



*Asheville on Bikes*  
RIDE YOUR CITY

November 19, 2020

**Public Comment for the FBRMPO RE: 2020 TIP re-prioritization**

[Asheville on Bikes](#) (AoB) is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to cultivate the culture of urban and commuter bicycle riding through advocacy and celebration. More than 25,000 bike riders have participated in our group rides, hundreds of middle school children have learned to ride through our youth cycling program, and our members include more than 500 residents of Buncombe, Haywood, and Henderson counties. We are active advocates for multi-modal projects, complete streets, and bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure.

We support the work of the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO) and believe that your transportation decisions are among the most important decisions made in our region each year. Thank you for serving on the MPO. We know that the recent state funding shortfall has triggered the need to make painful decisions about projects in our region.

**We need your help understanding the process that created [these particular proposed changes in the Transportation Improvement Plan \(TIP\)](#).**

We cannot identify, nor have we been shown, the process used by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to determine these new funding priorities. We know that one process was used to assign points and prioritize the TIP, with your input, prior to August of 2020.

1. What was the process by which these new delays were determined? How did it differ from or comply with the state SPOT prioritization processes and the Strategic Mobility Formulas used in the past?
2. Who amongst you can clearly articulate NCDOT's process in this matter? What parts of the proposed changes to the TIP reflect the input of the FBRMPO?
3. Where can citizens of WNC access information about this process and its impact?
4. Have the citizens of WNC had an opportunity to provide prioritization guidance to NCDOT or to the MPO before these TIP changes were proposed? Where that feedback exists, is it being incorporated or ignored by the proposed TIP?
5. Which projects are being reduced in scope or eliminated in order to lower costs?

David Uchiyama, NCDOT Communication Officer for WNC, said in the Mountain Xpress in 2018, "...residents' ire is often mistakenly pointed at DOT, when transportation initiatives are generated by regional groups like the French Broad River MPO, which DOT works in partnership with."

It appears as though feedback offered to NCDOT prior to today would have arrived too early, and yet, because these changes to the TIP are coming from NCDOT absent a clear process, any feedback that arrives tomorrow might be too late.

**We're asking for a transparent process that values investment in multi-modal projects as part of any re-prioritization.**

We notice many unfair future outcomes from the delays in the proposed TIP. A few stand out:

- **The core of the Hellbender Trail Network is blocked for 10 years** by the proposed TIP revisions. That network of multi-use paths is delayed by the projects along the Swannanoa River, U-4739, U-6046, and U-5832. This includes all of the Wilma Dykeman Greenway between Carrier Park and the Asheville Nature Center. This delay is contrary to the expressed planning documents and work of the City of Asheville, Buncombe County, Riverlink, Asheville Greenworks, Connect Buncombe, and Asheville on Bikes. It is also contrary to the public statements of major employers in the region, including New Belgium Brewing, Highland Brewing, and other businesses whose customers and employees already depend on the proposed infrastructure that is part of these projects. Further, Black Mountain, Weaverville, and Woodfin each lose some of the value of their own investments in multi-use paths, as those plans will no longer connect to other destinations as intended. The roads, multi-use paths, bike lanes, and rights of way affected by these projects are core transportation connections for our region, not amenities.
- **The delays in projects are not equal in amount or effect.** Buncombe County is penalized by this proposed TIP, even though it represents the largest portion of our population and many of our critical needs for better transportation.

Average delay by county, in years, per project:

<b>County</b>	<b>Average Delay Per Project, in years</b>
Buncombe	4.42
Haywood	3.38
Henderson	3

- **Several projects that are still funded in the proposed TIP will have a smaller regional impact than others which are assigned long delays.** Notably, \$152 million is still reserved for widening I-26 north of Asheville, A-0010AA, a section of uncongested interstate north of Woodfin all the way to Forks of Ivy.

- **If we were forced to single out one project** that should be built on an accelerated timeline, it is the regional benefits of the road, bridge, and multimodal changes contained within the U-4739 Amboy / Meadow Road project.

**Please consider all your possible remedies as you weigh the decision to adopt, alter, or reject the proposed TIP.** In any changed prioritization, please value the multi-modal components contained in your planned projects more highly than what we see here.

Sincerely,  
Mike Sule  
[Asheville on Bikes](#)