First study of neutrino angle reconstruction using quasielastic-like interactions in MicroBooNE

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58	We investigate the expected precision of the reconstructed neutrino direction using a ν_{μ} -argon
59	guasielastic-like event topology with one muon and one proton in the final state and the recon-
70	struction capabilities of the MicroBooNE liquid argon time projection chamber. This direction is of
71	importance in the context of DUNE sub-GeV atmospheric oscillation studies. MicroBooNE allows
72	for a data-driven quantification of this resolution by investigating the deviation of the reconstructed
73	muon-proton system orientation with respect to the well-known direction of neutrinos originating
74	from the Booster Neutrino Beam with an exposure of 1.3×10^{21} protons on target. Using simula-
75	tion studies, we derive the expected sub-GeV DUNE atmospheric-neutrino reconstructed simulated
76	spectrum by developing a reweighting scheme as a function of the true neutrino energy. We further
77	report flux-integrated single- and double-differential cross section measurements of charged-current

 ν_{μ} quasielastic-like scattering on argon as a function of the muon-proton system angle using the full

MicroBooNE data sets. We also demonstrate the sensitivity of these results to nuclear effects and

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I. INTRODUCTION

final state hadronic reinteraction modeling.

Atmospheric neutrinos play a crucial role in improving¹¹⁴ 82 our understanding of neutrino oscillations and extract-115 83 ing mixing parameters in the lepton sector, such as the¹¹⁶ 84 charge-parity violating phase (δ_{CP}) [1, 2]. Of particular¹¹⁷ 85 interest are sub-GeV atmospheric neutrinos with energies¹¹⁸ 86 in the 100 MeV to 1 GeV range. These are affected by¹¹⁹ 87 both solar and atmospheric mass splittings, while being¹²⁰ 88 sensitive to nontrivial oscillation effects [3–6]. A mea-¹²¹ 89 surement of their oscillation pattern can yield important¹²² ٩n new information on δ_{CP} . Furthermore, there are a wealth¹²³ 91 of phenomenological oscillation study efforts in this en-124 92 125 ergy regime [7–23]. 93

Atmospheric neutrinos' oscillatory nature will be ex-126 94 tensively explored with precision measurements per-127 95 formed using data sets that will be collected, amongst¹²⁸ 96 others, by the forthcoming Deep Underground Neutrino¹²⁹ 97 Experiment (DUNE) [24–27]. The liquid argon time¹³⁰ 98 projection chamber (LArTPC) technology deployed by¹³¹ 99 DUNE will be essential to that effort, since it enables ex-132 100 cellent neutrino interaction topology and energy recon-¹³³ 101 struction by allowing the detection of the majority of the¹³⁴ 102 secondary charged particles with low detection thresh-135 103 olds for charged particles [28]. Yet, in addition to a good¹³⁶ 104 estimation of the neutrino energy, a precise reconstruc-¹³⁷ 105 tion of the incoming neutrino direction and the accurate₁₃₈ 106 modeling of the nuclear effects are crucial to determine₁₃₉ 107 the event-by-event baseline necessary for studying oscil-140 108 lation effects and obtaining a measurement of δ_{CP} [23]. 141 109 In this work, we investigate the precision of the recon- $_{142}$ 110 structed neutrino direction in a LArTPC detector using₁₄₃ 111

sub-GeV neutrinos arriving from a known direction. The reported results use the MicroBooNE detector [29] and data sets corresponding to an exposure of 1.3×10^{21} protons on target. Neutrinos from the Booster Neutrino Beam (BNB) [30] at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory collected during 2015–2020 are used, which provide strong overlap with the sub-GeV atmospheric neutrino spectrum. We focus on interactions where a single muonproton pair is reconstructed with no additional detected particles, similar to previous measurements [31-33]. We refer to these events as $CC1p0\pi$. Such events are dominated by quasielastic (QE) interactions as it is required that there are no visible pions. We define the direction of the muon-proton system from the sum of the muon and proton momentum, and investigate the deviation of this direction from that of the incoming neutrino. Furthermore, we present the first flux-integrated differential cross-section measurements for muon-neutrino chargedcurrent (CC) interactions on argon as a function of the angle between the muon-proton system and the incoming neutrino direction. We present both a single-differential measurement, and double-differential measurements in different ranges of variables with sensitivity to nuclear effects and undetected particles such as neutrons. These variables include the reconstructed energy, derived struck nucleon momentum, and derived missing momentum.

