Meeting Agenda

RPO TCC and Board Joint Meeting
November 19th, 2026 –11:00 French Broad Room (Large) Conference Room
Land of Sky Regional Council or Zoom

Join LOSRPO Joint TCC & TAC November 2026 Meeting

Meeting ID: 886 0020 7663 Passcode: 825142
Call-In: 6469313860

1. **WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING**
   - A. Welcome and Introductions, Approval of Agenda — Aaron Bland & Kevin Ensley
   - B. Ethics Statement for RPO Board Members — Kevin Ensley

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT** — Kevin Ensley

3. **Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda Joint action)** — Aaron Bland & Kevin Ensley
   - A. Minutes from the RPO TCC October 8th, 2026, Meeting
   - B. Minutes from the RPO TAC October 15th, 2025, Meeting
   - C. LOSRPO letters of support for NCDOT **Madison Co. I 26** and **Haywood Co. I 40** Wildlife Crossings and Pilot Program Grant Application.

4. **LAND OF SKY RPO TAC BUSINESS Items**
   - A. LOSRPO Prioritization 8.0 Division Needs LIP assignment — Vicki Eastland
   - B. LOSRPO 2026 Meeting Schedule — Vicki Eastland
   - C. NCDOT AAM Comprehensive Planning Grant Award — Vicki Eastland

5. **JOINT LOSRPO UPDATES**
   - NCDOT Division 13 and 14 updates — Tim Anderson/Wesley Grindstaff or designee
   - Transportation Planning Division — Daniel Sellers
   - Staff Updates — Vicki Eastland

6. **PUBLIC COMMENT** — Kevin Ensley

7. **ADJOURN LOSRPO MEETING** — Kevin Ensley

Upcoming Meeting
Land of Sky RPO TCC – January 14, 2027

LAND OF SKY RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Meeting Agenda

Land of Sky RPO TAC – January 21, 2027

ETHICS AWARENESS & CONFLICT OF INTEREST REMINDER

(To be read by the Chair or his or her designee at the beginning of each meeting)

In accordance with the State Government Ethics Act, it is the duty of every Board member to avoid conflicts of interest. Does any Board member have any known conflict of interest with respect to any matters coming before the Board today? If so, please identify the conflict and refrain from any participation in the particular matter involved.

3. **A. Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda TCC**
   Minutes from the RPO TCC October 8th, 2026, Meeting
   2026-10_08_RPOTCC_Draft-Minutes.pdf
   B. Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda TAC
   Minutes from the RPO TAC October 15th, 2025, Meeting
   2026-10_15__DRAFT.RPO_.TAC_.Minutes.pdf
   C. LOSRPO Letters of Support
   NCDOT Madison Co. I 26 and Haywood Co. I 40 Wildlife Crossings and Pilot Program Grant Application.

I 26 Project:
In September of 2024, NCDOT applied to USDOT's Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program for improvements along **I 26 in Madison County**, Tennessee state line at Sam's Gap and the Mars Hill area. The application requested $**5.78 million in federal funding**, **total project cost** of approximately **$7.23 million** with **NCDOT** providing the **non-federal matching funds** of approximately **$1.45 million**. To install approximately **6.5 miles of 10-foot wildlife fencing** along **I 26 to direct wildlife towards 2 existing underpasses** installed when this section was constructed in 2003. The project would also include drainage improvements at one of the underpasses. There is currently 4.5-foot control-of-access fencing, but this is not effective keeping wildlife off the roadway. NCDOT crash data identified **117 reported wildlife-vehicle crashes between 2003-2023.**

The project is intended to provide **two primary benefits**: **improve roadway safety** by **reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions** and **improve habitat connectivity across I-26**. The French Broad River MPO and Land of Sky RPO's 2023 wildlife-crossing planning work identified this section of I-26 as a high-priority location for wildlife connectivity improvements.

If funded with this application NCDOT anticipates beginning construction within six months of receiving funding and completing construction within one year.

LOSRPO letter of Support can be viewed here:
LOSRPO_Letter_of_Support_for_WCPP_I_26_2026

I 40 Project:
NCDOT is applying to the Federal Highway Administration's Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program for the I**-40 SAFE PASSAGE project in Haywood County**, focused on the **Pigeon River Gorge**.

The proposed project **builds on previous wildlife research and substantial wildlife-passage investments already underway along I-40**. The project would **evaluate** how **existing, planned, and under construction wildlife crossings function** together **as a coordinated system**; **identify remaining wildlife-vehicle collision hotspots and terrestrial and aquatic connectivity barriers; and develop a corridor-wide strategy for future improvements.**

The project would also **advance selected high-priority wildlife-passage improvements to preliminary design**, helping position those projects for future funding and construction.

The work builds on **NCDOT bridge replacement projects, Hurricane Helene-related I-40 reconstruction, the NCDOT Wildlife Passage Program**, previous corridor research, and other public and private investments in wildlife connectivity.

