

July 2024

STRATEGIC TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS

Smart decisions to keep North Carolina moving.

WORKGROUP PROCESS IMPROVEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

SUMMARY OF IMPROVEMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS



Prepared by:



fountainworks

FACILITATION • MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

Background

As the Workgroup wrapped up the P7.0 process, there was a feeling among some Workgroup members that the overall process should be reviewed and process improvements should be identified and implemented.

The SPOT Office therefore convened a Workgroup Process Improvement Subcommittee between the P7.0 and P8.0 cycles to identify how the Workgroup's processes might be improved.

The Process Improvement Subcommittee held eight monthly meetings in the time period between October 2023 and May 2024. **This document summarizes the subcommittee's process improvement recommendations for the Workgroup's discussion and consideration.**

Recommendations

- **Workgroup Vision Statement**

The Workgroup aspires to continually maintain and improve the statewide prioritization process by holistically and collaboratively refining the system to select the best transportation infrastructure solutions from those submitted in each round.

- **Workgroup Member Roles and Expectations**
 - Clarified roles and expectations for all Workgroup stakeholders (page 2)
- **Schedule and Cadence of Meetings**
 - Developed a schedule and cadence of meetings for P8.0 (page 5)
- **Role of Facilitator**
 - Outlined the role of the facilitator in Workgroup meetings (page 5)
- **Decision-Making Structure**
 - Developed a Workgroup decision-making structure (page 6)
- **Meeting Documentation Procedure**
 - Developed a documentation process for Workgroup meetings (page 6)
- **Workgroup Handbook**
 - Developed a living handbook to provide all Workgroup members and stakeholders with a common understanding and frame of reference for the Workgroup's activities)
(page 8 – [link to Handbook](#))

Clarified Workgroup Member Roles and Expectations

MPO/RPO Members

- MPO and RPO members should attend Workgroup meetings in-person and be active and engaged listeners.
- MPO and RPO members should actively participate in Workgroup meetings and provide meaningful input.
- MPO and RPO members should work to represent the broad interests of their respective organizations as a unified voice.
- MPO and RPO members should work alongside other MPOs/RPOs to prepare for meetings.
- MPO and RPO members should keep other MPOs/RPOs informed of the Workgroup's processes and decisions.

Division Engineers

- Division Engineers should attend Workgroup meetings in-person and understand the Workgroup process.
- Division Engineers should represent the interests of the Chief Engineer of NCDOT Highway Division as a unified voice.
- Division Engineers should provide specialized knowledge and technical information.
- Division Engineers should use their unique engineering perspective to inform others (as opposed to planning or other perspectives which may be better represented in the Workgroup).
- Division Engineers should stay connected with citizens and legislators and work to represent their interests.

SPOT Staff

- SPOT staff should attend Workgroup meetings in-person and understand the Workgroup process.
- SPOT Staff should implement the STI legislation requirements.
- SPOT staff should provide technical support and expertise.
- SPOT staff should co-facilitate Workgroup discussions with the facilitator.
- SPOT staff should work with the facilitator on agenda development and meeting design.
- SPOT staff should adequately summarize the outcomes of each meeting using the appropriate level of documentation.
- SPOT staff should familiarize consultants and academics with Workgroup processes.
- SPOT staff should be explicit and transparent about their split role, making sure to distinguish between when they are speaking as the Workgroup co-facilitator and when they are speaking as a Workgroup member (which reflects more of their own opinion on a particular topic).

Representative Groups (NCLM, NCACC, etc.)

- Representative groups should speak with one unified voice that reflects the interests of their groups.

- Representative groups should attend meetings in-person or send an alternate in their stead.
- Representative groups should seek to understand the Workgroup process, and ask for clarification on topics whenever needed.
- Representative groups should provide a diverse, outside perspective to the Workgroup.
- Representative groups should build relationships with DOT leadership between prioritization cycles so they can choose the appropriate representatives to serve on the Workgroup.

Other DOT Members (Not Division Engineers, SPOT, or MPO/RPO)

- Other DOT members should serve as subject matter experts.
- Other DOT members should represent the interests of their unit/subject.
- Other DOT members should attend Workgroup meetings and actively participate.
- Other DOT members should clarify to other Workgroup members the role/perspective they bring when participating in meetings.

Advisory Members

- Advisory members should provide technical expertise as subject matter experts.
- Advisory members should offer advice, information, and guidance when the Workgroup encounters roadblocks.
- Advisory members should provide feedback and input on potential areas for improvement.

Alternates

- Alternates should fill in for regular participants as needed.
- Alternates should stay current on Workgroup topics and discussions (for example: for MPO/RPO alternates, attend MPO/RPO preparation meetings).
- Alternates should seek to understand the Workgroup process.
- Alternates should develop solid institutional knowledge to ensure effective Workgroup representation as representatives change over time.

Board of Transportation

- The Board of Transportation should provide high-level policy direction to the Workgroup.
- The Board of Transportation should consider the recommendations of the Workgroup.
- The Board of Transportation should ask questions and provide feedback.
- The Board of Transportation should recognize the Workgroup as an independent advisory body.

Legislative Aides

- Legislative Aides should honor their observer role and avoid dictating to the Workgroup.
- Legislative Aides should serve as guardrails and let the Workgroup know when their recommendations may not be politically feasible.

