

Language Assistance Plan for Prairieland Transit System / Nobles County Heartland Express

Effective:

November 22, 2010
Updated April 14, 2014
Updated July 12, 2016

Purpose

The purpose of this Language Assistance Plan (hereinafter "plan") is to meet Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) requirements to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. As a subrecipient of FTA funds, this transit system is pledged to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to its transit services for persons who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. The FTA refers to these persons as Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons.

The completion of this plan for persons with Limited English Proficiency conforms to the requirements of the FTA Circular 4702.1B Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients.

The U.S. DOT's FTA Office of Civil Rights' publication "Implementing the Department of Transportation's Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient Persons – A Handbook for Public Transportation Providers," dated April 13, 2007, was used in the preparation of this plan.

The plan for Prairieland Transit System / Nobles County Heartland Express contains:

- A. A needs assessment based on the four-factor analysis
- B. Language assistance measures
- C. A staff training plan
- D. Methods for notifying LEP persons about available language assistance
- E. Methods for monitoring, evaluating and updating the plan

Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons refers to persons for whom English is not their primary language who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. It includes people who reported to the U.S. Census that they speak English less than very well, not well, or not at all.

In an effort to comply with DOT's LEP policy guidance and Executive Order 13166, this Language Assistance Plan outlines the steps we will take to ensure meaningful access to all benefits, services, information, and other important portions of our programs and activities by individuals who are limited-English proficient.

Accordingly, a four factor analysis was conducted to determine the specific language services appropriate to provide, and to whom, to inform language assistance planning and determine if our communication with LEP persons is effective.

A. Four Factor Analysis

This Four Factor Analysis is an individualized assessment that balances the following four factors:

- (1) The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by a program, activity, or service of the recipient or grantee;
- (2) The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program;
- (3) The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the recipient to people’s lives; and
- (4) The resources available to the recipient and costs.

Factor #1: *The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program, activity, or service of the recipient.*

We assessed the following information (as checked) about LEP persons to determine the number or proportion of LEP persons who might use or want to use our transit services:

- X -- 2010 US Census data/American Community Survey data (Updated 2013)
- Survey results:
 - Local school district data
 - Locally Coordinated Human Services Plan
 - Other Human Services data
 - Area/Metropolitan Planning Organizations/Regional Development Commission data
 - Information from local organizations (religious, legal, social service, etc.) about LEP persons in our service area
 - Reports from drivers, dispatchers and others about contact with LEP persons
 - Other information: Describe: _____

According to data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau website

http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_5YR_B16001&prodType=table
Retrieved July 12, 2016:

- 1) The total number of LEP persons in our service area is 1,226 (6.2%).
- 2) The total number of dual language persons in our service area is 5,138 (26%).
- 3) The total eligible population in our service area is 19,779.

Retrieved July 12, 2016 from:

http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_5YR_B16001&prodType=table

| | Nobles County, Minnesota | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| | Estimate | Margin of Error |
| Total: | 19,779 | +/-50 |
| Speak only English | 14,641 | +/-307 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 1,852 | +/-277 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 0 | +/-16 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 1 | +/-3 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 0 | +/-16 |

5138

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|--------|
| Speak English less than "very well" | 1 | +/-3 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 0 | +/-16 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 0 | +/-16 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 5 | +/-8 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 0 | +/-16 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 27 | +/-41 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 0 | +/-16 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 291 | +/-129 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 3 | +/-5 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 38 | +/-59 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 0 | +/-16 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 0 | +/-16 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 0 | +/-16 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 165 | +/-116 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 695 | +/-279 |

1226

Factor #2: The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program.

The conclusions drawn from examining this information about LEP persons seeking transit services are 25% in Worthington and 5% in rural Nobles County.

This includes how they come into contact with Prairieland Transit System (e.g., meetings, specific routes, and dispatch service). Meetings provide opportunities for contact. If Prairieland Transit System has public meetings with LEP populations who rarely show up, we will recognize these as opportunities to be factored into our outreach planning to LEP communities.

Factor #3: The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the recipient to people’s lives.

Our transit system considers transit to be an important and essential service for many people living in our service area. Many LEP persons use our transit service to travel to work, social service appointments, preschool, child care, household appointments (Laundromat, grocery store, etc.) and personal reasons.

Factor #4: The resources available to the recipient and costs.

Our current budget for marketing to or communicating with LEP persons in their language about transit services that are available to them is \$5,000. This may include funding for staff training, translation services, brochures, flyers, posters, newspaper ads, radio ads, website, etc.

We are also considering resources that go beyond our financial resources. Community-based organizations can be a cost-effective means of disseminating information to LEP groups. We will partner with other organizations to spread information amongst LEP persons. Technological resources can also be utilized.

Project-Specific LEP Outreach

A project-specific four factor analysis will be conducted for any project being planned or scheduled outreach event limited to a specific geographical area delineated for that activity (i.e., the project study area or outreach area, respectively). Language assistance

will be provided in accordance with the measures already outlined, including translating written materials for each LEP language group that is 5% or 1,000, whichever is less, of the project or outreach area population.

