

Language Assistance Plan (LAP)

To provide meaningful access to the County's transit programs and services the County's Language Assistance Plan (LAP) is utilized to achieve this objective. It serves as a training tool and guide for staff on how to recognize a person who may need language assistance and how to provide that assistance.

Introduction

Dade County Transit System operates a transit system within Dade County service area. The Language Assistance Plan (LAP) has been prepared to address Dade County Transit System's responsibilities as they relate to the needs of individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Individuals, who have a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English are LEP. Dade County Transit System service area there are 163 residents or 1.04% who describe themselves as not able to speak English less than "very well" Dade County Transit System is federally mandated (Executive Order 13166) to take responsible steps to ensure meaningful access to the benefits, services, information and other important portions of its programs and activities for individuals who are LEP. Dade County Transit System has utilized the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) LEP Guidance Handbook and performed a four factor, analysis to develop its LAP.

96.37% of Dade County, Georgia's residents speak English; and 1.97% speak Spanish.

The U.S. Department of Transportation Handbook, titled "Implementing the Department of Transportation's Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons: A Handbook for Public Transportation Providers, (April 13, 2007)" (hereinafter "Handbook"), states that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq., and its implementing regulations provide that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance (Handbook, page 5). The Handbook further adds that Title VI prohibits conduct that has a disproportionate effect on LEP persons because such conduct constitutes national origin discrimination (Handbook, page 5).

Executive Order 13166 of August 16, 2000 states that recipients of Federal financial assistance must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons (Handbook, page 6). Additionally, recipients should use the DOT LEP Guidance to determine how best to comply with statutory and regulatory obligations to provide meaningful access to the benefits, services, information and other important portions of their programs and activities for individuals who are LEP

For many LEP individuals, public transit is the principal transportation mode available. It is important for Dade County Transit System be able to communicate effectively with all of its riders. When Dade County

Transit System is able to communicate effectively with all of its riders, the service provided is safer, more reliable, convenient, and accessible for all within its service area. Dade County Transit System is committed to taking reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access for LEP individuals to this agency's services in accordance with Title VI.

This plan will demonstrate the efforts that Dade County Transit System undertakes to make its service accessible to all persons without regard to their ability to communicate in English. The plan addresses how services will be provided through general guidelines and procedures including the following:

- Identification: Identifying LEP populations in service areas
- Notification: Providing notice to LEP individuals about their right to language services
- Interpretation: Offering timely interpretation to LEP individuals upon request
- Translation: Providing timely translation of important documents
- Staffing: Identifying Dade County Transit System staff to assist LEP customers
- Training: Providing training on LAP to responsible employees.

Four Factor Analysis

The analysis provided in this report has been developed to identify LEP population that may use Dade County Transit System services and identify needs for language assistance. This analysis is based on the "Four Factor Analysis" presented in the Implementing the Department of Transportation's Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons, dated April 13, 2007, which considers the following factors:

1. The number and proportion of LEP persons in the service area who may be served or are likely to encounter a Dade County Transit System program, activity or service.
2. The frequency with which LEP persons come in contact with Dade County Transit System programs, activities or services.
3. The nature and importance of programs, activities or services provided by Dade County Transit System to the LEP population.
4. The resources available to Dade County Transit System and overall costs to provide LEP assistance

a. Factor 1: The Number and Proportion of LEP Persons Serviced or Encountered in the Eligible Service Population

Of the 16,197 residents in the Dade County service area 1.13% residents describe themselves as speaking English less than "very well". For the Dade County Transit System service area, the 2019 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau shows that among the area's population 95.73% speak English "very well". For groups who speak English "less than very well", 1.04% speak [Spanish] and 1% speak [Indian].

Appendix H contains a table which lists the languages spoken at home by the ability to speak English for the population within the Dade County Transit System service area.

b. Factor 2: The Frequency with which LEP Individuals Come into Contact with Your Programs, Activities, and Services

The Federal guidance for this factor recommends that agencies should assess the frequency with which they have contact with LEP individuals from different language groups. The more frequent the contact with a particular LEP language group, the more likely enhanced services will be needed.