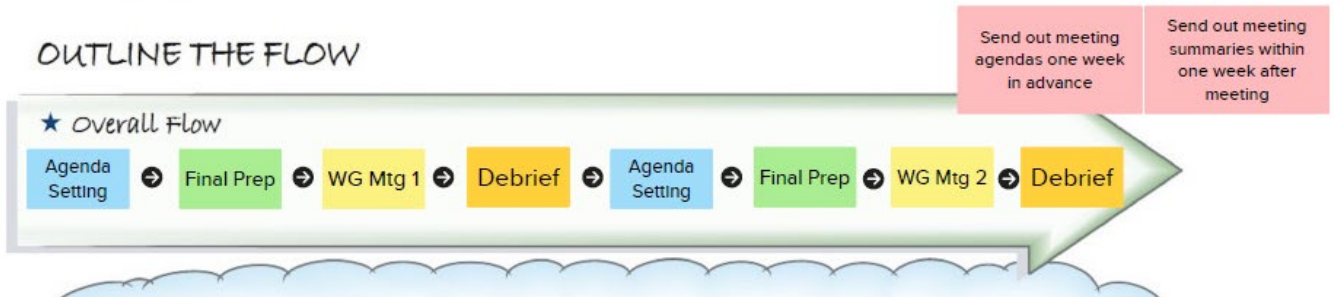
- Legislative Aides should provide a legislative perspective through actions such as legislative updates.

Developed Schedule and Cadence of Meetings

For each Workgroup meeting, there will be an agenda setting meeting two weeks ahead of time, a final preparation meeting the week before, and a debrief meeting shortly following. The meeting agendas will be shared a week before the meetings, and summaries will be sent out a week afterward. This cadence is visually depicted below.

Approach For P8.0 Meetings

OUTLINE THE FLOW



Outlined the Role of the Facilitator

The Workgroup uses a facilitation team to support its meetings. [Facilitation](#) is the art of leading people through processes toward agreed-upon objectives. Effective facilitation encourages participation, ownership, and creativity for all involved.

The facilitation team will perform the following actions:

General Principles

- Ensure the Workgroup’s purpose, outcomes, and vision are clear
- Ensure all voices are heard
- Partner with the SPOT Office to ensure agenda design covers topics sufficiently and the overall process functions smoothly
- Identify gaps in knowledge and work to close those gaps so that all participants can stay “up-to-speed”
- Be an active and perceptive listener
- Ensure that the number and complexity of topics covered in a prioritization cycle does not overload the Workgroup

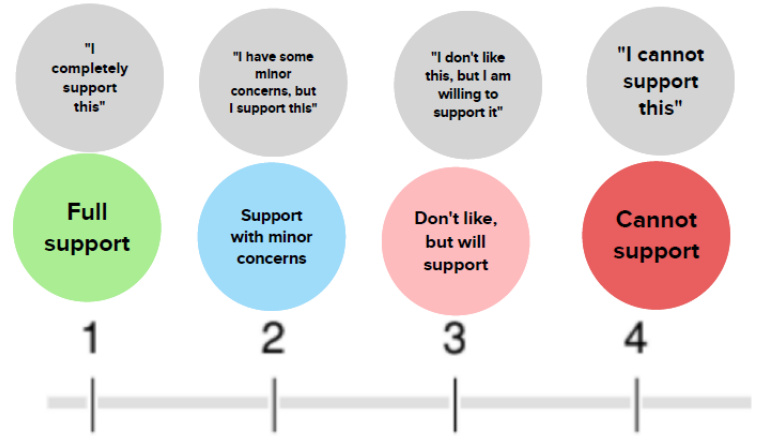
Between, During, and After Meetings

- Ensure that consensus is adequately achieved within the meeting

- Ensure that the items on the Workgroup’s agenda reflect the priorities of the Workgroup
- Keep meetings on track
- Keep a record of meetings so that newcomers can understand what has been accomplished

Developed Workgroup Decision-Making Structure

- For routine decisions that have lower stakes, the Workgroup’s current informal decision making approach is sufficient.
- For more complex or difficult decisions that have higher stakes, the Workgroup will use a gradients of agreement scale (at right) when needed.



Developed Documentation Procedure

The Workgroup follows the process below for documentation of its meetings:

- During each meeting, the facilitator will take notes using a virtual whiteboard tool such as Mural.
- The facilitator will capture the main points of all conversations and will keep track of the decisions made in accordance with the decision-making structure.
- The virtual whiteboard notes will capture some (but usually not all) of the nuances of conversations. The main purpose of capturing notes on the virtual whiteboard is to memorialize conversations with a reasonable level of detail.
- The virtual whiteboard will clearly capture to-do/action items, and keep a running tab of potential Workgroup topics and data requests. This information should be as specific as possible.
- The Workgroup will continue to use the consensus tracker.
- The Workgroup will pilot the virtual whiteboard tool and process at the P8.0 Orientation meeting.



Developed Workgroup Handbook

The subcommittee developed a [handbook](#) for the Workgroup and its members. The handbook is a living document, and all content can be updated, modified, or removed as needed.

Process Improvement Subcommittee Members

| Name | Organization |
|-----------------|---|
| Brian Wert | NCDOT – SPOT Office |
| Neil Burke | Charlotte Regional TPO |
| David Graham | High Country RPO |
| Pat Ivey | NCDOT – Highway Division 9 |
| Karyl Fuller | Central Pines RPO |
| Chris Lukasina | NC CAMPO |
| Tyler Meyer | Greensboro Urban Area MPO |
| Tristan Winkler | French Broad River MPO |
| Drew Cox | NCDOT – Division of Highways |
| Ryan Brumfield | NCDOT – Office of Strategic Initiatives |