In Sec. II we define the angle between the muon-proton system and the incoming neutrino direction, $\theta_{\rm vis}$. We further define the variables with sensitivity to nuclear effects used in the double-differential cross section measurements. In Sec. III we present $\theta_{\rm vis}$ distributions using MicroBooNE ν_{μ} -Ar CC1p0 π interactions and discuss the observed features in specific regions of phase space. Section IV leverages the MicroBooNE CC1p0 π event selection to make a projection for the expected DUNE atmo-

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¹⁴⁷ spheric neutrino $\theta_{\rm vis}$ spectrum by deriving a reweighting¹⁷⁶ factor as a function of the true neutrino energy. In Sec. V₁₇₇ ¹⁴⁹ we present the first flux-integrated single- and double-¹⁷⁸ differential cross section measurements in the new angular variable. Finally, conclusions are presented in Sec. VI.

II. OBSERVABLES

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The simplest case in which to benchmark the recon-153 structed neutrino angular orientation precision is us- $_{180}$ 154 ing charged-current quasielastic-like (CCQE-like) inter- $_{\scriptscriptstyle 181}$ 155 actions, where the final state can be characterized by a_{182} 156 muon and a proton. Using the muon (\vec{p}_{μ}) and proton₁₈₃ 157 (\vec{p}_p) momentum vectors, we define the angle between the 158 muon-proton system and the incoming neutrino direction 159 $(\theta_{\rm vis})$ as 160

$$\theta_{\rm vis} = \operatorname{acos}(\frac{\vec{b} \cdot \hat{z}}{|\vec{b}|}),\tag{1}$$

with
$$\vec{b} = \vec{p}_{\mu} + \vec{p}_{p},$$
 (2)¹⁸⁵

¹⁶¹ where \hat{z} corresponds to the unit vector along the beam₁₈₇ ¹⁶² direction of incident neutrinos, as shown in Fig. 1.



FIG. 1. Schematic representation of $\theta_{\rm vis}$ using the muon's and¹⁹⁷ proton's three-dimensional momentum vectors.¹⁹⁸

This reconstructed angular orientation is studied as a²⁰⁰ function of variables with sensitivity to nuclear effects;²⁰¹ namely the i) visible energy, ii) total struck nucleon momentum, and iii) missing momentum.

The reconstructed visible energy (E_{reco}) is a crucial input to neutrino oscillation studies, and can be obtained²⁰² following the formalism used in [34],

$$E_{\rm reco} = E_{\mu} + K_p + B, \qquad (3)_{_{205}}^{_{204}}$$

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where E_{μ} is the total muon energy, K_p is the proton ki-206 netic energy, and *B* the nucleon removal energy of argon₂₀₇ set to 30.9 MeV [35]. The particle energies are obtained₂₀₈ using range-based momentum. 209

Assuming that the incoming neutrino travels along the₂₁₀ z-direction and using conservation of momentum along₂₁₁ that direction, the transverse and longitudinal components of the struck nucleon momentum can be obtained, as discussed in Refs. [36, 37],

$$\delta \vec{p}_T = \vec{p}_{\mu,T} + \vec{p}_{p,T},\tag{4}$$

$$p_L = p_{\mu,L} + p_{p,L} - E_{\text{reco}},\tag{5}$$

where $p_{\mu(p),T(L)}$ are the transverse (longitudinal) component of the muon (proton) momentum vector, respectively. Assuming that all the particles are reconstructed, the initial struck nucleon momentum (p_n) can be obtained as the vector sum of the longitudinal and transverse components,

$$p_n = |\vec{p}_n| = \sqrt{p_L^2 + \delta p_T^2}.$$
(6)

This derivation of the initial struck nucleon momentum builds on the assumption that neutrinos arrive from a known direction along the beamline. This is not applicable for neutrinos of atmospheric origin. To overcome this limitation, we introduce a new variable to quantify the missing momentum as

$$p_{\rm miss} = E_{\rm reco} - b,\tag{7}$$

where b corresponds to the magnitude of the vector \vec{b} . This quantity is independent of the incoming neutrino direction since it uses no angular information. Thus, it can be calculated for atmospheric neutrinos and leveraged to ensure that both the incoming atmospheric neutrino direction and energy will be reconstructed accurately. In the absence of undetected particles, detection thresholds, or nuclear effects, $p_{\rm miss}$ would be equal to the protonneutron mass difference. Deviations from that value are indicative of the presence of these effects and introduce missing energy or momentum in the measurement.

III. MICROBOONE EVENT SELECTION

The CC1p0 π signal definition used in this analysis includes all ν_{μ} -Ar scattering events with a final-state muon with momentum $0.1 < p_{\mu} < 1.2 \text{ GeV}/c$, and exactly one proton with $0.3 < p_p < 1 \text{ GeV}/c$. Events with final-state neutral pions of any momentum are excluded. Signal events may contain any number of protons with momentum less than 300 MeV/c or greater than 1 GeV/c, neutrons of any momentum, and charged pions with momentum lower than 70 MeV/c.





