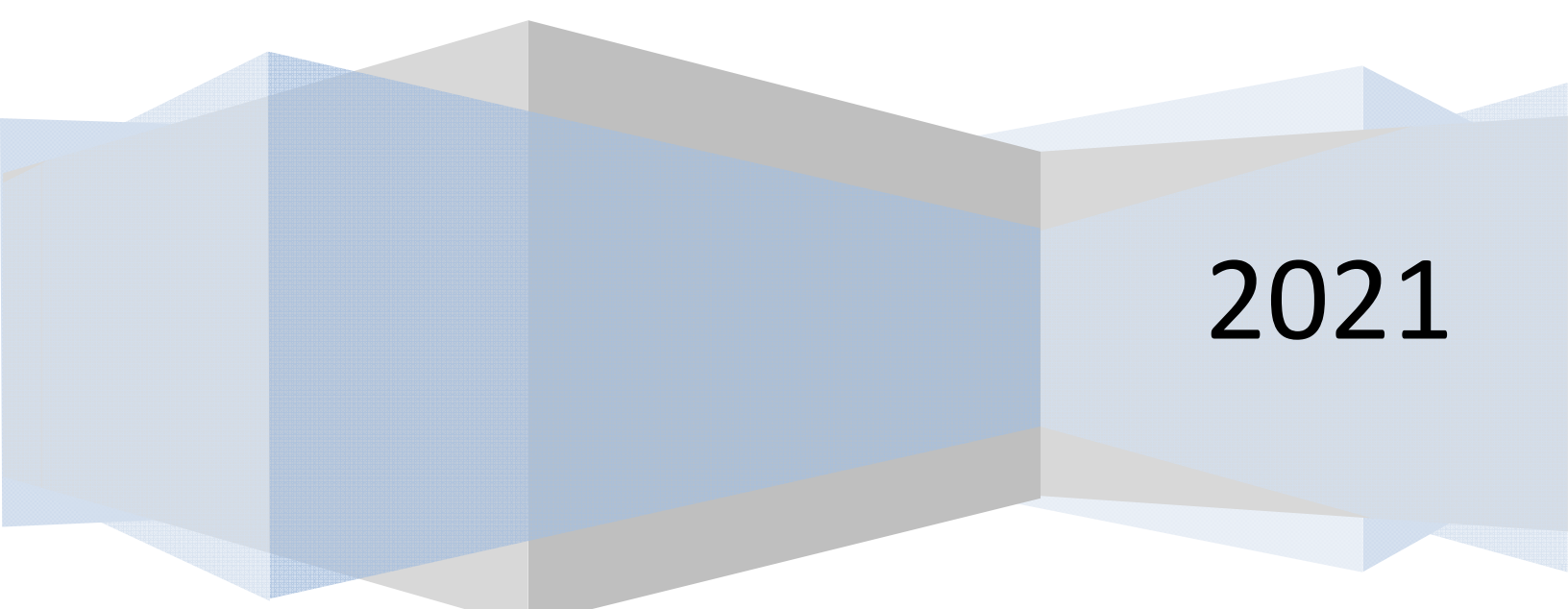


Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study
(MACORTS) & Athens-Clarke County Transit Department

Limited English Proficiency Plan

Adopted May 12, 2021

Prepared by Athens-Clarke County Planning Department



2021

**RESOLUTION BY THE MADISON ATHENS-CLARKE OCONEE REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION STUDY (MACORTS) POLICY COMMITTEE**

WHEREAS, federal regulations require that the Limited English Proficiency Plan for urbanized areas must be completed and periodically be updated and,

WHEREAS, the Technical Coordinating Committee of MACORTS in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and the Georgia Department of Transportation has reviewed the Limited English Proficiency Plan,

WHEREAS, the Technical Coordinating Committee at its April 28, 2021 meeting recommended the approval of the Limited English Proficiency Plan for MACORTS and the Athens Transit Department:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the MACORTS Policy Committee concurs with the recommendation of the Technical Coordinating Committee of MACORTS to approve the Limited English Proficiency Plan.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by the Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study Policy Committee, at their meeting held on May 12, 2021.

Recommended by:



Brad Griffin
TCC Chairman / MPO Director

May 12, 2021



John Daniell
MACORTS Policy Committee Chairperson

May 12, 2021

Limited English Proficiency Plan
for
Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study
and
Athens-Clarke County Transit Department

Adopted
May 12, 2021

Prepared By:
Athens-Clarke County Planning Department

The Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP) is established pursuant to and in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons With Limited English Proficiency."

The opinions, findings, and conclusions in this publication are those of the author(s) and are not necessarily those of the Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration, or Georgia Department of Transportation.

No person in the United States shall be excluded, on the grounds of race, color, creed, sex, age, disability, or national origin, from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination of any kind by the Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS) membership, staff, or agents.

