

**RPO Technical Coordinating Committee** February 9, 2023 – 10:00 A.M., Land of Sky Regional Council and Zoom Platform. <u>Join LOSRPO TCC Meeting</u> or call in: (301) 715-8592 Meeting Id: 817 7514 0192 Passcode: 700822

# Agenda

# 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Welcome and Introductions, Agenda Approval/Modifications William High

# 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

# 3. Consent Agenda

- A. Minutes from the RPO TCC October 13, 2022, Meeting William High
- B. Letter of Support City of Brevard Greenway Feasibility Study
- C. Letter of Support Active Routes to School
- D. Letter of Support Ecusta Trail RAISE Grant Application

# 4. <u>RPO BUSINESS</u>

<ul><li>A. CRP Update</li><li>B. Prioritization 7.0 Update and DRAFT Schedule</li><li>C. CMAQ Update</li><li>D. Wildlands Network's Wildlife Connectivity</li></ul>	Vicki Eastland Vicki Eastland Vicki Eastland Nikki Robinson, NC Project Manager
	NC Project Manager

**Division Staff** 

Daniel Sellers

Alexius Farris

Vicki Eastland

# 5. <u>REGULAR UPDATES</u>

- A. NCDOT Division 13 and 14 updates
- B. Transportation Planning Division Updates
- C. NCDOT Integrated Mobility Updates
- D. Staff Updates

# 6. PUBLIC COMMENT

7. ADJOURNMENT

# **Upcoming Meetings**

Land of Sky RPO TAC - Thursday February 16th, 2023 - 11:30 AM LOSRC Offices and Zoom

Land of Sky RPO TCC- Thursday March 9th, 2023 – 10:00AM LOSRC Offices and Zoom

# RURAL CRANKING

## 3. Consent Agenda

A. Minutes from the RPO TCC March 10, 2022, TCC Meeting

# **RPO Technical Coordinating Committee**

Hybrid Meeting with the Zoom Platform October 13, 2022 – 10:00 A.M. **Minutes** 

#### Remote Attendance:

Chair William HighVicki Eastland Stephen SparksHannah CookDarby TerrellNathan MoneyhamForrest Gilliam Wes JamisonDaniel MetcalfJane Pies (minutes)Daniel SellersErica AndersonSteve WilliamsTroy WilsonAlexius Farris

Aaron Bland Chris Medlin

#### WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

Chair High called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 am, welcomed everyone, and roll was called. A quorum was announced to conduct business.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

Forrest Gilliam moved to approve the TCC agenda. Steve Williams seconded the motion which passed upon a roll call vote.

Steve Williams moved to approve the consent agenda, consisting of the agenda and the August 11, 2022, TCC minutes, The Letter of Support for the Above the Mud Reconnecting Communities Planning Grant and the Letter of Support for the Ecusta Trail NSFLTP Grant Application. Daniel Sellers seconded, and the motion passed unanimously upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

#### **RPO BUSINESS**

LOSRPO 2023 Meeting Calendar

LOSRPO TCC Meetings 2023	LOSRPO TAC Meetings 2023
February 9th 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM	February 16 <sup>th</sup> 11:30AM LOSRC and ZOOM
March 9 <sup>th</sup> 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM	March 16 <sup>th</sup> 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM
May 11 <sup>th</sup> 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM	May 18 <sup>th</sup> 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM
August 10 <sup>th</sup> 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM	August 17 <sup>th</sup> 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM
September 7th 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM	September 14 <sup>th</sup> 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM
October 12 <sup>th</sup> 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM	October 19th 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM

Meetings will be held at the Land of Sky Regional Council Office, 339 New Leicester Hwy, Suite 140 Asheville, NC 28806 Meeting Schedule subject to change based on required deadlines for RPO business. TAC meetings to be 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday.

## Information only. No action required.

# I-4700 Presentation: Blue Ridge Parkway Bridge/I-26

The I-4700 project is the widening of I-26 from I-40 to NC 280 (Airport Road). A big part of the project is the removal and replacement of the Blue Ridge parkway Bridge. Nathan Moneyham, Division Construction Engineer, NCDOT Division 13 provided a presentation on the planned process of the bridge replacement.

## Information only. No action required.

# Upcoming potential funding opportunities Carbon Reduction Program CRP/State Planning and Research SPR

There are a couple of funding sources that will be available this winter. The Carbon Reduction Program, established in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law BIL, and the State Planning and Research program funding. Below is some information on both programs.