B. Language Assistance Measures

The following general language assistance measures are reasonable and achievable for our organization at this time:

- Translating public notices posted in the local paper, SMOC Offices, and in vehicles into the languages of all language groups that met the threshold in Factor 1.
- Communication with LEP persons' groups about transit services.
- Translation of key documents in the following languages: Spanish & Lao.
- Making a concerted effort to inform LEP persons of available language assistance via staff, broadcast media, relationship-building with organizations, and our website.
- Posting vital bulletin board information and disseminating community surveys in various languages.
- Determining how best to take public involvement to LEP groups directly, including through small group meetings.
- Utilizing language line translation services at our dispatch center.
- Utilizing or hiring staff who speak a language other than English and can provide competent language assistance. Note: We will not ask family members to serve as interpreters at our meetings. Relying upon family members in that capacity could raise ethics concerns. If a family member decides (on their own) to translate any materials or interpret at our meetings, we cannot object. That is their right.
- Using language identification flashcards to determine appropriate services.
- Posting notices in appropriate language informing LEP persons of available services.
- Establishing a process to obtain feedback on our language assistance measures.

Written Translation and Oral Interpretation

Vital documents will be translated for each eligible LEP language group in our service area that constitutes 5% or 1,000, whichever is less, of the population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered. Translated materials will be placed online and in appropriate public (or private) places accessible to LEP persons. The safe harbor provisions apply to the translation of written documents only, and 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. When appropriate, translation of any document will be communicated orally in the appropriate language. Prairieland Transit System brochures and bus schedules have been translated in Spanish and Lao.

In the event that the 5% trigger is reached for a LEP language group that is fewer than 50 persons, written notice will be provided in the primary language of that group of the right

to receive competent oral interpretation of vital written materials, free of cost. The most effective method of notice, which could be an ad in the local newspaper or other publication, a radio commercial, or door hangers, will be determined in consideration of the circumstances on the ground and in coordination with language access resource contacts.

C. Staff Training & Support

To ensure effective implementation of this plan, the transit system will schedule training at orientations for new staff and for all relevant employees on an annual basis to review:

- the transit system's Language Assistance Plan
- demographic data about local LEP population
- printed LEP persons' materials
- how to handle verbal requests for transit service in a foreign language
- responsibility to notify transit manager about any LEP persons' unmet needs.

We also provide training for staff about working with a translator.

Staff Support for Language Assistance

- Agency staff will be provided a list of referral resources that can assist LEP persons with written translation and oral interpretation, including the Title VI Officer. This list will be updated as needed to remain current.
- All main offices and vehicles will have on hand a supply of language assistance flashcards and materials translated into the languages of the largest LEP language groups. When encountered by an LEP person, staff (including drivers) should present the individual with a flashcard and let them choose the language. Do not assume you know their preferred language. Drivers are permitted to seek volunteer assistance from other passengers before contacting a referral resource. Document the encounter and report it to the Title VI Coordinator.
- Training: All employees will be instructed on our procedures for providing timely and reasonable assistance to LEP persons. New employee orientation will also explain these procedures to new hires. Staff routinely encountering LEP persons by telephone or in person will receive annual refresher training. All other employees will be reminded of LEP through annual Title VI program acknowledgements and basic Title VI trainings.

D. Notice to LEP Persons about Available Language Assistance

Our transit system plans to notify LEP persons in their own language about the language assistance available to them without cost by using the following methods:

- X -- signs on buses or at bus stops
- brochures
- X -- posters
- X -- sending information to local organizations that work with LEP persons
- telephone messages

- local ads (newspaper , radio, TV)
- website notices
- X -- information tables at local events, grocery stores, pharmacies, and churches
- Other: Describe: _____

E. Annual Monitoring, Evaluating and Updating Plan

This plan will be reviewed by our transit system annually by:

- assessing its effectiveness (e.g., comparing numbers of LEP persons served by year, number of requests for language assistance received during the year),
- assessing the sufficiency of staff training and budget for language assistance,
- reviewing current sources for assistance to ensure continuing availability, and
- reviewing any complaints from LEP persons or about their needs that were received during the past year.

Monitoring of daily interactions with LEP persons will be continuous, thus assistance techniques may be refined at any time. This LAP will be periodically reviewed to determine if our language assistance measures and staff training are working. Resource availability and feedback from agency staff and the general public will be factors in the evaluation and any proposed updates. Among other practices, this process will include working with LEP community contacts to determine if our employees are responding appropriately to requests made with limited English or in languages other than English, and observing how agency staff responds to requests, including observing drivers or surveying riders. To the best of our ability, we will attempt to never eliminate a successful existing LEP service.

Revisions of this plan will be approved by the Transit Director and dated. Significant LEP program revisions will be approved or adopted by our board or designated official and dated accordingly.

F. Dissemination of Plan

This Language Assistance Plan is available on our website at

<http://www.smoc.us/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/languageassistanceplan.pdf>

This plan is also available at no cost in English upon request by telephone, fax, email, mail or in person.

If requested to be provided in another language and it is feasible to have it translated, information will be provided at no cost to the requester.

G. Contact Information

Questions or comments about this plan may be submitted to:

Karen DeBoer

Transit Director

Prairieland Transit System / Nobles County Heartland Express

Z:\My Documents\pts nche\2017\2017 application\SMOC 2016 Language Assistance Plan.docx

Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc.
1106 3rd Avenue, PO Box 787
Worthington MN 56187
Phone: 507-376-3322 Ext 231
Fax: 507-372-4372
Email: kdeboer@smoc.us