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Introduction

On August 11, 2000, President William J. Clinton signed Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Service for Persons with Limited English Proficiency”, to clarify Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on the grounds of race, color, or national origin by any entity receiving federal financial assistance. Administrative methods or procedures that have the effect of subjecting individuals to discrimination or defeating the objectives of these regulations are prohibited. The purpose of Executive Order 13166 is to ensure accessibility to programs and services to otherwise eligible persons who are not proficient in the English language.

Purpose

The purpose of this Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan is to demonstrate compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166. The LEP Plan is for persons who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. Such persons may be eligible to receive language assistance with respect to a particular service, benefit, or encounter. This Plan will examine the services and products provided by the Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS) and the Athens-Clarke County Transit Department (ACCTD). The Plan will outline current accommodations made for LEP persons and possible future accommodations that can and/or should be made to make these services and products more accessible to LEP persons.

Four Factors to Formulate an LEP Plan

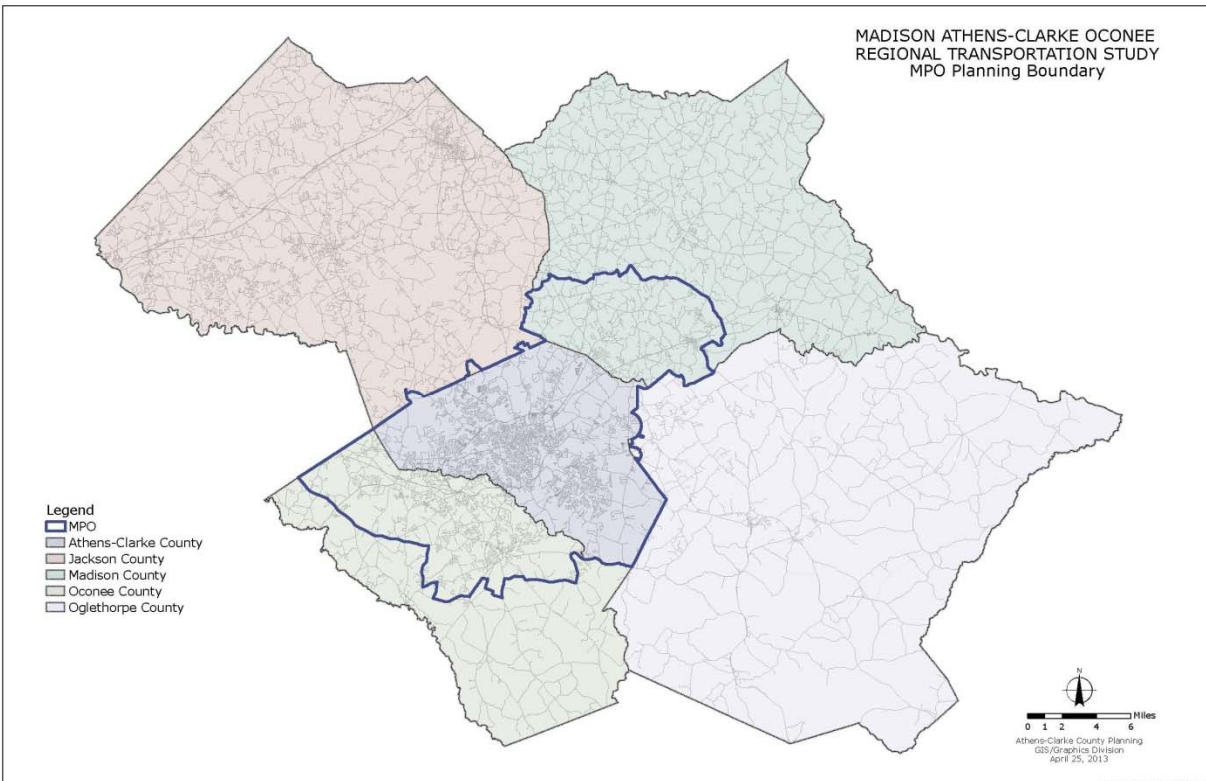
In determining how to provide effective and meaningful access for LEP customers, the U. S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has established the following four guidelines to consider in determining “reasonable steps” to be taken by MACORTS and Athens-Clarke County Transit Department:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons served or encountered in the eligible service population,
2. The frequency with which LEP persons encounter the services, programs, or activities provided,
3. The nature and importance of the services, programs, or activities; and
4. The resources available to the program and the costs of providing interpretation/translation services.

Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study

The Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS) was formed in 1969 and is the Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning in Athens-Clarke County and portions of Madison, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Jackson Counties. MACORTS is responsible for implementing the 3-C (comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing) transportation planning process.

Figure 1: Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study Planning Boundary



The Athens-Clarke County Planning Department, in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Transportation, is responsible for carrying out the transportation planning process as mandated under federal legislation. MACORTS products include, but are not limited to, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, the Unified Planning Work Program, and the Participation Plan.

