

July 7, 2025

Neil Burke
CRTPO Deputy Director
600 E. Fourth Street, 8th Floor
Charlotte, NC 28202-2853

RE: 2055 MTP Draft Transportation Project Recommendations - Scoring Methodology Issues

Dear Mr. Burke,

The Town of Cornelius has identified critical flaws in the 2055 MTP project scoring methodology that systematically disadvantage major infrastructure investments like COR-II (Westmoreland at I-77 Interchange).

The Problem

Project COR-II - a \$100 million interstate interchange improvement addressing a major I-77 bottleneck - scored only 102 out of 300 points, relegating it to unfunded status. This outcome appears to reflect a **misapplication of the existing methodology**.

Scoring Analysis:

- **Safety: 5/50 points** - Fails to account for interstate mainline safety hazards
- **Congestion: 43/100 points** - Undervalues network-wide bottleneck removal benefits
- **Benefit/Cost: 0/45 points** - Excludes quantifiable network and safety benefits
- **Total Tier 2: 29/100 points** - Appears to misapply existing scoring criteria

The Core Issue: Misapplication of Existing Methodology

The current COR-II scores appear to reflect **incorrect application** of the existing scoring criteria:

Safety Scoring Error (Currently 5/50 → Should be 35-45/50): The current score fails to account for critical **interstate mainline safety hazards** that COR-II would eliminate:

- **Queue spillback onto I-77 mainline** from inadequate off-ramp capacity at Exit 28
- **High-speed rear-end crashes** when through-traffic encounters unexpected backups
- **Dangerous merge conflicts** from short on-ramps with high merge volumes
- **Speed differential hazards** between 70+ mph I-77 traffic and stopped queue traffic

These interstate highway safety benefits represent exactly the type of crash reduction the methodology is designed to capture.

Congestion Scoring Error (Currently 43/100 → Should be 70-80/100): The score appears to exclude **network-wide congestion relief** that bottleneck removal provides:

- **I-77 corridor-wide improvements** from eliminating a key chokepoint
- **Peak hour volume relief** affecting miles of interstate in both directions
- **Freight mobility benefits** on a designated freight corridor
- **Future growth accommodation** in the region's highest growth area

Benefit/Cost Scoring Error (Currently 0/45 → Should be 25-35/45): The calculation appears to exclude quantifiable benefits the methodology should include:

- **Travel time savings** from network-wide improvements
- **Safety benefits** from eliminating interstate mainline conflicts
- **Economic development value** from improved corridor access
- **Freight efficiency gains** for regional supply chains

Our Request

We request that CRTPO **reapply the existing methodology** to COR-II with proper consideration of:

1. **Interstate mainline safety benefits** that should score 35-45 points
2. **Network-wide congestion relief** that should score 70-80 points
3. **Quantifiable economic and safety benefits** that should score 25-35 points

Projected Score Impact: These corrections would increase COR-II's total score from 102 to approximately 192 points, moving it from unfunded to fundable status within the current framework.

Data Request for Scoring Transparency

To better understand the scoring rationale and ensure proper application of the methodology, we request that CRTPO provide the following supporting data used to score COR-II:

Safety Scoring (5/50 points):

- Traffic crash data for I-77 at Exit 28 (2019-2024)
- Queue spillback analysis showing I-77 mainline impact
- Comparative crash rates for similar interchange bottlenecks
- Documentation of how interstate mainline safety benefits were evaluated

Congestion Scoring (43/100 points):

- Peak hour volume data for I-77 at Exit 28
- Level of service analysis for current conditions

- Network-wide delay calculations used in scoring
- Methodology for evaluating corridor-wide congestion relief

Benefit/Cost Scoring (0/45 points):

- Detailed B/C calculation methodology and inputs
- Travel time savings calculations and assumptions
- Safety benefit valuations and crash reduction estimates
- Economic development impacts included or excluded

We believe this data will demonstrate that COR-I1's current scores significantly undervalue the project's safety and mobility benefits, and that proper application of the existing methodology would result in substantially higher scores.

Why This Matters

The I-77 corridor serves as a critical economic artery connecting Charlotte to rapidly growing northern communities. The current COR-I1 scores appear to reflect **misapplication of the existing methodology** rather than the methodology itself being inadequate. When properly applied to account for interstate safety benefits, network effects, and strategic corridor importance - all factors the current methodology is designed to capture - COR-I1 should score significantly higher within the existing framework.

We urge CRTPO to correct these scoring errors to ensure the 2055 MTP accurately reflects the true value of transformational infrastructure investments like COR-I1.

Sincerely,

Michael Osborne, Commissioner
Town of Cornelius

CC: Wayne Herron -- Deputy Town Manager