Dade County Transit System has assessed the frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the transit system. The methods utilized for this <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/dadecountygeorgia> Phone inquiries and staff survey feedback indicated that Dade County Transit System dispatchers and drivers interact [infrequently] with LEP persons. Over the past years, Dade County Transit System has had 0% requests for translated documents.

c. Factor 3: The Nature and Importance of the Program, Activity, or Service Provided by the Recipient to People's Lives

Public transportation and regional transportation planning is vital to many people's lives. According to the Department of Transportation's *Policy Guidance Concerning Recipient's Responsibilities to LEP Persons*, providing public transportation access to LEP persons is crucial. A LEP person's inability to utilize public transportation effectively, may adversely affect his or her ability to access health care, education, or employment.

Federal guidance states staff members of an agency should know their obligations to provide meaningful access to information and services for LEP persons and that all employees in public contact positions should be properly trained.

Suggestions for implementing Element 3 of the Language Assistance Plan, involve: (1) identifying agency staff likely to come into contact with LEP individuals; (2) identifying existing staff training opportunities; (3) providing regular re-training for staff dealing with LEP individual needs; and (4) designing and implementing LEP training for agency staff.

In the case of Dade Transit System, the most important staff training is for Customer Service Representatives and transit drivers. Several representatives are bilingual in English and Spanish language.

An on-board passenger survey was conducted to collect data on usage of and access to the Your Transit System services. According to the survey, the most common age among all the participants in the survey was 65 or older. This supports the fact that Your Transit System can be considered a senior transit service as most of its patrons are over the age of 65.

To further access personal mobility options, each respondent was asked how he or she would have made the surveyed trip had Your Transit System not been available. The most frequent

response was “friend of family member” (40 percent). An additional 25 percent indicated they would not have made the surveyed trip if the service was not available. This data indicates that the Your Transit System Service is very important as a primary means of transportation for its customers.

d. Factor 4: The Resources Available to the Recipient and Costs

Given that Dade County Transit has a very limited number of LEP citizens, we can meet the needs of its LEP population through relatively simple means. First, **Dade County Transit** staff members who speak Spanish or any other foreign languages can be consulted or utilized for translation or interpretation in informal or emergency situations. In the event assistance in a rare language is needed, Dade County Transit can reach out to local colleges or universities to find staff who are proficient and may be willing to assist. Other free resources include the use of Google Translate or other technology-based translation services. Our agency can utilize Google Translate to interpret simple comments or messages left on our social media or in real time if necessary to communicate without advance warning an interpreter is needed.

Dade County Transit recognizes there will be times when professional interpretation or translation services are needed.

Finally, Dade County Transit will pay for document translation services when needed, which generally costs about \$25-\$35 per page. These resources give our agency the ability to perform outreach with the LEP population at a reasonable cost.

Language Assistance Plan

In developing a Language Assistance Plan, FTA guidance recommends the analysis of the following five elements:

1. Identifying LEP individuals who need language assistance
2. Providing language assistance measures
3. Training staff
4. Providing notice to LEP persons
5. Monitoring and updating the plan

The five elements are addressed below.

Element 1: Identifying LEP Individuals Who Need Language Assistance

Federal guidance provides that there should be an assessment of the number or proportion of LEP individuals eligible to be serviced or encountered and the frequency of encounters pursuant to the first two factors in the four-factor analysis.

Dade County Transit System has identified the number and proportion of LEP individuals within its service area using United States Census data (see Appendix H). As presented earlier, 96.37 % of the service area population speaks English only. The largest non-English spoken language in the service area is Spanish (1%) (<https://www.census.gov/search-results.html?searchType=web&cssp=SERP&q=Dade%20County,%20GA.>) Of those who primary spoken language identify themselves as speaking less than “very well.

Modify the following list with the efforts your agency is willing and able to undertake with regards to identifying LEP persons.

Dade County Transit System may identify language assistance need for an LEP group by:

Examining records to see if requests for language assistance have been received in the past, either at meetings or over the phone, to determine whether language assistance might be needed at future events or meetings.

Having Census Bureau Language Identification Flashcards available at Dade County Transit System Meetings. This will assist Dade County Transit System in identifying language assistance needs for future events and meetings.

Having Census Bureau Language Identification Flashcards on all transit vehicles to assist operators in identifying specific language assistance needs of passengers. If such individuals are encountered, vehicle operators will be instructed to obtain contact information to give to Dade County Transit System management to follow-up.

Vehicle operators and front-line staff (i.e. Dispatchers, Transit Operation Supervisors, etc.) will be surveyed on their experience concerning any contacts with LEP persons during the previous year.

