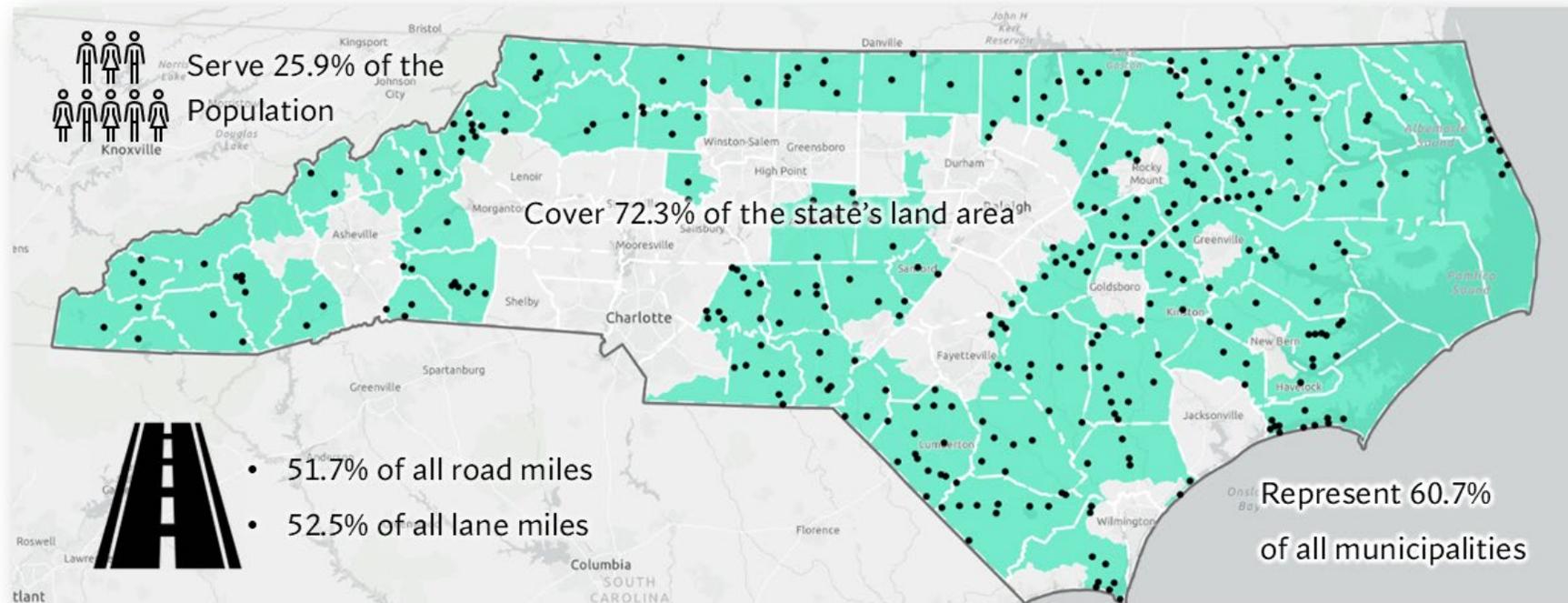
Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs)

- There are 18 RPOs in North Carolina
 - Generally, **1 staff person** to cover 3-10 counties
 - With a budget between \$135,000-\$200,000
 - RPOs serve a mixture of rural and small urban areas, and each has a unique character and a unique viewpoint
- RPOs serve all parts of the state that are not part of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
- Unlike MPOs, RPOs are not mandated by Federal law, but are rather created and governed by state law
- Each RPO has a Technical Committee made up of local government staff and a Transportation Advisory Committee made up of elected officials, similar to the MPOs



Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) – Cont.

Rural Planning Organizations in North Carolina

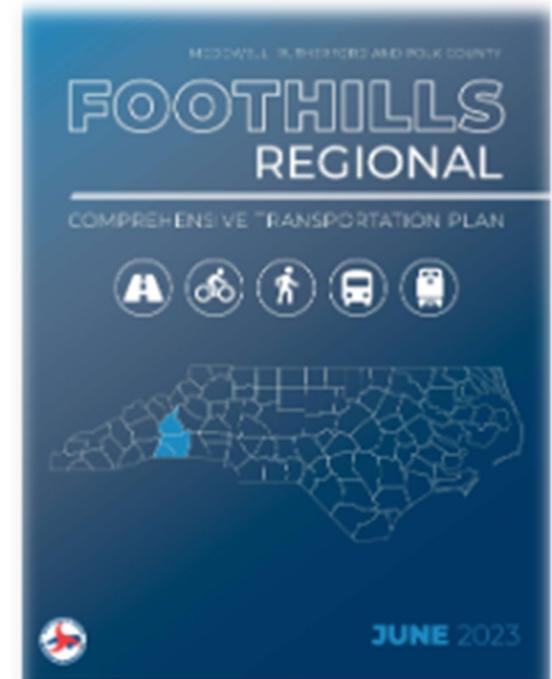


NCARPO, 2025.