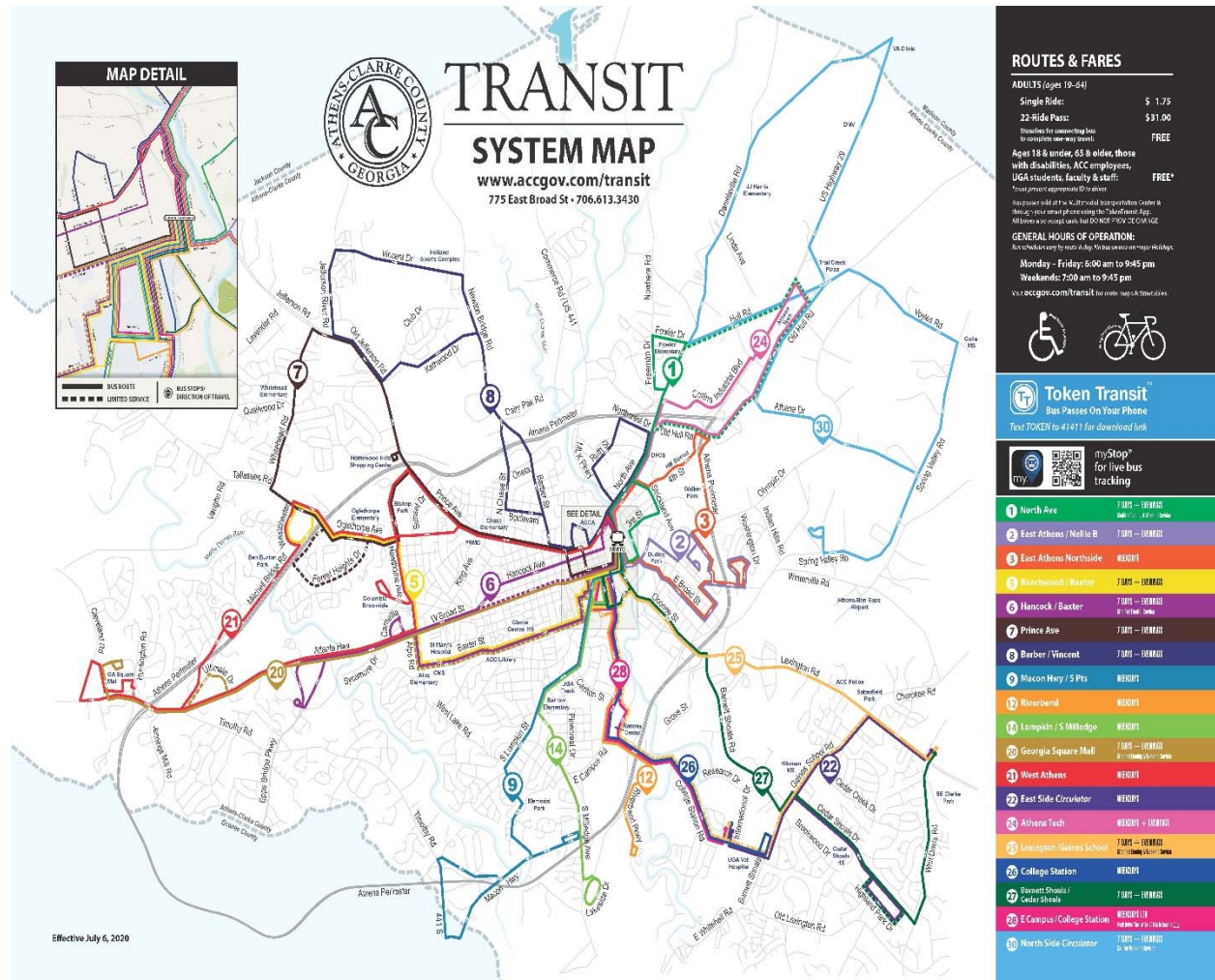
The Metropolitan Transportation Plan outlines the transportation planning vision for the next 20 years. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is an annually updated program of projects to receive federal funding during the next 4 fiscal years for implementation. The Unified Planning Work Plan (UPWP) is the annual operating and capital budget for MACORTS. The Participation Plan outlines how and when public involvement activities will be conducted. These documents are the main work efforts of MACORTS.

Athens-Clarke County Transit Department

Athens-Clarke County Transit Department (ACCTD) provides public transportation for Athens-Clarke County with 32 buses on 20 bus routes throughout the county. ACCTD offers fixed route bus service that operate Monday – Saturday from approximately 6:00 am to 10:00 pm, depending on the route, day, and time of year. In FY 2020, the ACCTD provided over 1.3 million rides on the fixed route service. All fixed route vehicles are ADA-accessible.

Athens-Clarke County Transit Department offers a Demand Response transportation option for people with a mobility impairment called "The Lift". This service is provided for those patrons who cannot ride the fixed route bus service. In FY 2020, the ACCTD provided 5,398 rides on demand response service. Additionally, ACCTD has a "Bus-N-Bike" program which makes daily commuting much easier, safer, and more convenient for cyclists to ride the bus. All fixed route vehicles are equipped with a three-position bicycle rack mounted to the front of the bus.