FIG. 2. (a) Schematic representation of the $\theta_{\rm brt}$ angle using the angle between the true $(\vec{b}_{\rm true})$ and reconstructed $(\vec{b}_{\rm reco})_{263}^{263}$ muon-proton system vectors with respect to the neutrino orientation for selected signal CC1p0 π simulated events. (b)²⁶⁴ Angular $\theta_{\rm brt}$ distribution using the selected signal CC1p0 π^{265} simulated events. The peak location (p'), median (m), mean²⁶⁶ value (μ) , and standard deviation $(\tilde{\sigma})$ describing the distri-²⁶⁷ bution are also shown. (c) Two-dimensional correlation be-²⁶⁸ tween the reconstructed and true $\theta_{\rm vis}$ using the selected signal₂₆₉ CC1p0 π simulated events.

To report the results as a function of the $\theta_{\rm vis}$ angular orientation, we use five years of data collected by the MicroBooNE detector from its exposure to the BNB neutrino flux. The detector is an 85 tonne active mass liquid argon time projection chamber and is described in detail in Ref. [29].

The selection outlined in Refs. [31–33] is used, which corresponds to the same CC1p0 π signal definition as described at the beginning of this section. This results in 17,130 candidate data events, a purity of CC1p0 π interactions of about 70%, and a selection efficiency of approximately 10%. The final efficiency is primarily driven by the demand for exactly two fully contained track-like candidates. Based on simulation predictions, we find that the dominant background contributions originate from events with two true protons, pion-proton pairs, and broken muon tracks. This is attributed to reconstruction failures that either fail to reconstruct a particle track or split a particle track into multiple segments.

This data is compared against the GENIE v3.0.6 neutrino interaction generator predictions [38] with the GENIE v3.0.6 G18_10a_02_11a (G18) model configuration along with the MicroBooNE BNB flux prediction [30]. This model configuration uses the local Fermi gas (LFG) model [39], the Nieves CCQE scattering prescription [40] which includes Coulomb corrections for the outgoing muon [41], and random phase approximation (RPA) corrections [42]. Additionally, it uses the Nieves meson exchange current (MEC) model [43], the Kuzmin-Lyubushkin-Naumov Berger-Sehgal resonance production (RES) [44–46], the Berger-Sehgal coherent production (COH) [47], and the Bodek-Yang deep inelastic scattering (DIS) [48] models with the PYTHIA [49] hadronization part, and the hA2018 final state interaction (FSI) model [50]. The CCQE and CCMEC neutrino interaction models have been tuned to T2K $\nu_{\mu}\text{-}^{12}\text{C}$ CC0 π data [51, 52]. Predictions for more complex interactions, such as RES, remain unaltered and no additional Monte Carlo (MC) constraints are applied. We refer to the corresponding tuned prediction as G18T. In order to provide an accurate description of the dominant cosmic backgrounds pertinent to surface detectors, the full MC simulation consists of a combination of simulated neutrino interactions overlaid with background data collected when the beam is off to model cosmic ray induced interactions and detector noise. This technique has been extensively used by previous CC1p0 π MicroBooNE analyses [53–56].

We first characterize the performance of the LArTPC reconstruction by comparing the true (\vec{b}_{true}) and reconstructed (\vec{b}_{reco}) muon-proton system vectors. These are constructed using the true and reconstructed values for the muon and proton momentum vectors, respectively, as defined in Sec. II. This comparison is performed using the selected MC events that satisfy the CC1p0 π signal definition. We refer to the relevant opening angle between the reconstructed (r) and true (t) \vec{b} vectors as θ_{brt} , as shown in Fig. 2(a). As shown in Fig. 2(b), for the majority of events the angle θ_{brt} is better than 5°, which demon-

strates the excellent reconstruction capabilities of LArT-270 PCs. The peak location (p'), median (m), mean value 271 (μ) , and standard deviation $(\tilde{\sigma})$ describing the distribu-272 tions are also shown. The small values that characterize 273 this distribution indicate that the detector resolution on 274 these quantities is not the limiting factor in determining 275 the incoming neutrino direction. This will also be dis-276 cussed in later sections. Finally, Fig. 2(c) shows the two-277 dimensional correlation between the reconstructed and 278 true $\theta_{\rm vis}$ and demonstrates that no major biases are ob-279 served. The corresponding muon and proton angular cor-280 relations between the reconstructed and true quantities 281 can be found in the Supplemental Material [57]. 282