Rural Planning Organizations' Duties

Primary RPO Activities Include:

- Working cooperatively with NCDOT and local governments to develop Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTPs)
- Participating in other transportation plans/activities in the region
- Participating in the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) prioritization process
- Representing local interests in the project development process
- Serving as a technical and informational resource for our local jurisdictions and the public, that often do not have transportation planning capacity



RPOs' Involvement in Prioritization

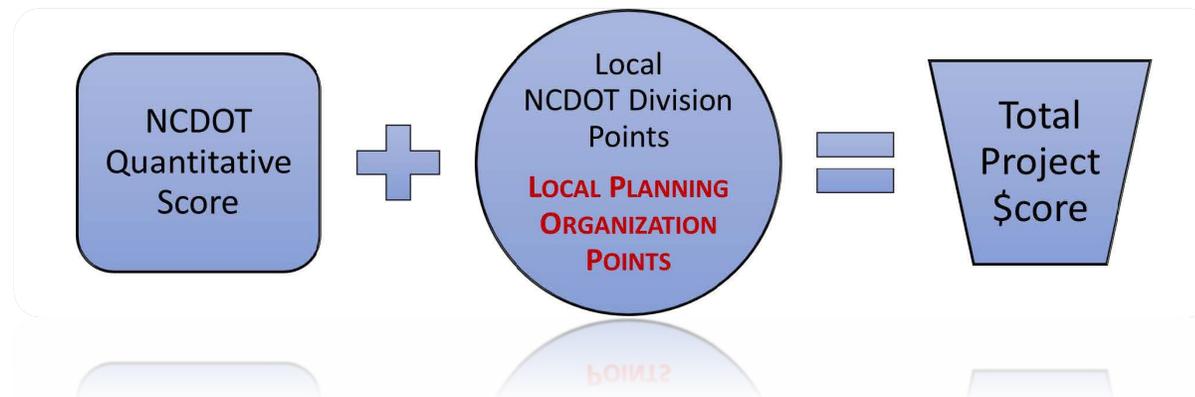
- STI Law- Chapter 136, Article 14B codified RPOs' involvement in NCDOT's process to select transportation projects for its STIP, generally called Prioritization
- RPOs participate on equal footing with the MPOs and the Highway Divisions throughout the process

SPOT ID	Mode	TIP	Project Category	Route	From / Cross Street	To	Description	Specific Improvement Type	Cost to NCDOT	Statewide Mobility Quantitative Score (Out of 100)	Regional Impact Quantitative Score (Out of 75)	Election Result Quantitative Score (Out of 50)
1792	Highway		Statewide Mobility	US 421	North of SR 2407 (Colonial Trading Path) at Guilford County Line	US 64	Upgrade existing US 421 to Interstate Standards from near the Guilford County Line to SR 2210 (Center Brooks Rd) in Guilford County.	17 - Upgrade Freeway to Interstate Standards	\$ 289,218,000	67.03	48.34	33.82
2131	Highway		Regional Impact	NC 211	Rattlesnake Road, Gun Club Drive	N/A	Improve Intersection, add turn lanes. Both Rattlesnake Road and Gun Club Drive are municipal roadways that are not maintained by NCDOT.	10 - Improve Intersection	\$ 6,899,000	N/A	44.23	33.29
4278	Highway		Statewide Mobility	NC 87	SR 1149 (Frank Wicker Road) / Traceway	N/A	Improve Intersection to superstreet	10 - Improve Intersection	\$ 7,332,000	68.56	43.70	31.11
3749	Highway		Statewide Mobility	US 1	NC 42 (Wicker Street)	N/A	Construct single roundabout at intersection of US 1 on/off ramps for southbound direction and NC 42 (western intersection). Construct two-lane roadway on new location between SR 1112 and NC 211 in Aberdeen. Includes a new bridge over the railroad.	8 - Improve Interchange	\$ 6,800,000	64.79	43.39	30.11
1781	Highway		Regional Impact	NC 211 (New Route)	SR 1112 (Rowland Road)	NC 211 (Raford Road)		5 - Construct Roadway on New Location	\$ 22,500,000	N/A	43.22	28.50
5146	Highway		Regional Impact	US 15, US 501	NC 79	NC 24, NC 27	Widen to multilanes	1 - Widen Existing Roadway	\$ 166,440,000	N/A	37.41	28.24
2439	Highway		Statewide Mobility	NC 87	SR 1136 (Wilson Road)	SR 1144 (Swains Station Road), Hammett County Line	Upgrade Arterial to Superstreet	4 - Upgrade Arterial to Signalized RCI Corridor	\$ 37,100,000	59.78	37.89	27.63
5147	Highway		Regional Impact	US 15, US 501	NC 24, NC 27 in Carhage	US 1 near Tramway	Widen to multilanes	1 - Widen Existing Roadway	\$ 265,504,000	N/A	36.75	27.46
3669	Highway	R-5827	Regional Impact	US 15, US 501	NC 211	US 1	Widen US 15703 to three lanes (2+1 weaving lanes) from US 402 in Saurburg to where US 1 becomes four lanes in Aberdeen (NC 211).	1 - Widen Existing Roadway	\$ 48,700,000	N/A	39.54	27.83
1170	Highway		Statewide Mobility	US 1	NC 540	Near Tramway (before controlled access starts)	Bring up to Interstate standards.	17 - Upgrade Freeway to Interstate Standards	\$ 1,007,111,000	50.83	35.35	25.43
1556	Highway		Statewide Mobility	US 15, US 501	NC 22 (South McNeill St)	N/A	Convert at grade intersection to roundabout	10 - Improve Intersection	\$ 4,540,000	58.18	34.83	24.78

