

# Final Yearly Narrative

Mid-East RPO  
Annual Performance Report  
Fiscal Year 2018-2019

## Overview

The Lead Planning Agency, the Mid-East Commission, has utilized its staff, technology and resources to participate in a wide variety of planning efforts, facilitate local participation in the transportation decision-making process and support local officials with information, mapping and transportation expertise. We guided local professionals and elected officials through the assignment of local priority points Prioritization 5.0 Process. We also guide them thru the selection of projects for the Prioritization 6.0 pre-submittal process. Staff guided Martin County in the adoption of their Comprehensive Transportation Plan, as well as the initiation of the early planning stages of the upcoming Pitt County CTP.

## Project Number **1718-001**: Project Prioritization

- RPO staff submitted donated Regional Impact Category Points for H170881 project (US17) into SPOT Online for P5.0.
- RPO staff held meeting with TAC/TCC to discuss Local Input Points for the Division Needs Category. RPO staff prepared details, maps of the projects, and absentee input forms for the local input.
- RPO staff analyzed projects to assign local input points using local methodology for P5.0. RPO staff reported to Division Engineers the preliminary points assigned.
- RPO staff advertised the recommended Division Needs Category Local Input Points to public prior to final vote to endorse recommended points.
- RPO staff meet with TCC/TAC for final adoption of Division Needs Category input points for P5.0 as amended by TAC. RPO staff reported to Division Engineers the final points assigned.
- RPO staff entered approved Division Needs Category Local Input Points into SPOT Online for P5.0.
- RPO staff submitted 14 intersection/interchange projects for P6.0 pre-submittal process. RPO staff participate in the Express Designs/Concepts of the pre-submitted projects.
- RPO staff have discussed transit project selection for P6.0 with the transit providers. RPO staff prepared report of submitted projects in previous prioritization rounds for their reference.
- RPO staff have discussed rail project with the NCDOT Rail Division.

### **Project Number 1819-002: MERPO Memorandum of Understanding**

- RPO staff administer a TAC/TCC workshop to discuss the desired changes to the MOU document.
- RPO staff further updated the MOU document per review of County members, RPO colleagues, and NCDOT.
- RPO staff presented final document and received approval by the TCC/TAC committees. The document was subsequently signed by the counties.

### **Project Number 1819-03: Title VI Plan**

- RPO staff prepared the Title VI Plan draft for TPD review.
- RPO staff reviewed TPD recommendations and review other Title VI Plans
- RPO staff researched how to get an adequate assessment for the population within the census blocks that intersect Mid-East RPO and Greenville MPO boundaries.
- RPO staff prepared final document after review of TPD and Office of Civil Rights.

### **Project Number 1819-04: MERPO General Activities**

- RPO staff attended county transportation committees and reported on local projects, comprehensive transportation plans, and regional and state transportation issues.
- RPO staff attended meetings of regional organizations such as the Highway 17/64 Association and the Southern Albemarle Association and reported updates to the TAC/TCC.
- RPO staff responded to member requests for details on specific projects.
- RPO staff updated the Mid-East RPO website as needed.
- RPO staff participated in statewide RPO coordinators quarterly meetings.
- RPO staff hosted regular meetings of the TCC and TAC and prepared the necessary documents and arrangements for each meeting.
- RPO staff prepared all required documentation for quarterly reports and financial reimbursement.
- RPO staff participated in RPO evaluation process and RPO Coordinator evaluations.
- RPO Staff served on NCARPO Bike and Pedestrian Committee.
- RPO Staff served on GIS Committee.
- RPO Staff participated in the CUR/CTP Set Up Work Group.
- New RPO staff studied MERPO projects and RPO 101 manual and had training sessions with staff from other RPO.
- RPO Staff participated in the NC Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) update.
- RPO Staff served on the Regional Collaborative Strategic Plan Steering Committee.
- RPO Staff prepared the Martin County Bike Plan grant application spring 2019.
- RPO Staff participated in the Eastern NC Freight Plan development.