The reconstructed $\theta_{\rm vis}$ distribution is shown in Fig. 3. 283 The uncertainty band shown in the data to MC ra-284 tio includes contributions from the neutrino flux pre-285 diction (6.7%) [58], neutrino interaction cross section 286 modeling (4.8%) [52, 59, 60], detector response model-287 ing (4.1%) [61], beam exposure (2.4%), MC statistics 288 (0.5%), number of scattering targets (1.19%), reinterac-289 tions (0.9%) [62], and out-of-cryostat interaction model-290 ing (0.3%). The data-simulation agreement is quantified 291 across all the figures in terms of a goodness-of-fit met-292 ric (χ^2) , the corresponding p-value (p), and as a number 293 of standard deviations (σ'). The latter is calculated by 294 translating the p-value to a χ^2 value with one degree of 295 freedom and taking the square root of that quantity. The 296 χ^2 calculation includes the bin-to-bin correlations. 297



FIG. 3. Distribution of the selected CC1p0 π events as a function of the angle $\theta_{\rm vis}$. Only statistical uncertainties are shown on the data. The bottom panel shows the ratio of data to prediction. The prediction uncertainty is included in the bottom panel. The data-simulation agreement is quantified across all the figures in terms of a goodness-of-fit metric (χ^2), the corresponding p-value (p), and as a number of standard deviations (σ').



FIG. 4. Distribution of the selected CC1p0 π events as a function of the muon-proton angle $\theta_{\rm vis}$ in (a) low, (b) medium, and (c) high reconstructed energy ($E_{\rm reco}$) regions. Only statistical uncertainties are shown on the data. The bottom panels shows the ratio of data to prediction. The prediction uncertainty is included in the bottom panels. The data-simulation agreement is quantified across all the figures in terms of a goodness-of-fit metric (χ^2), the corresponding p-value (p), and as a number of standard deviations (σ').





FIG. 5. Distribution of the selected CC1p0 π events as a function of the muon-proton angle $\theta_{\rm vis}$ in (a) low, (b) medium, and (c) high reconstructed struck nucleon momentum (p_n) regions. Only statistical uncertainties are shown on the data. The bottom panels shows the ratio of data to prediction. The prediction uncertainty is included in the bottom panels. The data-simulation agreement is quantified across all the figures in terms of a goodness-of-fit metric (χ^2) , the corresponding p-value (p), and as a number of standard deviations (σ') .

FIG. 6. Distribution of the selected CC1p0 π events as a function of the muon-proton angle $\theta_{\rm vis}$ in (a) low, (b) medium, and (c) high reconstructed missing momentum ($p_{\rm miss}$) regions. Only statistical uncertainties are shown on the data. The bottom panels shows the ratio of data to prediction. The prediction uncertainty is included in the bottom panels. The data-simulation agreement is quantified across all the figures in terms of a goodness-of-fit metric (χ^2), the corresponding p-value (p), and as a number of standard deviations (σ').



FIG. 7. (a) Angular orientation $\theta_{\rm vis}$ dependence on the reconstructed energy using simulated signal CC1p0 π events. (b) The $\theta_{\rm vis}$ distributions presented in reconstructed energy slices using simulated signal CC1p0 π events. The peak location (p'), median (m), mean value (μ) , and standard deviation $(\tilde{\sigma})$ are also presented.

In the absence of nuclear effects and final-state rein-³³⁷ 298 teractions, the $\theta_{\rm vis}$ distribution would be peaked at 0° 299 with respect to the incoming neutrino direction. Instead₃₃₈ 300 it shows a smooth rise at low values until it peaks at₃₃₉ 301 $\approx 10^{\circ}$, followed by a decreasing tail that extends to $180^{\circ}_{.340}$ 302 The physics contributions driving this tail are discussed₃₄₁ 303 in Sec. V. Candidate neutrino interactions that satisfy₃₄₂ 304 the CC1p0 π signal definition at a reconstruction level₃₄₃ 305 but not at truth level are treated as background events.344 306 We refer to these background events as non-CC1p0 π . In₃₄₅ 307 addition, there are also some remaining background con-346 308 tributions from cosmic contamination and interactions347 309 originating outside the cryostat. 310 348

The final θ_{vis} cross section results will be reported in₃₄₉ regions of E_{reco} , p_n , and p_{miss} . These regions are listed in₃₅₀ Table I and correspond to phase-space regions with sen-₃₅₁ sitivity to different nuclear effects. The relevant event₃₅₂

distributions in these regions are presented in Figs. 4– 6. The $\theta_{\rm vis}$ resolutions are included in the Supplemental Material [57]. The bin-width division has already been applied to account for the irregular binning. We further report the evolution of the $\theta_{\rm vis}$ mean value (μ), standard deviation ($\tilde{\sigma}$), and median (m) in those regions for the simulated signal CC1p0 π events. A representative example of the angular orientation $\theta_{\rm vis}$ for the simulated signal CC1p0 π events is presented as a function of the reconstructed energy in Fig. 7.