Figure 2: Athens-Clarke County Transit Department System Map



Limited English Proficiency Analysis

This plan uses the four factors outlined by the US Department of Transportation to determine the level and extent of language assistance necessary to reasonably ensure meaningful access to public transit and MACORTS services within the MPO area. Data used in this analysis was obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, specifically the American Community Survey's 5-year estimates. Due to the constraints of the available data, the member counties were analyzed at the Census Tract level, which does not conform completely to the MACORTS boundary. Therefore, it should be noted that the number of LEP persons within the MACORTS area is smaller than this data suggests. Recommendations are based on the results of the analysis including the available data.

Factor 1: The number of LEP persons served in the eligible service population

The MPO has developed a demographic profile of the population in the MACORTS region and ACCTD service area (Athens-Clarke County). As illustrated in Table 1, the MPO region has a total population (over 18 years of age) of 160,212 individuals. This total represents the Census Tracts within Athens-Clarke, Madison, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Jackson Counties with any part in the MPO area. This area is larger than the area within the MACORTS boundary. Athens-Clarke County total population (over 18 years of age) is 111,568. The race and ethnic breakout is as follows:

Table 1 - Total 'Speakers' by Race Age 18 & Over

Census Source	Race	Athens-Clarke Co.	Madison Co.	Oconee Co.	Oglethorpe Co.	Jackson Co.	Total
B01001A	White	68,232	7,606	22,461	3,955	5,897	108,151
B01001B	African American	25,722	1,231	1,365	705	825	29,848
B01001C	American Indian	138	11	6	9	0	164
B01001D	Asian	4,311	123	1,070	0	38	5,542
B01001E	Hawaiian / Islander	83	0	0	0	5	88
B01001F	Other Race	2,022	304	90	133	57	2,606
B01001G	Two or More Races	2,440	68	321	51	43	2,923
B01001I	Hispanic	8,620	559	1,072	334	305	10,890
	Total	111,568	9,902	26,385	5,187	7,170	160,212

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, B01001A-G & B01001I, 5 year Average 2014 - 2018, Sex by Age by Race

The LEP Analysis is based upon the Census data reported for persons ages 18 and up. This age group represents the potential ‘customers’ of ACCTD and MACORTS. Services and documents provided by ACCTD and MACORTS have a greater impact on the lives of this age group. MACORTS documents, particularly, are not written for an audience under 18 years of age. Children would generally have guidance from adults on navigating the ACCTD system.

Table 2 shows the 10 most prevalent languages spoken in the MACORTS region as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. This data includes all age brackets from 5 years old and up. A more detailed breakdown of the data was not available from the U.S. Census Bureau. This limitation of the available data inflates the number individuals reported in each age group by including those under 18 years of age.

Table 2 – Top Ten Languages Spoken in MACORTS Region

5 yrs and over Population	176,455	
English	153,464	86.97%
Spanish or Spanish Creole	13,811	7.82%
Other Indo-European	2,122	1.20%
Chinese	1,907	1.08%
Other Asian/Pacific Islander	1,067	0.60%
Other & Unspecified	785	0.44%
Korean	763	0.43%
German	653	0.37%
Arabic	507	0.29%
French, Haitian, or Cajun	455	0.26%
Total	175,534	99.48%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-yr Estimate: 2014 - 2018; C16001 – Language Spoken by All Ages

Table 3 shows the 10 most prevalent languages spoken in Athens-Clarke County as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. This data includes all age brackets from 5 years old and up. A more detailed breakdown of the data was not available from the U.S. Census Bureau. This limitation of the available data inflates the number individuals reported in each age group by including those under 18 years of age.

Table 3 – Top Ten Languages Spoken in Athens-Clarke County

5 years and over population	117,825	
English	99,947	84.83%
Spanish or Spanish Creole	10,828	9.18%
Other Indo-European	1,546	1.31%
Chinese	1,362	1.16%
Other Asian/Pacific Islander	746	0.63%
Other & Unspecified	746	0.63%
Korean	694	0.59%
German	511	0.43%
Arabic	491	0.42%
French, Haitian, or Cajun	274	0.23%
Total	117,145	99.42%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-yr Estimate: 2014 –2018; C16001 – Language Spoken by All Ages

The Census Bureau has four classifications for how well people speak English. The classifications are ‘very well’, ‘well’, ‘not well’, and ‘not at all’. For the purposes of the LEP Plan, people who were categorized as speaking English ‘not well’ or ‘not at all’ by the U.S. Census Bureau have been considered to be Limited English Proficient persons. As Table 4 shows, Oglethorpe County has the highest percentage of LEP individuals with 3.26%, while the entire region has approximately 2.78% of the population categorized as having limited English proficiency.