Element 2: Language Assistance Measures

Federal Guidance suggests that an effective LAP should include information about the ways in which language assistance will be provided. This refers to listing the different language services an agency provides and how staff can access this information.

For this task Federal Guidance recommends that transit agencies consider developing strategies that train staff as to how to effectively deal with LEP individuals when they either call agency centers or otherwise interact with the agency.

Modify the following list with the efforts your agency is willing and able to undertake with regards to language assistance measures.

Dade County Transit System has undertaken the following actions to improve access to information and services for LEP individuals:

Provide bilingual staff at community events, public hearings, and transit committee meetings.

Survey transit drivers and other front-line staff annually on their experience concerning any contacts with LEP persons during the previous year.

Provide Language Identification Flashcards onboard transit vehicles and in the Dade County Transit System offices.

Include statements clarifying that being bilingual is preferred on bus driver recruitment flyers and onboard recruitment posters.

When an interpreter is needed in person or on the telephone, staff will attempt to access language assistance services from a professional translation service or qualified community volunteers.

Your Transit System will utilize the demographic maps provided in Appendix I in order to better provide the above efforts to the LEP persons within the service area.

Element 3: Training Staff

Federal guidance states staff members of an agency should know their obligations to provide meaningful access to information and services for LEP persons and that all employees in public contact positions should be properly trained.

Suggestions for implementing Element 3 of the Language Assistance Plan, involve: (1) identifying agency staff likely to come into contact with LEP individuals; (2) identifying existing staff training opportunities; (3) providing regular re-training for staff dealing with LEP individual needs; and (4) designing and implementing LEP training for agency staff.

In the case of Dade County Transit System, the most important staff training is for Customer Service Representatives and transit drivers. Several representatives are bilingual in English and .

Modify the following list with the efforts your agency is willing and able to undertake with regards to training staff.

The following training will be provided to Customer Service Representative:

- Information on Title VI Procedures and LEP responsibilities
- Use of Language Identification Flashcards
- Documentation of language assistance requests
- How to handle a potential Title VI/LEP complaint

Element 4: Providing Note to LEP Persons

Dade County Transit System will make Title VI information available in English and Spanish Dade County Transit on the Agency's website. Key documents are written in English and Posted. Notices are also posted in Dade County Transit System office lobby, on buses, and Work Place. Additionally, when staff prepares a document or schedules a meeting, for which the target audience is expected to include LEP individuals, then documents, meeting notices, flyers, and agendas will be printed in an alternative language based on the known LEP population.

Element 5: Monitoring and Updating the Plan

The plan will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis. Updates will consider the following:

- The number of documented LEP person contacts encountered annually
- How the needs of LEP persons have been addressed
- Determination of the current LEP population in the service area
- Determination as to whether the need for translation services has changed
- Determine whether Dade County Transit System's financial resources are sufficient to fund language assistance resources needed

Dade County Transit System understands the value that its service plays in the lives of individuals who rely on this service, and the importance of any measures undertaken to make the use of system easier. Dade County Transit System is open to suggestions from all sources, including customers, Dade County Transit System staff, other transportation agencies with similar experiences with LEP communities, and the general public, regarding additional methods to improve their accessibility to LEP communities.

Safe Harbor Provision

DOT has adopted the Department of Justice's Safe Harbor Provision, which outlines circumstances that can provide a "safe harbor" for recipients regarding translation of written materials for LEP population. The Safe Harbor Provision stipulates that, if a recipient provides written translation of vital documents for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes five percent (5%) or 1,000 persons, whichever is less, of the total population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered, then such action will be considered strong evidence of compliance with the recipient's written translation obligations. Translation of non-vital documents, if needed, can be provided orally. If there are fewer than 50 persons in a language group that reaches the five percent (5%) trigger, the recipient is not required to translate vital written materials but should provide written notice in the primary language of the LEP language group of the right to receive competent oral interpretation of those written materials, free of cost.

Dade County Transit System service area does not have LEP populations which qualify for the Safe Harbor Provision. As shown in Appendix H, Dade County Transit System does not have LEP groups which speak English less than "very well" which exceed either 5.0% or 1,000 person.

The Safe Harbor Provision applies to the translation of written documents only. They do not affect the requirement to provide meaningful access to LEP individuals through competent oral interpreters where oral language services are needed and are reasonable. Dade County Transit System may determine, based on the Four Factor Analysis, that even though a language group meets the threshold specified by the Safe Harbor Provision, written translation may not be an effective means to provide language assistance measures.