## FHWA CARBON REDUCTION PROGRAM

## Program purpose

The Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) establishes the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP), which provides funds for projects designed to reduce transportation emissions, defined as carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from on-road highway sources. *Statutory citation:* § 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175

## Apportionment of funds

As under the FAST Act, the BIL directs FHWA to apportion funding as a lump sum for each state, which is then subdivided among apportioned programs.

Apportionment is calculated based on a percentage specified in law. [23 U.S.C. 104(b)(7)] (See "Apportionment" fact sheet for a description of this calculation.)

## <u>Suballocation</u>

65% of a state's CRP apportionment is to be obligated in the following areas in proportion to their relative shares of the state's population. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(1)(A)] Funds attributed to an urbanized area may be obligated in the metropolitan area established under 23 U.S.C. 134 that encompassed the urbanized area [23 U.S.C. 175(e)(2)]:

Urbanized areas with an urbanized area population greater than 200,000: This
portion is to be divided among those areas based on their relative share of
population, unless the Secretary approves a joint request from the state and relevant
MPO(s) to use other factors. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(1)(A)(i) and (e)(3)]

- Urbanized areas with an urbanized area population of at least 50,000 but no more than 200,000: This portion is to be divided among those areas based on their relative share of population, unless the Secretary approves a joint request from the state and relevant MPO(s) to use other factors. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(1)(A)(ii) and (e)(3)]
- Urban areas with population at least 5,000 and no more than 49,999. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(1)(A)(iii)]

• Areas with population of less than 5,000. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(1)(A)(iv)] The remaining 35% of the state's CRP apportionment may be obligated in any area of the state. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(1)(B)]

Over the period of FY22-26, states are required to make available to each urbanized area with a population of at least 50,000 obligation authority for the suballocated CRP funding. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(6)]

# Eligible activities

CRP funds may be obligated for projects that support the reduction of transportation emissions, including, but not limited to- [except as noted, § 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(c)(1)]

- a project described in 23 U.S.C. 149(b)(4) to establish or operate a traffic monitoring, management, and control facility or program, including advanced truck stop electrification systems;
- o a public transportation project eligible under 23 U.S.C. 142;
- a transportation alternative (as defined under the Moving Ahead for Progress under the 21st Century Act [23 U.S.C. 101(a)(29), as in effect on July 5, 2012]), including, but not limited to, the construction, planning, and design of onroad and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation;
- a project described in 23 U.S.C. 503(c)(4)(E) for advanced transportation and congestion management technologies;
- deployment of infrastructure-based intelligent transportation systems capital improvements and the installation of vehicle-to-infrastructure communications equipment;
- a project to replace street lighting and traffic control devices with energyefficient alternatives;
- development of a carbon reduction strategy developed by a State per requirements in 23 U.S.C. 175(d);
- a project or strategy designed to support congestion pricing, shifting transportation demand to nonpeak hours or other transportation modes, increasing vehicle occupancy rates, or otherwise reducing demand for roads, including electronic toll collection, and travel demand management strategies and programs;
- efforts to reduce the environmental and community impacts of freight movement;
- o a project that supports deployment of alternative fuel vehicles, including-
  - acquisition, installation, or operation of publicly accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure or hydrogen, natural gas, or propane vehicle fueling infrastructure; and

- purchase or lease of zero-emission construction equipment and vehicles, including the acquisition, construction, or leasing of required supporting facilities;
- o a project described in 23 U.S.C. 149(b)(8) for a diesel engine retrofit;
- certain types of projects to improve traffic flow that are eligible under the CMAQ program, and that do not involve construction of new capacity; [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 149(b)(5); and 175(c)(1)(L)]
- a project that reduces transportation emissions at port facilities, including through the advancement of port electrification; and
- any other STBG-eligible project, if the Secretary certifies that the State has demonstrated a reduction in transportation emissions, as estimated on a per capita and per unit of economic output basis. (Note: FHWA will issue guidance on how the Secretary will make such certifications.) [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 133(b) and 175(c)(2)]

# Statewide Planning and Research SPR

Each year, NCDOT receives Statewide Planning and Research (SPR) funds from the Federal Highway Administration. NCDOT uses these funds primarily to fund the activities of the NCDOT Transportation Planning Division and NCDOT Research & Development Office, as well as the RPO program. These competitive funds must be used for planning activities (not design or construction) and require a local match. The local match varies based on the presence of Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties within each MPO or RPO—since LOSRPO includes at least one Tier 2 county, any SPR-funded project in our area would require a 10% local match (with the state picking up 10% and the federal funds paying 80%).

