



Support Balanced Transportation Policy for ACC: Submit Comment on the Draft Transportation Improvement Plan

With bicycle projects at stake this year, your input is more critical than ever.

The draft version of this year's Transportation Improvement Plan, or TIP, prepared annually by our regional transportation planning authority MACORTS, is now available for public review. Written and emailed comments may be submitted through May 24th.

Why Comment? Mayor Heidi Davison has recently requested that the MACORTS committee include several bicycle projects in this year's TIP. This inclusion is necessary in order to gain federal dollars that are potentially available through Georgia Dept of Transportation (GDOT) for dedicated bicycle/pedestrian projects. In a recent MACORTS meeting, her request was granted, but with the clear qualification from other committee members that the public comment on the plan *must* support the inclusion of these bicycle projects, or they will likely be removed from the final draft of the TIP.

Easy to Do. The TIP is a rather large, project-specific document, but you do not necessarily need to immerse yourself in all of the details to help out. General comment will be effective, but should be in your own words. Comments may be as long or as short as you wish. We are asking local transportation planners to take a more integrated approach to regional transportation planning than cars-and-roads only, urging them to seek out the federal funds that are available for alternative transportation, including dedicated bicycle and pedestrian projects.

Background. Almost all of the bicycle or pedestrian facilities presently included in the TIP are add-ons to planned GDOT road or bridge projects, and many involve road-widenings in the more rural parts of Athens-Clarke County (ACC). The bicycle and pedestrian facilities constructed as a part of these roads do not generally overlap the goals of the ACC Bicycle Master Plan, which is a 20-year program for gaining safe and useful in-town bicycle facilities (within 3 miles of the center of Athens).

There are few options for funding Bicycle Master Plan projects, but obtaining federal funding is a possibility, given the appropriate local leadership. Although GDOT ultimately controls the purse strings for most of the transportation dollars flowing to our community, it is the MACORTS committee members who have the responsibility to tell GDOT how citizens of the MACORTS area wish to see our transportation allocations directed. Thus it is our responsibility to communicate our desires to the MACORTS committee members.

Access the TIP. You can get a copy of the TIP online, or pick up a printed version or CD at the Planning Department offices of Athens-Clarke County, Oconee County, or Madison County.
http://www.athensclarkecounty.com/%7Eplanningdept/acorts/public_comment/comment.htm

Submit Your Comment by May 24th. Email comments to macorts@co.clarke.ga.us, or drop comments off at one of the scheduled public information sessions (see reverse side). A TIP comment sheet is available online at the URL above if you have specific project comments. A hard copy comment form may also be downloaded, completed, and sent by mail to: ACC Planning Dept, Attn:MACORTS, 120 W Dougherty Street, Athens GA 30601.

More Information on the Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS) and the Transportation Planning Process

A Transportation Planning Process is required by federal law for all urban areas having populations that exceed 50,000. All transportation projects in this area which utilize state and/or federal funds must go through a process in which they are adopted into a **Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)**. The projects that are in the LRTP are, over time, put into an annual **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** for implementation.

MACORTS is the **Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)** that is responsible for implementing the transportation planning process in our region. There are 14 MPOs in Georgia. MACORTS was formed in 1969 and includes all of Athens-Clarke County (ACC) and the northern half of Oconee County. The southern portion of Madison County was added following the 2000 census. The organization is composed of a Policy Committee and a Technical Coordinating Committee.

The **Policy Committee** consists of 8 voting members and 10 non-voting members, including the MACORTS Chair. The voting members consist of representatives from ACC, Oconee County, Madison County, the University of Georgia (UGA), and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). The position of MACORTS Chair is rotated between the Chief Elected Officials of the member counties. Mayor Heidi Davison of ACC is the present MACORTS Chair. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month, usually on a quarterly basis.

The **Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)** is a recommending body to the Policy Committee. It is composed of staff from ACC, Oconee County, Madison County, UGA, GDOT, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), among a number of other organizations. The ACC Planning Department Director is permanent Chair of the TCC. TCC meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month on an as-needed basis.

The **TIP** document that is produced annually by MACORTS outlines planned transportation improvements for the next 6 years, including information on the amount and source of funding for the design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of road, bridge and other transportation projects. For the current year's TIP, projects are divided into First Tier (projects planned for 2006-2008) and a Second Tier (projects planned for 2009-2011).

Public Information Meetings for the 2006-2008 Transportation Improvement Plan

MACORTS has scheduled a series of informational meetings to provide an opportunity for the public to review and comment upon the draft Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the upcoming year. Public comment will be accepted at each of the meetings.

Athens-Clarke County
Monday May 16, 2005
5:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Planning Department
Auditorium
120 W Dougherty Street
Athens

Oconee County
Monday May 9, 2005
4:00 – 6:00 p.m.
Oconee Co Govt Annex
Auxiliary Courtroom
SR 15 Greensboro Hwy
Watkinsville

Madison County
Wednesday May 11, 2005
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Danielsville Courthouse
Public Meeting Room
91 Albany Avenue
Danielsville

A qualified interpreter for the hearing impaired is available upon request at least ten (10) days in advance of these meetings. Please call (706) 613-3110, [TDD (706) 613-3114] to request an interpreter.