**Table 4 – Total Limited English Proficient Speakers
18 years of age and over By County**

	Total Speakers	Total LEP Individuals	Total % LEP Individuals
Athens-Clarke Co.	102,948	3,221	3.13%
Madison Co.	9,343	262	2.80%
Oconee Co.	25,313	378	1.49%
Oglethorpe Co.	4,853	158	3.26%
Jackson Co.	6,865	133	1.94%
Total	149,322	4,152	2.78%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-yr Estimate: 2014 – 2018; B16004 – Age by Language Spoken at Home by Ability

**Table 5 – Total Limited English Proficient Speakers
18 years of age and over By County & Language Group**

Language Group	Athens-Clarke Co.	Madison Co.	Oconee Co.	Oglethorpe Co.	Jackson Co.	Total
Spanish	2,768	245	254	158	0	3,425
Indo-European	86	0	0	0	81	167
Asian & Pacific	253	17	124	0	52	446
Other Languages	114	0	0	0	0	114
Total	3,221	262	378	158	133	4,152

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-yr Estimate: 2014 – 2018; B16004 – Age by Language Spoken at Home by Ability

Figures 3 and 4 on the following pages illustrate graphically the density of LEP persons by census tract. Figure 3 shows the density based on the regional totals. Figure 4 shows the concentration of LEP persons in Athens-Clarke County compared to the Athens-Clarke County Transit Department service area.

Figure 3: Concentrations of LEP persons (18+ years of age) by Census Tract within the MACORTS planning area counties compared to regional totals