NCDOT opens the window for RPOs and MPOs to submit projects for SPR funding in December/January and the deadline will be at the end of February 2023. If successfully awarded funding, projects would be administered by LOSRPO through an amendment to our annual Planning Work Program. The matching funds would be paid by the applicable local government(s).

LOSRPO would like to hear from any local governments that would like to apply before January 15th, 2023.

## Information only. No action required.

#### **REGULAR UPDATES**

NCDOT Division 13 &14 construction and project updates given Division StaffNCDOT Transportation Planning Division updates givenDaniel Sellers, PENCDOT Integrated Mobility Division updates givenAlexius FarrisStaff Updates givenVicki Eastland

## PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received. <u>ADJOURNMENT</u> Chair High adjourned the meeting at 10:51 AM as there was no further business.

# 3. Consent Agenda

- B. Resolution of Support City of Brevard Greenway Feasibility Study
- C. Letter of Support Active Routes to School
- D. Letter of Support Ecusta Trail RAISE Grant Application

# <u>B.</u> Resolution of Support - The City of Brevard to pursue an IMD Feasibility Study Grant through the NCDOT IMD Feasibility Studies Grant Program

The City of Brevard is pursuing an IMD Feasibility Study Grant through the NCDOT IMD Feasibility Studies Grant Program for a feasibility study for a shared use path along SR 1504 (Old Hendersonville Road) from SR 1512 (Ecusta Road) to US 64/276 (Asheville Hwy)

A resolution of support has been requested from the Land of Sky RPO TAC Chair

# RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR THE CITY OF BREVARD TO PERSUE AN IMD FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT THROUGH THE NCDOT IMD FEASIBILITY STUDIES GRANT PROGRAM

**WHEREAS**, the NCDOT has developed a new discretionary grant program to aid in bridging the

gap between conceptual planning and programming of projects through the IMD Feasibility Studies Grant;

**WHEREAS**, the NCDOT has appropriated \$2.5 million for the IMD Feasibility Studies Grant for FY24;

**WHEREAS**, the IMD Feasibility Studies Grant requires the project to be identified in a locally or regionally adopted plan;

**WHEREAS**, the SR 1504 (Old Hendersonville Hwy) Shared Use Path is Identified in the City of Brevard Pedestrian Plan (updated 2018) and the Transylvania County Bike Plan, 2019, as a Transylvania County/Brevard interface project, and in the City of DRAFT Brevard Bike and Pedestrian Plan,

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that be it resolved that the TAC of the Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization herby support the City of Brevard submitting a grant application for an IMD Feasibility Studies Grant through NCDOT.

# ADOPTED and approved this the 16th day of February 2023

# Commissioner Matthew Wechtel, Chairman, Land-of-Sky RPO TAC

## C. Letter of Support - Land of Sky Regional Council Active Routes to School

NCDOT has made "non-infrastructure" funds available for organizations to apply for Safe Routes to School Coordinators and related activities. This is a position that generally works with schools and students to provide education and encouragement activities while also coordinating with community partners and NCDOT to help improve roadway engineering and traffic enforcement in needed areas. Land of Sky Regional Council is currently planning to apply for three years of funding for a position that would cover Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties. There currently is not a dedicated position that covers any communities in those counties. In the past, these positions have provided walking and biking training, held events to celebrate and encourage walking and biking to school, and have coordinated Road Safety Audits with local governments, NCDOT, and other partners to help improve transportation safety.

A letter of support has been requested from the Land of Sky RPO TAC Chair

2/16/2023 North Carolina Department of Transportation 1 S. Wilmington St. Raleigh, NC 27601

To Whom It May Concern:

Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization, (LOSRPO) offers our support for Land of Sky Regional Council (LOSRC) to apply for funding to secure a Safe Routes to School Coordinator, through NCDOT's Safe Routes to School Program, for the five-county region that includes Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties. We support this grant application and the focus of improving the safety of students and their families accessing our region's schools.

Land of Sky RPO believes strongly in creating an environment that promotes safe, healthy, and equitable transportation for our student population. Tens of thousands of children access schools across Western North Carolina, many of whom face walking and biking conditions that can be less-than-ideal or dangerous. Providing greater training for kids to increase their awareness and confidence to make more trips by walking and biking has been proven to have positive impacts in academic performance as well as safety.

With a Safe Routes to School Coordinator in the region, more children will have the opportunity to have education and encouragment activities for walking and biking that is not currently available. This position will not only work with students and parents to

improve individual awareness and confidence, but also work with community partners and NCDOT to improve walking and biking conditions where necessary. We believe that having a dedicated coordinator to facilitate the planning, education, and encouragement of active transportation to schools in our region will help improve the well-being of our students and residents and the community's quality of life.

