

Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS) / Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Frequently Asked Questions

Background

In Georgia, planning for transportation improvements is accomplished through either a rural area process or an urban area process. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), in conjunction with the regional commissions, performs the transportation planning activities for the rural areas so that federal funds may be used for transportation improvements in those areas. For urban areas, it is the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's) in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Transportation that perform the transportation planning activities required to utilize federal funds for transportation improvements.

What is an MPO?

- A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is an organization designated as the transportation planning group for an urban area.
- The name of the MPO based in and around Athens is the Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS).
- The MPO area includes all of Athens-Clarke County, the northern half of Oconee County, and the southernmost quarter of Madison County.
- MPO has three major roles:
 - Cooperative organization that is a venue for counties to coordinate transportation efforts with Federal and State agencies at the table
 - Federal funding is channeled through MPO process
 - Provides mechanism for local input into how federal dollars should be spent

What is the make-up of MPO ?

The composition and boundary of the MPO is approved by the Governor, and it is updated every ten years with the release of the U.S. Census Bureau population data.

MACORTS is made up of 2 committees:

Policy Committee – decision making body of MACORTS

- currently 9 voting members: Mayor/Chairman of Board of Commissioners for Athens-Clarke, Oconee, and Madison Cos., citizen representative from each county,

Commissioner of GDOT or designee, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration for UGA, and U.S. Navy Supply Corps School

Technical Coordinating Committee – provides technical input to the Policy Committee; recommending body

- members include county engineers, UGA Auxiliary Services and Transit, planning directors, county administrators, transit planner, GDOT representatives, citizen representatives, Navy School, school boards, transportation industry professionals, and other technical county staff

What are the documents that the MPO produces ?:

There are 4 documents that all MPO's must produce in order to remain eligible for federal funding for any of its transportation programs.

1. Participation Plan
 - outlines how and when public involvement activities will be conducted
2. Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
 - annual budget of MPO
3. Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
 - comprehensive plan for transportation in area of MPO
 - covers timeframe of 20 years
 - is updated every 5 years
 - includes all projects that are anticipated to be necessary in next 20 years that can be reasonable funded
 - projects must be in LRTP before they can be moved forward into the TIP
4. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) -
 - annually updated program of projects to receive federal and state funding during the next 4 fiscal years
 - MACORTS also includes a section of local projects for informational purposes to make the document more useful at the local level
 - 2nd Tier of projects includes 2 years beyond the scope of the TIP (This is as far as federal transportation dollars are budgeted.)

**Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Update
Public Comment Period
May 24 – June 24, 2010
Frequently Asked Questions**

How often is the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) updated?

We update the TIP every year. Typically public comment is taken in April and May, but it can vary according to the Georgia Department of Transportation's schedule.

Where are we now in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) update process ?

The Draft TIP has been approved to go to the public for comment. This is not the final form of this document. The following public meetings have been scheduled to give the public opportunities to review and comment on the Draft TIP:

Athens-Clarke County Planning Department – Auditorium
Thursday, May 27, 2010 – 4pm to 6pm

Oconee County Veterans Park – Meeting Room
Tuesday, June 8, 2010 – 5pm to 7pm

Madison County, Danielsville Courthouse – Public Meeting Room
Wednesday, June 16, 2010 – 4pm to 6pm

Draft documents will be available to view at these meetings. Staff will be present to answer any questions and take public comments.

How do I get a copy of the Draft Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to review ?

The Draft TIP has been posted on the MACORTS website located at www.macorts.org. Paper copies as well as the document and associated materials on CD's are available at the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department, located at 120 W. Dougherty St. in Athens. You can reach us by phone at (706) 613-3515, by fax at (706) 613-3844, or by e-mail at macorts@co.clarke.ga.us. Copies may also be obtained at the Oconee County and Madison County Planning Offices in Watkinsville and Danielsville, respectively.

How can I comment on the Draft Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) ?

Comments will be accepted from May 24, 2010 to June 24, 2010. Comments may be submitted via mail, e-mail, phone, fax, or in person at the Planning Departments of Athens-Clarke County, Madison County, or Oconee County, or handed in at one of the 3 public meetings scheduled.

You can contact MACORTS directly at the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department at 120 W. Dougherty Street in Athens, by phone at (706) 613-3515, by fax at (706) 613-3844, or by e-mail at macorts@co.clarke.ga.us.

What will happen to my comments ?

After the comment period has been completed, all comments will be taken to the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) and Policy Committee (PC) for their review and consideration. Appropriate changes in response to the public comment will be incorporated into the document at the direction of the TCC and/or PC.

A final version of the document will be approved by the TCC and PC. The final version of the document will contain a summary of all public comment received. (Comments in their original form will be kept on file at the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department, but they will not be published in the Final document.)

Will the public be able to see the Final Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) ?

Yes, after PC approves the Final TIP, copies will be available free of charge to the public at the Planning Departments in Athens-Clarke County, Madison County, and Oconee County. Final documents should be available in hardcopy or on CD by July 30, 2010. It will also be posted on the MACORTS website shortly after approval.

Requests may be made to the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department at 120 W. Dougherty Street in Athens. The Planning Department may be contacted by phone at (706) 613-3515, by fax at (706) 613-3844 or by e-mail at macorts@co.clarke.ga.us.

How can I be notified of MACORTS happenings in the future ?

The easiest way to stay informed of what's going on with MACORTS is to sign up for our e-mail list on the MACORTS website (www.macorts.org).