As can be seen both in Figs. 4–6 and in Table I, the median obtained in the θ_{vis} distribution using all the events (Fig. 3) is smaller than the median in regions with reconstructed energy less than 0.5 GeV shown in Fig. 4(a). The same behavior is observed for regions with high reconstructed struck nucleon momentum seen in Fig. 5(c) and regions with high missing momentum shown in Fig. 6(bc). Yet, the resolutions obtained with the CC1p0 π selection are, in most cases, smaller than the ones observed in the result reported in [63]. That observation is valid even at the lower part of the neutrino energy spectrum, where the reconstruction performance is expected to worsen.

TABLE I. Evolution of the mean value (μ) , standard deviation $(\tilde{\sigma})$, and median (m) as a function of $\theta_{\rm vis}$ across various regions of $E_{\rm reco}$, p_n , and $p_{\rm miss}$ for the simulated signal CC1p0 π events.

Region	μ [deg]	$\tilde{\sigma}$ [deg]	m [deg]
All events	23.2	21.1	16.5
$E_{\rm reco} < 0.5 {\rm GeV}$	34.5	27.3	26.5
$0.5 < E_{ m reco} < 0.8 { m GeV}$	21.8	18.6	16.5
$0.8 < E_{ m reco} < { m GeV}$	14.3	11.5	10.5
$p_n < 0.2 \mathrm{GeV}/c$	10.0	5.8	9.5
$0.2 < p_n < 0.4 \mathrm{GeV}/c$	21.8	11.4	19.5
$0.4 < p_n < 1 \mathrm{GeV}/c$	49.3	26.3	44.5
$ p_{\rm miss} < 0.1 {\rm GeV}/c$	20.7	19.4	15.5
$0.1 < p_{\rm miss} < 0.2 \mathrm{GeV}/c$	23.6	21.3	16.5
$0.2 < p_{\rm miss} < 0.5 {\rm GeV}/c$	29.8	23.6	23.5

IV. DUNE ATMOSPHERIC PROJECTION

In this section, we make a projection for the simulated $\theta_{\rm vis}$ distribution expected for DUNE atmospheric searches using the ν_{μ} flux prediction from Honda *et al.* [64] at the Homestake site. This is motivated by the good agreement within uncertainties seen between data and prediction, which allows us to take advantage of our simulation dataset and make predictions for the expected angular resolution in DUNE. In order to make the DUNE projection, we use the probability distribution function (pdf) for the BNB and Honda ν_{μ} fluxes. As shown in Fig. 8(a) showing the flux pdfs, there is a significant overlap between the Honda flux and the low energy range of the BNB flux. Using the ratio between the two flux pdfs as a function of E_{ν} , we derive a reweighting function to transition between the two fluxes, as shown in Fig. 8(b).



FIG. 8. (a) Comparison between the BNB and Honda ν_{μ} flux pdfs in true neutrino energy. (b) Reweighting function used for the BNB-to-Honda projection using the ratio of the ν_{μ} flux pdfs.

This function is applied on an event-by-event basis on 353 the simulated candidate $CC1p0\pi$ events that satisfy the 354 MicroBooNE BNB event selection outlined in Sec. III³⁷¹ 355 and are shown in Fig. 9(a). The reweighted distribu-356 tion shown in Fig. 9(b) corresponds to the expected $\theta_{\rm vis}$ 357 behavior that DUNE atmospheric analyses might obtain³⁷² 358 when the Honda flux is used. The MicroBooNE detec-³⁷³ 359 tor properties and cross section modeling are assumed to 360 be the same for the purpose of this DUNE reweighting₃₇₄ 361 study. As expected, due to the lower-energy Honda flux, 375 362 the DUNE atmospheric distribution has a broader $\theta_{vis^{376}}$ 363 distribution than the MicroBooNE BNB $\theta_{\rm vis}$ one. 364 377

Figure 9 also includes the interaction contributions of $_{378}$ the simulated candidate CC1p0 π events for both the Mi- $_{379}$ croBooNE result and the DUNE projection. Since the $_{380}$ Honda flux peaks at lower energies compared to the BNB $_{381}$ flux, the DUNE atmospheric projection has a higher con- $_{382}$ tribution of QE events than the MicroBooNE distribu- $_{383}$



FIG. 9. Distribution of $\theta_{\rm vis}$ using simulated candidate CC1p0 π events for (a) MicroBooNE and (b) a DUNE atmospheric projection using the reweighting as a function of E_{ν} . The peak location (p'), median (m), mean value (μ) , and standard deviation $(\tilde{\sigma})$ describing the distributions are also shown.

tion.