Land of Sky RPO supports LOSRC's request for funding for a Safe Routs to School Coordinator through the Safe Routes to School Program.

Sincerely,

Mathew Wachtel, Commissioner Madison County, NC, Chair, Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization

## D. Letter of Support – Ecusta Trail RAISE Grant Application

The City of Brevard has been working with Henderson County, Hendersonville, and NCDOT with assistance from the Land of Sky RPO and French Broad River MPO on a grant application for *Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity* (RAISE) grant through the US Department of Transportation to provide construction funding for the Ecusta Trail in Transylvania County and parts of Henderson County.

A letter of support will be provided by the Land of Sky RPO TAC Chair

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg Secretary U.S. Department of Transportation 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: FY2023 RAISE Grant Application – Ecusta Trail: An Engine for Reimagining Rural Mobility and Economic Recovery

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization (LOSRPO) strongly supports the RAISE grant application "Ecusta Trail: An Engine for Reimagining Rural Mobility and Economic Recovery," which is the result of a collaboration between the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), City of Brevard, Henderson County, City of Hendersonville, Friends of the Ecusta Trail, Conserving Carolina, and other local stakeholders.

The Ecusta Rail Trail will provide an active transportation and recreation corridor that improves access to jobs and public resources for several growing communities; increases opportunities for rural, low-income communities; and connects to the Pisgah National Forest. The trail is part of a statewide and regional greenway system identified in the NCDOT Great Trails State Plan.

By supporting this effort, USDOT can showcase a project that aligns closely with the Biden Administration's objectives, including:

- Enhancing access to opportunities for historically marginalized communities,
- Creating a more equitable and safe transportation system,
- Creating jobs and economic opportunity in an area where the local paper mill industry has declined,
- Revitalizing aging and unmaintained rail infrastructure into a major community asset, and
- Transitioning to a more environmentally conscious transportation network that prioritizes non-motorized users.

In summary, the Ecusta Trail will serve as an engine—powering healthy, climate-friendly, resilient, and integrated transportation and recreation options and an economic driver for this region.

Thank you for considering our application for RAISE Program funding.

Sincerely,

Mathew Wachtel, Commissioner Madison County, NC, Chair, Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization

# RURAL CRANNING

# 4. RPO Business

# Item 4A: Carbon Reduction Program Update

The Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (IIJA) also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) establishes the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP),

Carbon Reduction Program Overview

- States are to develop Carbon Reduction Strategies
- \$6.4 Billion in formula funding for Fiscal Years 2022 through Fiscal Years 2026
- Funding for projects to support transportation emissions reductions.

\*Transportation Emissions means carbon dioxide emissions from on-road highway sources of those emissions within a State (23 U.S.C. 175(a)(2)).

# North Carolina's Suballocation

- Funds are available to FY26
- NC has already received FY22 and FY23 amounts
- 35% of funds may be obligated in any area of the State
- 65% of funds apportioned to a State for CRP obligated by population:
  - Urbanized areas over 200,000;
  - Urbanized areas from 50,000 to 199,999;
  - Urban areas from 5,000 to 49,999;
    - \$4 Million currently available
  - Other areas less than 5,000.
    - \$15 Million currently available
  - \$100,000 minimum project cost
    - 80/20 Plus 10% NCDOT Administration
    - REIMBURSEMENT program, Awarded applicant must fund the project and invoice NCDOT for reimbursement.
- The deadline to submit CRP projects in this first call for projects is March 17<sup>th</sup>.
- After this call, funds will be available on a rolling call.

CARBON REDUCTION CALCULATOR	
Project Name	i.e., Left Turn Lane Main/First Street
Estimated project Cost	100000
NCDOT Admin Cost 10%	10000
Estimated Overall Cost	110000
Federal Grant 80%	88000
Local Match 20%	22000

Currently LOSRPO has one project for this round, a section of greenway in Brevard. The greenway crosses property owned by Brevard, the engineering and design are complete along with up to date cost estimates.

RPO staff is working with Transylvania County planning staff developing cost estimates for the purchase and installation of two transit shelters for their transit route. RPO Staff is also talking with Mountain Projects, Haywood County Transit staff about some potential software upgrades and other transit related purchases. Madison County Transit was considering CRP funds for propane conversions, but they submitted that as 5311 Capital request to NCDOT, IMD. These projects along with your now requests will be developed and submitted in the rolling call for projects.