- RPO Staff assisted VHB with Martin County's PADT corridor study and travel forecast study in Beaufort County.
- RPO Staff participated in the NCMOVES 2050 Plan
- RPO Staff participated in the Zero Emission Vehicle Plan Input Session
- RPO Staff attended and participated in many other meetings and initiatives

**Project Number 1819-05: MERPO GIS Data Warehouse**

- RPO Staff evaluated traffic counts and crash data for evaluation as requested by TCC members.
- RPO staff downloaded statewide building footprints and share it with the NCARPO as part of the GIS Committee.
- RPO staff downloaded updated GIS layers and maps.
- RPO staff downloaded and share with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Division the bicycle and pedestrian facilities of Beaufort, Martin and Pitt counties.

**Project Number 1819-06: Martin CTP**

- RPO staff assisted NCDOT with the presentation and adoption of the Martin County Comprehensive Transportation Plan. RPO staff administered presentation to the County board, provided adoption document assistance.
- RPO staff delivered adoption resolutions of all the municipalities to TPD.
- RPO approved RPO endorsement resolution and delivered to TPD.

**Project Number 1819-07: Pitt CTP**

- RPO staff started to set the Pitt County Comprehensive Transportation Plan steering committee and outreach efforts to get diverse group of members.

**Project Number 1819-08: RPO-Transit**

- RPO staff attended Beaufort Area Transit System (BATS) quarterly board meetings.
- RPO staff assisted BATS with their MOU and By-laws update.
- RPO staff prepared a Statewide Planning & Research funds application for BATS services feasibility study.

**Project Number 1819-09: 15th Street Project (#U-5860)**

- RPO staff worked with Division 2 engineers on 15<sup>th</sup> Street project in Washington and met with Washington city administrators and Chamber of Commerce members on project history and alternatives.
- RPO staff requested crash data for the corridor to the Traffic Safety Unit and is preparing to do presentation to the city's council.

## Challenges and Shortcomings

- **P5.0 STI Funded Projects.** Small amount of projects were funded through P5.0. Funded projects recognized as a high local priority due to safety concerns with existing conditions were set to start construction on 2027 or later.
- **Project Development local pushback.** Spent time meeting with local officials and DOT Division staff and made presentations related to controversial projects, particularly the 15th Street project in Washington, and the US264 and NC32 intersection roundabout safety project in Beaufort County.
- **MERPO Contact Information.** NCDOT website contact information update took months. We still have the old office address. We are not being invited to the Merger Process Meetings.
- **Public Participation.** More time needs to be dedicated to public outreach, but time required for prioritization and other tasks makes this difficult to achieve. Ideas include evening meetings for public input, a webpage for MERPO, and a monthly or quarterly newsletter.
- **NCDOT Board Member Participation.** NCDOT Board members do not attend RPO meetings.
- **TAC Attendance.** While overall RPO attendance has improved, a few TAC/TCC members have poor attendance records. The Pitt County municipal TAC seat has remained vacant. RPO staff remains hopeful that a member who can represent Pitt County will emerge from the Memorandum of Understanding update, the ongoing assigned committee member by their board request, the invitation letters sent and/or CTP process in the future.
- **Learning Curve.** As a new RPO Planner, questions sometimes come up that I don't know the answer to and I have to do research and get back to people. Knowing where to look for information and who to ask about each subject is key. There is no one database you can go to for all answers.

## Lessons Learned

- Continued regular communication with NCDOT Transportation Planning Division staff has helped maintain a more productive and positive working relationship.
- The success of the RPO is part staff commitment, part cooperation with NCDOT TPD, and part active/engaged TCC and TAC members. Having local government officials who are energetic and passionate about transportation and getting them

appointed by their respective Counties to serve on the RPO has made for a better experience and product for everyone involved.

- Continued promotion and education of RPO activities and member benefits to local governments is critical to the success of the RPO.
- Facilitating the understanding of complex processes and project discussion by developing maps and detailed information of our project selection and other funding opportunities to assist our members understanding is a crucial engagement tool. Therefore, they will be able to spread the topics discussed.
- The Planning Work Program must provide adequate funding for Direct and Indirect cost expenses and the flexibility to adapt to emerging issues.