V. MICROBOONE CROSS SECTION MEASUREMENT

We report the extracted cross sections (σ) from the MicroBooNE data as a function of true kinematic variables using the Wiener singular value decomposition (Wiener-SVD) unfolding technique [65]. This technique transforms both the data measurement and covariance matrix into a regularized truth space. It requires the construction of a response matrix describing the expected detector smearing and reconstruction efficiency. This matrix is responsible for correcting for these effects. The input covariance matrix is constructed using the uncertain-

ties related to the incident neutrino flux [30], interaction₃₉₇ 384 model [66], particle propagation [67], and detector re-398 385 sponse [68]. The binning is chosen to balance resolution₃₉₉ 386 and statistics. Each measurement is accompanied by an_{400} 387 output regularization matrix A_C . The A_C matrix per-401 388 forms the conversion from the truth to the regularized $_{402}$ 389 truth space and is included in the Supplemental Mate-403 390 rial [57]. The unfolding is performed for each of the ob-404 391 servables of interest using the G18T model described in₄₀₅ 392 Sec. III. The robustness of the unfolding method is ver-406 393 ified using fake data studies with alternative generator₄₀₇ 394 predictions. 395 408



FIG. 10. (a) The unfolded cross section interaction and⁴³⁶ the interaction contributions for the selected events for the⁴³⁷ **G18T** configuration as a function of $\theta_{\rm vis}$. (b) The unfolded⁴³⁸ cross section interaction and the interaction contributions for⁴³⁹ the selected events using the same configuration as a function⁴⁴⁰ of $\theta_{\rm vis}$ for events with $0.8 < E_{\rm reco} < 2 \,{\rm GeV}$. The gray band⁴⁴¹ shows the normalization systematic uncertainty. Inner and⁴⁴² outer error bars show the statistical and the statistical \oplus shape⁴⁴³ uncertainty at the 1σ , or 68%, confidence level.

The event rate has the predicted background sub-446

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tracted before the unfolding. It is further divided by the integrated neutrino flux and number of argon nuclei in the fiducial volume to report a differential cross section. In the results presented in Figs. 10–15, the inner error bars on the cross sections correspond to the data statistical uncertainties. The systematic uncertainties are decomposed into data shape and normalization sources following the procedure outlined in Ref. [69]. The crossterm uncertainties are incorporated in the normalization. The outer error bars on the reported cross sections correspond to data statistical and shape uncertainties added in quadrature. The data normalization uncertainties are presented as a band at the bottom of each plot. The degrees of freedom (ndf) correspond to the number of bins. The χ^2/ndf and p-value (p) data comparison for each generator prediction shown on all the figures takes into account the total covariance matrix. More details on the systematic uncertainties and the cross section extraction technique can be found in Ref. [32]. All the extracted cross sections are reported in the Supplemental Material [57]. They are compared to the G18T model set used by MicroBooNE, as well as the model set used by DUNE.

The single-differential cross section as a function of $\theta_{\rm vis}$ is shown in Fig. 10(a). As expected from the reconstructed event spectrum shown in Fig. 3, it is a distribution that peaks at a non-zero value of ~10° and extends to 180°. The low- $\theta_{\rm vis}$ part of the distribution is dominated by QE interactions. The higher- $\theta_{\rm vis}$ part of the spectrum has strong contributions from interactions with multi-nucleon effects, namely MEC and RES along with small DIS contributions. In this case where all events are considered, the G18T prediction yields good data-simulation agreement with a χ^2 /ndf less than one and a p-value close to unity.

As discussed in Sec. I, the neutrino angular orientation is of great importance for atmospheric neutrino oscillation studies. Thus, an extended $\theta_{\rm vis}$ tail can be a limiting factor that introduces significant uncertainties and limits the experimental sensitivity. To that end, experimental efforts might want to primarily study events of interest in regions of the phase-space that result in a smaller spread of the $\theta_{\rm vis}$ distribution. An example of such a phasespace region is shown in Fig. 10(b) and corresponds to higher reconstructed energies $(0.8 < E_{\rm reco} < 2 \,{\rm GeV})$. In this limited phase space, $\theta_{\rm vis}$ rarely exceeds 30° and the G18T prediction results in good agreement when compared to the data. Other phase space regions with small $\theta_{\rm vis}$ spread are those with $p_n < 0.2 \,{\rm GeV}/c$ and $|p_{\rm miss}| <$ $0.1 \,\mathrm{GeV}/c$, as can be seen in Figs. 14 and 15, which will be shown later.



