

# NCDOT Communications Survey

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## *Review and Summary of Written Comments*

The purpose of this white paper is to summarize my analysis of the text comments from the NCDOT Communications Survey. The task was somewhat larger than I anticipated given that the Communications Committee actually administered separate surveys to Elected Officials, Local Staff and NCDOT Staff. There were a total of 943 individual written responses forty-five percent of which came from elected officials with thirty percent and twenty-five percent coming from local staff and NCDOT staff respectively. I settled on two windows through which to look at the data. First, what issues are the commenter's talking about and what solutions are they suggesting, second what are the commenter's saying about parts of NCDOT.

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## **Issues and Proposed Solutions**

About eighty percent of the comments related to funding, procedures, compassion, policy, collaboration, schedule, timeliness, or planning. Twenty percent of the comments related to funding alone. People clearly do not understand transportation funding. Regarding Compassion that is intended to get at two things whether or not NCDOT understands outside motivations and whether or not outsiders feel listened to. Generally, commenter's proposed more of the same, more meetings, more email, and more training to resolve communications issues.

## **Raves and Pans**

I was able to separate out some units as good or bad performers based on the data. The Divisions received generally good reviews with almost sixty-seven percent of the positive comments going back to the Divisions. Many folks commented negatively on the Public Transportation Division (40.9%) and the Transportation Planning Branch (27.3%).

## **Special Concern**

Some comments are of special concern. The two comments below come from elected officials.

"Myself I have had no problems. However I am persevering female and I do not mind picking up the phone and calling whomever I need to talk to."

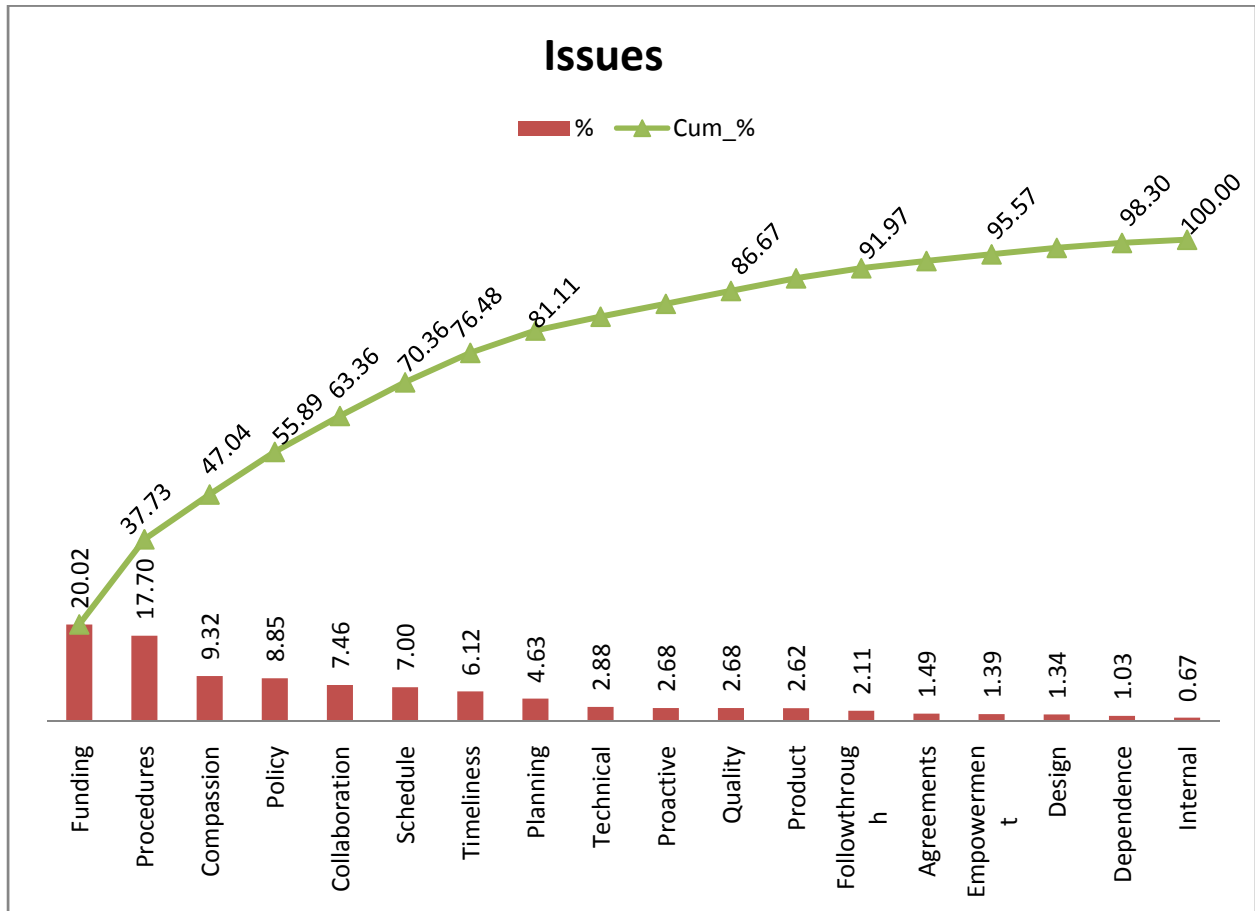
"I THINK, ON THE LOCAL LEVEL, THEY NEED SENSITIVITY TRAINING ON HOW TO RESPECTFULLY COMMUNICATE WITH MINORITIES AND WOMEN. I FEEL IGNORED AND DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BECAUSE I FEEL I ALWAYS HAVE TO GET A CAUCASIAN MALE TO RELAY ANY MESSAGE I NEED TO CONVEY TO NCDOT. IS THERE ANY WAY YOU CAN GET A LINE OF COMMUNICATION GOING THAT WOULD SATISFY THE MINORITY POPULATION?"

The following comment seems to relate to Ferry Division, but is unclear. It seems a stretch that the Department is working on recreational facilities.

“The status of grant funding for special projects that pertain to transportation, such / as funding for boat slips, bulkhead of our city park on the river, and help with bathrooms for our pending deep water piers.”

### Additional Thoughts

As strongly as I believe that the Department does not communicate well with the outside I do not believe that simply adding more meetings, emails, and newsletters to the mix is going to solve the problem. Sometimes more is just more. I get plenty of email and the Board Members and Division Engineers spend most of their time in meetings already. Two suggestions however, have some merit. First, develop a staff cross training program in which NCDOT Staff and Local Government Staff spend a week or so in one another’s office. This would certainly be beneficial to PTD, TPB, and Division staff. Second, perhaps there should be some consideration to developing account executives that routinely interact with local government and work to solve their problems<sup>1</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> Historically, this was a function shared between TPB and PTD.

# Suggested Solutions

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