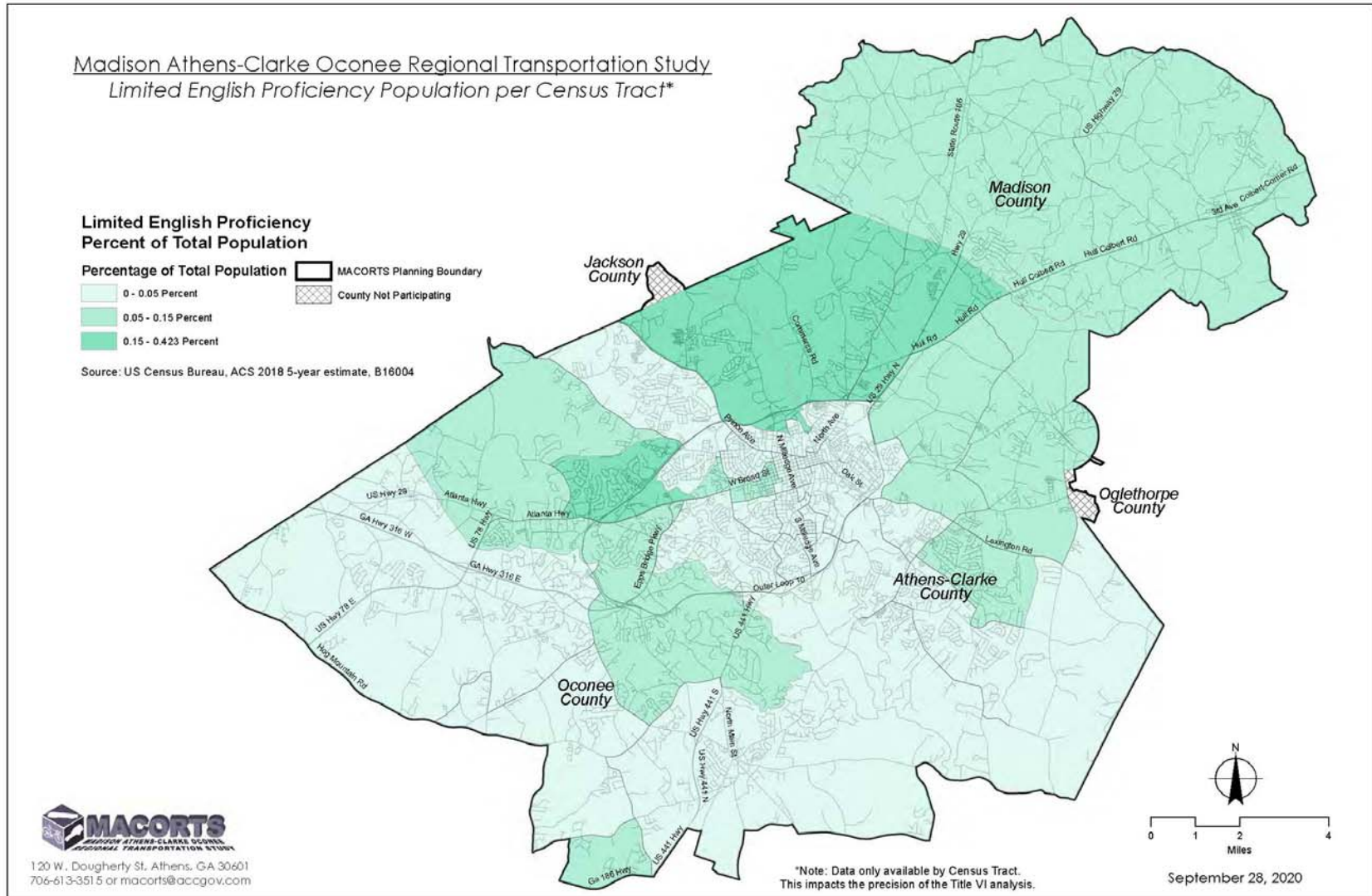
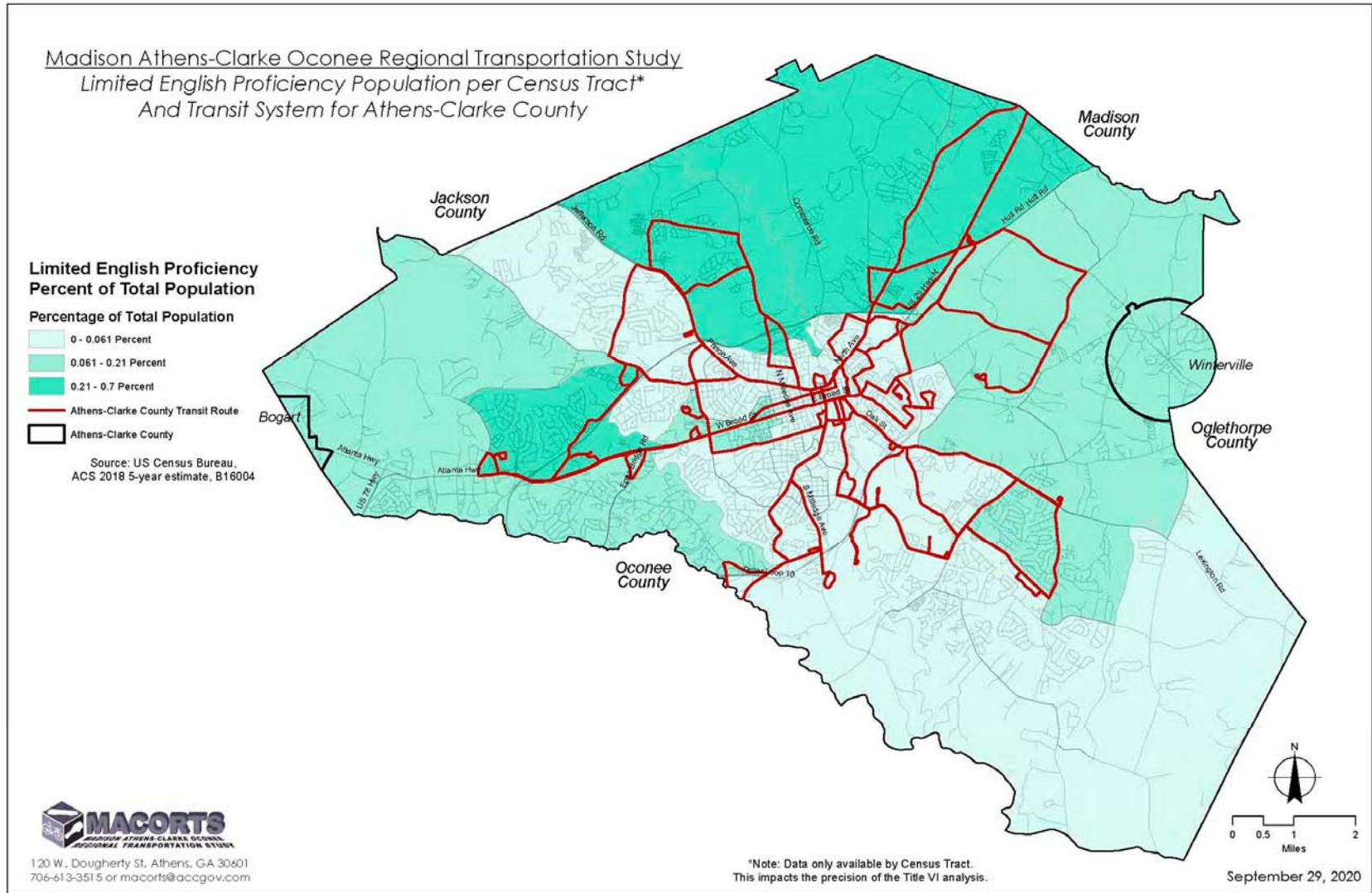


Figure 4: Shows the concentrations by Census Tracts of LEP Persons (18+ Years of Age) in Athens-Clarke County with Athens-Clarke County Transit Department System Map



Factor 2: The frequency with which LEP persons encounter the services provided.

To date, MACORTS has had very little contact with LEP persons in the course of MPO business. Athens-Clarke County Transit Department (ACCTD) has more contact with LEP persons due to the nature of services provided and number of persons with whom the staff interacts with on a weekly basis, but the percentage is still quite small. ACCTD and MACORTS planning staff were surveyed in regards to their interactions with LEP individuals in an average week. The MACORTS staff have had no requests for assistance from LEP persons in the last 15 years. Anecdotally, MPO staff noted only interacting less than 5 times in the last 20 years with LEP individuals during the course of their public interactions or day-to-day business. The remainder of the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department staff, who are housed with the MPO staff, indicated that they encounter an average of less than 2 LEP persons per week per planner. The office-wide total was 12 LEP customers encountered of the 256 customer interactions for the week surveyed (4.7%). Usually, these people bring another person with them who speaks English to assist them, according to the survey. Table 6 shows the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department number of customers and the number of LEP persons on an annual basis. LEP individuals make up approximately 4.7% of the customers annually.