RPOs' Involvement in Prioritization

- Process

- RPOs submit projects on behalf of local governments to be scored in the Prioritization Process
- RPOs conduct public input and work with local officials to assign local input points to the highest priority projects at both the Regional and Division Tier
- Four RPOs serve with 4 MPOs and 5 statewide members as the non-DOT half of the Prioritization Workgroup, which is responsible for continuous improvement in the process



STI Process Changes: Through Prioritization 7.0

In 2021, Prioritization 6.0 was halted due to limited funding for new projects

RPOs and MPOs were involved in determining the process (NCDOT developed the process with the Prioritization Workgroup) to create the 2024-2033 STIP

Unfortunately, by the end of Prioritization 7.0, rising inflation, poor project cost estimates and rising construction costs had significantly reduced the amount of new funding available. Only 4 of the 22 funding categories had funds – Statewide, Region C, Region D and Division 6

NCDOT and the STIP Unit continued to partner with the RPOs and MPOs and developed a process that was used to re-prioritize projects, and the 2026-2035 draft STIP was completed

STI Process Changes: Prioritization 8.0

- End of May 2026: Release of SPOT scores and funded Statewide Projects
- Summer/Fall 2026: Local Input Process for Regional and Division Tier
- January 2027: Target for 2028-2037 STIP

Draft 2028-2037 STIP Estimated Funding Availability
for Selecting Projects from Prioritization 8.0
As of July 9, 2025

STI Funding Category	Funding Availability
Statewide Mobility	\$1,665M
Region A (Divisions 1 & 4)	\$145M
Region B (Divisions 2 & 3)	\$104M
Region C (Divisions 5 & 6)	\$646M
Region D (Divisions 7 & 9)	\$319M
Region E (Divisions 8 & 10)	\$277M
Region F (Divisions 11 & 12)	\$366M
Region G (Divisions 13 & 14)	\$186M
Division 1	\$198M
Division 2	\$152M
Division 3	\$112M
Division 4	\$35M
Division 5	\$73M
Division 6	\$242M
Division 7	\$77M
Division 8	\$54M
Division 9	\$68M
Division 10	\$53M
Division 11	\$43M
Division 12	\$69M
Division 13	\$132M
Division 14	\$235M

Values are as of July 9, 2025, and will change due to, but not limited to:

- Variance adjustments
- Additional funding for ongoing activities
- Bid adjustments
- Cost changes for future activities
- Schedule changes
- Changes in anticipated revenues (including federal transportation re-authorization)

THESE NUMBERS ARE LIKELY A BEST-CASE SCENARIO. THE AMOUNTS WILL CHANGE AND WILL LIKELY DECREASE.

RPO Perspectives on Current Process

- When there was more available funding, RPOs were picking up projects, mostly at the Division Tier
- Also, since Prioritization 3.0, each cycle adds at most, 2 years of additional funding for all modes, not 10 years
- Projects with significant cost (\$250+ million) or Megaprojects that are either not eligible or score poorly at the Statewide tier are an on-going issues such as a large bridge or bypass project
- Bonus allocation has been problematic for our jurisdictions as rural areas rarely have sufficient funds to move the needle. Also, when we do provide these funds, they do not necessarily return to the community, but to the County

- Division Tier encompasses everything STI- all modes and receives only 30% of the total funding.
- For the current round of prioritization, the amount per Division ranges from \$35 million in Division 4 to \$242 million in Division 6**. The average is ~\$110 million for 10 years
- Statewide projects being cascaded and funded at the Division tier is also problematic. On average, Statewide projects cost \$57 million

RPO Perspectives on Current Process – cont.

All of the highway criteria are named. It would allow for further improvement if there could be an unnamed criteria that the Workgroup could develop and then recommend to the Board of Transportation

RPOs generally support Division Engineers receiving local input points, as we recognize their expertise. However, we could support less than a 50/50 split between the Planning Organizations (MPOs/RPOs) and Division Engineers

Lack of State match for Bicycle/Pedestrian projects has proven to an ongoing issue for our smaller communities. In addition to the 20% match, there is also inflation, project overages and mandatory NCDOT fees

RPOs' Perspectives - Final Thoughts

RPOs have been strong partners with our local governments, MPOs and NCDOT and since the implementation of STI, that has been further enhanced.

We believe the **current process works** and that there is a mechanism in the Prioritization Workgroup to make further improvements

However, RPOs also recognize that there have been some things that may not be working as intended, including the cascading process, bonus allocation and megaprojects

The RPOs would **strongly** encourage the Legislature to explore additional and new funding mechanisms as sufficient funding for projects continues to be an issue

Questions?

Thank you for the opportunity to
present the RPO perspective!

North Carolina Association of Rural Planning Organizations

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