

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 8 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, and Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration for UGA

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, 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.)