Table 6 – Limited English Proficiency Customers of Athens-Clarke County Planning Department

LEP Persons Per Week	Extrapolated LEP Persons Per Year	Total Customers Per Week	Extrapolated Customers Per Year	Weekly Percentage LEP Customers	Annual Percentage LEP Customers
14	728	256	13,312	5.47%	5.47%

Additional Notes: This data came from a survey of employees of the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department. They were asked how many LEP persons were encountered in an average week. This office handles zoning, land use and plans review. The MPO, MACORTS, is administered out of this department. The number of customers per year was extrapolated from a survey of total customers during the week of September 21 – 25, 2020.

The staff of the Athens-Clarke County Transit Department was surveyed as well. They were asked how many LEP persons they encounter in the average week. Responses ranged from zero to 12 persons per week. The informal accounting of LEP persons was extrapolated to annual totals and compared to the number of people that ride ACCTD by route and by the total annual ridership. Table 7 illustrated that the highest percentage by route was on Route 7 – Prince Avenue with 0.73% of ridership being classified as LEP. When compared to the total annual ridership, the percentage of LEP persons system-wide is approximately 0.17%.

Table 7 – Limited English Proficiency Riders of Athens-Clarke County Transit Department

Bus Rts	Average Annual Number of LEP Riders	2020 Annual Ridership	LEP Annual Percentage	Bus Rts	Average Annual Number of LEP Riders	2020 Annual Ridership	LEP Annual Percentage
1	52	68,847	0.08%	20	52	122,895	0.04%
2	104	52,390	0.20%	21	208	33,562	0.62%
3	0	26,653	0.0%	22	0	24,489	0.0%
5	52	98,877	0.05%	23	0	2,521	0.0%
6	0	102,148	0.0%	24	364	50,337	0.72%
7	520	71,072	0.73%	25	104	80,874	0.13%
8	208	82,330	0.25%	26	52	47,055	0.11%
9	52	53,046	0.10%	27	104	141,855	0.07%
12	0	161,637	0.0%	28	0	21,092	0.0%
14	208	79,965	0.26%	30	104	16,426	0.63%
Any / All*	96			Total	2,280	1,338,071	0.17%

*Some drivers indicated that they drove different routes every day, so their responses couldn't be attributed to any particular route.

Factor 3: The nature and importance of the services and programs.

MACORTS is responsible for regional transportation planning. Denial or delay of access to services or information provided by the MPO would not have life threatening or even serious implications on an LEP individual. This is especially true if compared to services such as healthcare, emergency transportation, water, sewer, fire protection, police protection, and other essential services.

Athens-Clarke County Transit Department provides public transportation to the Athens-Clarke County area giving people access to work, healthcare, and other programs and/or services. Without access to public transportation, many of these individuals would not be able to take advantage of other services that could potentially be life changing or life sustaining. Therefore, lack of public transportation services could have an adverse effect on LEP individuals.

Factor 4: The Resources Available to the MACORTS, ACCTD, and Overall Cost

MACORTS serves a very small percentage of LEP persons, less than 2.8 % or approximately 4,152 in the region and has limited funds available for LEP services. Providing translation

assistance to LEP persons would be funded entirely from existing MACORTS operating funds and would compete with other operational requirements for funding. MACORTS's annual federal allocation is approximately \$188,000 for a total base grant amount of approximately \$235,000. The total budget varies from year to year slightly.

Given the small number of LEP people within the region and the MACORTS budget, it would be burdensome to produce written translations for the core MACORTS documents. The expense and time required to provide these translated documents could jeopardize the mandated objectives of the transportation planning program. It is appropriate, however, for MACORTS to provide translated summaries of core products as requested by LEP persons. A translation option is provided on each page of the MACORTS website (www.macorts.org) so that pages from the website can be translated into any of several languages (Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, or Spanish and others).

The Athens-Clarke County Transit Department (ACCTD) has been very proactive in their treatment of LEP persons. ACCTD has funding available through federal grants and the local government to continue to enhance their services for the LEP population.

Safe Harbor Stipulation

Federal law provides a “Safe Harbor” stipulation so that recipients of federal funds can ensure with greater certainty that they comply with their obligations to provide written translations in languages other than English. A “safe harbor” means that if a recipient provides written translations in certain circumstances, such action will be considered strong evidence of compliance with the recipient’s written-translation obligations under Title VI. The established threshold for the inclusion of a safe harbor for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes 5% of the service area population or 1,000 LEP persons, whichever is less.