RPO Staff are also consulting with NCDOT Division's 13 and 14 on projects to be submitted by them for the 35% spend anywhere funds.

Final submissions will be presented in March along with resolutions of support.

**<u>Staff Recommendations:</u>** No action required information only, action required in March.

## Item 4B Prioritization SPOT7.0 Update

NCDOT's Strategic Prioritization Process, P7.0 or SPOT 7.0 is underway. The statewide Prioritization Workgroup, made up of representatives from NCDOT, MPO's, RPO's, the League of Municipalities, Metro Mayors, NC Rural Center, and others has been meeting sense October 2022. The workgroup is developing recommendations on the weights and measures for project scoring to send to the Board of Transportation for their review and adoption.

The number of project submittals and local input points will be approximately the same as in prior rounds. LOSRPO will have 16 project submittals in each mode and 1,200 local input points in both Regional Impact and Division Needs tiers. Population numbers could potentially impact these numbers.

Any projects that were previously funded in the 2020 – 2029 STIP that lost their "Funded" status due to the NCDOT STIP re-programing, brought about by NCDOT financial challenges, will be considered CARRYOVER projects, and automatically be entered into P7.0. There is also potentially a one-time opportunity for each RPOs and MPOs to select three NEW SPOT6.0 project submittals, that did not get an opportunity to be considered for funding because SPOT6.0 was halted, to be entered into SPOT7.0 as CARRYOVER projects. These three projects also will not count as a submittal. This will be determined at the February 14<sup>th</sup> workgroup meeting.

RPO Staff will be setting up meetings with local partners and NCDOT Division staff to review previously submitted projects and develop LOSRPO's SPOT7.0 project list.

Below is the current schedule for SPOT7.0. As always, the schedule is subject to change.

#### P7.0 Schedule. **Prioritization Task Estimated Date Prioritization Workgroup meets** October 2022 - June, 2023 NC Board of Transportation Adopts Methodology June, 2023 SPOT Online Go-live Project submittal window opens July 2023 – September, 2023 October 2023 – March, 2024 NCDOT Data Review and Scoring (Partner Rev. Feb 2024) **Project Prioritization Public Survey** Winter - Spring 2024 Alternate Criteria Deadline/LOSRPO Local Input Point April, 2024 Methodology Due **DRAFT Statewide Programmed Projects and SPOT Scores** End of April 2024 Released **Regional Impact Local Input Points Window** May - July, 2024 **DRAFT Regional Impact Programmed Projects Released** August, 2024 September – November, 2024 **Division Needs Local Input Points Window Program Division Needs Projects** December 2024 – January, 2025 DRAFT 2026-2035 STIP Released End of January, 2025

Staff Recommendations: No action required information only.

# Item 4C Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Update

In recent years, LOSRPO has requested NCDOT program CMAQ funds allocated to the RPO for non-attainment of air quality standards in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP) to the Land of Sky Clean Cities and Clean Vehicles Coalition to be used for regional education and outreach program in the GSMNP adjacent region. This year, the RPO is working with Clean Cities/Clean Vehicles to provide funding for a DC fast charger in the Town of Waynesville. Waynesville is developing the project estimate. There will be a resolution of support for the project at the March TCC and TAC meetings.

**<u>Staff Recommendations</u>**: No action required information only, action required in March.

# Item 4D Wildlands Network's Wildlife Connectivity

In Western North Carolina, a group of stakeholders convened to address wildlife and motorist safety concerns specifically in the region of Great Smoky and Blue Ridge mountains. In June of 2022, Wildlands Network and the National Parks Conservation Association released <u>"Road Ecology Research and Mitigation Strategies to Improve Wildlife Connectivity and Human Safety along I-40 in the Pigeon River Gorge."</u> One of largest road ecology research projects ever completed in the eastern United States, the report provides 20 detailed mitigation recommendations along Interstate 40 in the Pigeon River Gorge.

Wildlands Network, also released a <u>scientific study</u> in September 2022, identifying 20 of the highest-priority wildlife crossing sites across North Carolina. This study identified I-40 through the Pigeon River Gorge as the number one priority.

Protecting wildlife from roadway collisions is critical for our state's infrastructure, human safety, and our natural ecosystems. Mitigating wildlife vehicle collisions is complex and expensive, and timing is everything. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act includes unique opportunities for wildlife crossing construction, and NCDOT is supportive of these efforts.

Staff Recommendations: No action required information only.

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- C. NCDOT Integrated mobility Division
- D. Staff Updates

# **ADJOURNMENT**

Division Staff Daniel Sellers, PE Alexius Farris Vicki Eastland

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