LOSRPO letter of Support can be viewed here:
I_40_SAFE_PASSAGE_WCPP_LOSRPO_Letter_of_Support

STAFF Recommendation: These are information only due to grant deadline, RPO staff discussed with TAC Chair and Provided letters of support.

4. LAND OF SKY RPO TAC BUSINESS Items

A. **LOSRPO NCDOT Prioritization 8.0 LIP assignment**

NCDOT updates the STIP on a two-year cycle based on projects selected for funding from the NCDOT Prioritization process. This is the process in North Carolina that helps determine the majority of transportation improvements across the State. The process is dictated by the Strategic Transportation Investments Act (STI) 2012 and is generally designed to be a data-driven, transparent process to determine what transportation projects are funded or not.

RPO's, MPO's and NCDOT Divisions work with local partners to select projects to be submitted for consideration for funding, (inclusion in the next STIP) and on the assignment of Local Input Points, used to boost the scores of projects in the Regional Impact and Division Needs Tiers, and to reflect local priorities.

The outcome of Prioritization 8.0, P8.0 will be the 2028 – 2037 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Land of Sky RPO receives 1200 Local Input Points for both Regional Impact and Division Needs. This round LOSRPO flexed 500 LIPs from Regional Impact tier to Division Needs. So LOSRPO has 1700 Division Needs LIP's this round. Currently there is more funding available in the Division Needs tier and several lower cost projects at that tier.

Local Input Points
The RPO has consulted with local partners. Changes can be made to priorities up until final approval.

Division Needs Projects
Linked list of all Division Needs Projects in (or partially in) the RPO, sorted based on Quantitative score. This list includes five Regional Impact Projects considered for cascading.
LOSRPO-DRAFT-P8.0-Division-Needs-TCO-Project-Scores

Staff Recommendation: Recommend TCC and TAC vote to approve the LOSRPO P8.0 Division Needs Local Input Points.

B. **LOSRPO 2027 Meeting Schedule**
The Land of Sky RPO 2027 meeting schedule will be available on the LOSRPO website.
The meeting days and times will not change, second Thursday at 10AM for TCC and third Thursday at 11:30 for TAC. If there is no pressing business for any scheduled meeting date, RPO staff will contact RPO leadership to discuss potentially skipping a meeting cycle if RPO business can meet deadlines and requirements or if necessary, adding additional meetings. See the 2027 LOSRPO meeting schedule:

2027-RPO-Schedule.pdf

Staff Recommendation: Information only

C. NCDOT AAM Comprehensive Planning Grant Award
NCDOT Division of Aviation Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) Planning Program Overview Second Round (FY26-27)

Program Background
The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) envisions a comprehensive transportation system that embodies safety, sustainability, efficiency, resilience, and accessibility for all residents. With North Carolina's population projected to grow from 10 million to 14 million by 2050,1 the resulting increase in demand on transportation infrastructure will require innovative and strategic approaches to ensure continued accessibility, efficiency, and

resilience across the system. Advanced mobility innovations offer promising solutions to meet these evolving needs.

By harnessing the collaborative efforts of NCDOT's Aviation, Integrated Mobility, and Rail divisions, Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) technology emerges as a transformative force to enhance accessibility and connectivity for both people and freight across the state. Comprising a suite of emerging aviation technologies, AAM has the potential to support critical services, complement existing transportation systems, and act as an economic catalyst. As AAM gains momentum, it can attract investment and expand mobility options across the State.

To ensure these benefits are realized, regional planning organizations are encouraged to integrate AAM into long-term planning efforts, laying the groundwork for thoughtful implementation, mitigating potential impacts, and maximizing public value across mobility, public service, and economic development goals. In support of this vision, NCDOT has established the Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) Planning Program, a statewide initiative designed to help regional planning organizations explore and prepare for the integration of these technologies into future transportation planning efforts.
AAM-Planning-Grant-Program-Overview-FY26-Final.pdf

The Southwestern RPO, Foothills RPO and Land of Sky RPO are partnering on the AAM application with SWRPO serving as the administrative entity. During the planning process, additional partners may include town and county staff, emergency managers, disaster recovery experts, first responders, law enforcements, healthcare providers, airport managers, US forest Service, NC State parks, Great Smoky Mountains NP, Duke Energy, Tennessee Valley Authority, Haywood EMC, the French Broad River MPO, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, NCDOT Division staff and others. Lind to the application: Southwestern-Application.pdf

Our application was selected for funding, there was an initial meeting last week with NCDOT Aviation Division staff and Representatives from Bolton – Mink, the consulting firm selected for the project. I will be in contact when I have more details.

Staff Recommendation: Information only

Public Comment

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6. JOINT LOSRPO FBRMPO UPDATES

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D. Transportation Planning Division	Daniel Sellers
E. Staff Updates	Vicki Eastland

7. ADJOURN LOSRPO MEETING — Kevin Ensley

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