FIG. 11. (a) The flux-integrated double-differential cross sections as a function of $\theta_{\rm vis}$ for $0.4 < p_n < 1 \,{\rm GeV}/c$. Colored lines show the results of theoretical cross section calculations using the G18T hN prediction with the hN FSI model (orange), the G18T G4 prediction with the GEANT4 FSI model (green), and the G18T prediction with the hA FSI model (light blue). The gray band at the bottom shows the normalization systematic uncertainty. The numbers in parentheses show the χ^2 /ndf calculation for each of the predictions. (b) The flux-integrated double-differential cross sections as a function of $\theta_{\rm vis}$ for $0.2 < |p_{\rm miss}| < 0.5 \,{\rm GeV}/c$. Colored stacked histograms show the results of theoretical cross section calculations for events with no neutrons, G18T On (light blue), one neutron, G18T 1n (orange), two neutrons, G18T 2n (green), and at least three neutrons, G18T 3(+)n (red). The num- $_{473}$ bers in parentheses show the fractional contribution for $\operatorname{each}_{474}$ neutron multiplicity. Inner and outer error bars show the sta- $_{475}$ tistical and the statistical \oplus shape uncertainty at the 1σ , or $_{476}^{-10}$ 68%, confidence level. 477

⁴⁴⁷ In contrast to these phase space restrictions that yield⁴⁷⁹ ⁴⁴⁸ noticeably narrower θ_{vis} distributions, regions with a⁴⁸⁰ ⁴⁴⁹ wide angular spread have also been identified. Fig-⁴⁸¹ ⁴⁵⁰ ure 11(a) shows an example corresponding to high to-⁴⁸² ⁴⁵¹ tal reconstructed struck nucleon momentum values (0.4⁴⁸³

 $< p_n < 1 \,\mathrm{GeV}/c$). This phase space region has been shown to be dominated by events that undergo FSI [33]. To test the θ_{vis} FSI sensitivity in that region, we study the performance of different FSI modeling options using T2K-tuned GENIE configurations and compare them to the data results. These tuned configurations include the GENIE v3.0.6 G18_10a_02_11 configuration with the empirical hA2018 model (G18T) [50], the GENIE v3.0.6 G18_10b_02_11 configuration with the hN2018 cascade model (G18b) [70], and the GENIE v3.0.6 G18_10d_02_11 configuration with the GEANT4-Bertini model (G18d) [71]. A comparison across the relevant predictions is shown in Fig. 11(a) and reveals that the three FSI models yield comparable predictions that describe the shape of the θ_{vis} distribution well. Discrimination power across the three FSI models could be established in future iterations of the analysis with reduced uncertainties in the first bins. A similar broadband $\theta_{\rm vis}$ distribution is observed for low $E_{\rm reco}$ values and is presented in Fig. 13, which will be discussed later.



FIG. 12. The flux-integrated single-differential cross sections as a function of $\theta_{\rm vis}$. The G18T (light blue) and AR23 (orange) GENIE configuration predictions are compared to data. Inner and outer error bars show the statistical and the statistical \oplus shape uncertainty at the 1 σ , or 68%, confidence level. The gray band shows the normalization systematic uncertainty. The numbers in parentheses show the χ^2 /ndf calculation for each of the predictions.

Other broad-spectrum features are observed for high missing momentum values $(0.2 < |p_{\rm miss}| < 0.5 \,{\rm GeV}/c)$ in Fig. 11(b). The figure shows that these high missing momenta are obtained due to the presence of neutrons that deposit little to no energy in the detector, resulting in a tail that extends beyond 30° in $\theta_{\rm vis}$. Multi-neutron contributions account for more than half of the events in the high $|p_{\rm miss}|$ sample. On the other hand, this reduces to 30% for events with low $|p_{\rm miss}|$ values. The neutron contributions for the $\theta_{\rm vis}$ distribution using all the selected events and those events with $|p_{\rm miss}| < 0.2 \,{\rm GeV}/c$ can be

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FIG. 13. The flux-integrated double-differential cross sections as a function of θ_{vis} for (a) $E_{reco} < 0.5 \text{ GeV}$, (b) $0.5 < E_{reco} < 0.8 \text{ GeV}$, (c) $0.8 < E_{reco} < 2 \text{ GeV}$, and (d) all events in all E_{reco} regions simultaneously expressed as a function of the universal bin number defined in the bin scheme file. The G18T (light blue) and AR23 (orange) GENIE configuration predictions are compared to data. Inner and outer error bars show the statistical and the statistical \oplus shape uncertainty at the 1 σ , or 68%, confidence level. The gray band shows the normalization systematic uncertainty. The numbers in parentheses show the χ^2 /ndf calculation for each of the predictions.