Within the MACORTS region, approximately 2.78% of the population over 18 years of age is considered LEP. Of the total LEP population, Spanish is the only one LEP language group that meets the population threshold for which written translations of vital documents should be provided to meet the safe harbor standard. Based on the small percentage of LEP persons encountered doing MACORTS business and the limited MACORTS Staff (2) and budget, it is deemed that written translations of core documents would be so burdensome as to defeat the objectives of the programs. MACORTS has taken measures to provide appropriate accommodations and keep with the spirit of the regulations.

Within Athens-Clarke County, the ACCTD service area, approximately 3.13% of the population over 18 years of age is considered LEP. Of the total LEP population, Spanish is the only one LEP language group that meets the population threshold for which written translations of vital documents should be provided to meet the safe harbor standard. ACCTD has taken measures to provide essential information in Spanish either orally or in print.

Language Assistance Measures

Language measures currently used and planned to be used by the MACORTS MPO and the Athens-Clarke County Transit Department include the following:

- Translation of summary of vital documents in Spanish via the MACORTS website
- Translation of vital documents in their entirety in Spanish, upon request
- Posting advertisements / public notices in Spanish-language publications locally circulated
- Providing Transit literature in Spanish (ie schedules, route guides, point-of-sale signage, Rider's Guide)
- Provide oral interpreter services at any meeting or public hearing, with advance notice of 3-7 calendar days. Interpreter to include foreign language and the hearing impaired.
- Posting notices in appropriate languages informing LEP persons of available services on the MACORTS website
- Spanish-speaking staff are available at ACCTD to assist LEP persons
- ACCTD buses have on-board location announcements in English and Spanish
- ACCTD provides bi-lingual outreach to the local Hispanic Community actively engaging them in several areas related to public transit.
- ACCTD is currently engaging the local Hispanic Community in a promotional campaign with the objective to increase transit ridership for this community.
- ACCTD provides a monthly bilingual 'How to Ride the Bus' program (English/Spanish).
- E-ink (tablet information mounted on bus shelters) displays have Braille instructions, Spanish capability, and read-aloud options
- ACCTD uses the Token application for passengers to buy bus passes and use them from their phones. The app is available in English and Spanish.
- ACCTD utilizes the myStop application to provide route information in English and Spanish.

Plan Monitoring & Updating

MACORTS and ACCTD will update the LEP Plan on the required schedule for Title VI materials, currently every 3 years. As part of the triennial update, census data will be reviewed and analyzed for changes in demographics. Staff will evaluate whether the current language assistance measures are sufficient and recommend adjustments accordingly.

Providing Notice to LEP Persons

MACORTS will provide statements offering language assistance in public information, public notices, and on the MACORTS website to those persons requiring language assistance or special accommodations. MACORTS and ACCTD provide the technology to translate their websites into several languages. ACCTD has translated public materials, such as route guides and schedules, so that they are available in Spanish.

Implementation of LEP Initiatives

With advance notice of three to seven calendar days, MACORTS will provide interpreter services at the Technical Coordinating Committee meetings, Policy Committee meetings, or other public meetings. Interpreters will provide services for both the foreign language and hearing impaired. Public notices will provide the contact information for this service. “I Speak” cards or a list of identifiers in the various languages will be provided for use at all public meetings to help identify the needs of LEP persons attending. Public meetings notices are published in Spanish in a local Spanish-language publication for all MACORTS public meetings and public comment periods.

The Athens-Clarke County Transit Department is providing many services to LEP persons currently. ACCTD schedules are available in Spanish and Braille. A picture book was developed that shows how to ride the bus for non-English speakers. The ACCTD website includes a mechanism to translate the content into one of several languages. There are currently several ACCTD staff members that speak Spanish fluently and are available to assist in interpretation as needed. These staff members are operators who would be available to drive along the routes with the highest LEP demand. ACCTD actively markets to the Spanish-speaking population.

MACORTS and ACCTD Staff Training

MACORTS staff members are provided training on the requirements for providing meaningful access to services for LEP persons. Additional training opportunities will be taken advantage of as they become available.

ACCTD staff members receive training regarding the Limited English Proficiency regulations and available resources as part of the Sensitivity Training at New Employee Orientation. Periodic refresher courses are provided as part of ACCTD monthly staff meetings. ACCTD staff has access to take classes in Command Spanish through the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County periodically. Staff are trained on the technology/tools used to provide passenger information in English and Spanish.

LEP Plan Access

MACORTS and ACCTD will post the LEP Plan on their websites at www.macorts.org and www.accgov.com/Transit, respectively. Anyone with internet access will be able to access the plan. For those without internet service, several area libraries offer free Internet access. Digital versions or hardcopies of the LEP Plan will be provided to MACORTS members, the Georgia Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, and any person or agency requesting a copy free of charge.

Any questions or comments regarding this plan should be directed to the MACORTS staff:

Athens-Clarke Planning Department - 120 W. Dougherty Street, Athens, GA 30601
Phone: (706)-613-3515; E-mail: macorts@accgov.com