found in the Supplemental Material [57]. The impor-500 484 tance of neutron detection in liquid argon has motivated⁵⁰¹ 485 a number of efforts and identification techniques [72–74].502 486 For completeness, the data results are also compared⁵⁰³ 487 against the v3.4.2 GENIE AR23_20i_00_000 (AR23) 504 488 model prediction that is currently used by DUNE and⁵⁰⁵ 489 other Short Baseline Neutrino (SBN) experiments. The⁵⁰⁶ 490 AR23 model set shares many common features with 491 the G18T one, but it includes some notable differences. 492 Namely, AR23 uses the local Fermi gas ground state⁵⁰⁷ 493 modeling along with a correlated high-momentum 494 nucleon tail [38]; the z-expansion form factors for_{508} 495 CCQE interactions [75]; the SuSAv2 modeling for MEC_{509} 496 interactions [76]; emission of de-excitation photons for_{510} 497 argon nuclei [38]; and the free nucleon tune [45]. 498 511 Figure 12 shows the single-differential cross sec-512 499

tion measurement, while Figs. 13–15 show the doubledifferential cross sections as functions of $\theta_{\rm vis}$ and $E_{\rm reco}$, p_n and $|p_{\rm miss}|$. AR23 yields a systematically lower prediction than G18T due to the fact that, unlike G18T, no tuning is applied on the AR23 QE contribution. Yet, there are also parts of the phase space where G18T demonstrates a poor performance with $\chi^2/{\rm ndf}$ greater than unity.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

We report on the precision of the reconstructed neutrino orientation $\theta_{\rm vis}$ for event topologies with a single muon and a single proton in the final state. The data are recorded with the MicroBooNE LArTPC detector using the Booster Neutrino Beam at Fermi National Accelera-



FIG. 14. The flux-integrated double-differential cross sections as a function of θ_{vis} for (a) $p_n < 0.2 \text{ GeV}/c$, (b) $0.2 < p_n < 0.4 \text{ GeV}/c$, (c) $0.4 < p_n < 1 \text{ GeV}/c$, and (d) all events in all p_n regions simultaneously expressed as a function of the universal bin number defined in the bin scheme file. The G18T (light blue) and AR23 (orange) GENIE configuration predictions are compared to data. Inner and outer error bars show the statistical and the statistical \oplus shape uncertainty at the 1σ , or 68%, confidence level. The gray band shows the normalization systematic uncertainty. The numbers in parentheses show the χ^2 /ndf calculation for each of the predictions.

tor Laboratory with an exposure of 1.3×10^{21} protons on 529 513 target. We find that the neutrino direction reconstruc-530 514 tion performance using the single-proton selection is, in₅₃₁ 515 most cases, better than assumed in already published lit-532 516 erature using an inclusive selection. Using a reweighting₅₃₃ 517 function in E_{ν} , we use the reconstructed simulated events⁵³⁴ 518 in MicroBooNE to make a projection for the spectrum⁵³⁵ 519 that the DUNE atmospheric studies might observe. The536 520 $\theta_{\rm vis}$ cross sections are studied in phase-space regions of 537 521 reconstructed neutrino energy, total struck nucleon mo-538 522 mentum, and total missing momentum. The latter is 523 agnostic to the angular orientation of the incoming neu-524 trino and, therefore, can be used in atmospheric neu-539 525 trino studies to separate events with better and worse 526 directional reconstruction. The G18T modeling perfor-₅₄₀ 527 mance is found to be satisfactory within the extracted $_{541}$ 528

uncertainties and able to describe the majority of the nuclear effects driving the $\theta_{\rm vis}$ distribution shape in different parts of the phase-space. We also report single-differential cross section measurements as a function of $\theta_{\rm vis}$, and double-differential cross section measurements as functions of $\theta_{\rm vis}$ and the reconstructed visible energy, the total struck nucleon momentum, and the missing momentum. These results can be used to inform the sub-GeV atmospheric oscillation studies that will be reported by forthcoming experiments like DUNE.

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FIG. 15. The flux-integrated double-differential cross sections as a function of θ_{vis} for (a) $|p_{miss}| < 0.1 \text{ GeV}/c$, (b) 0.1 $< |p_{miss}| < 0.2 \text{ GeV}/c$ (c) $0.2 < |p_{miss}| < 0.5 \text{ GeV}/c$, and (d) all events in all regions simultaneously expressed as a function of the universal bin number defined in the bin scheme file. The G18T (light blue) and AR23 (orange) GENIE configuration predictions are compared to data. Inner and outer error bars show the statistical and the statistical \oplus shape uncertainty at the 1σ , or 68%, confidence level. The gray band shows the normalization systematic uncertainty. The numbers in parentheses show the χ^2/ndf calculation for each of the predictions.

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