

## LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE CHECKLISTS

## 1. QUESTIONS TO ASK COMMUNITY GROUPS SERVING LEP PERSONS

The DOT LEP Guidance states that the nature of language assistance an agency provides should be based in part on the number and proportion of LEP persons served by the recipient, the frequency of contact between the recipient and the LEP population, and the importance of the service provided by the recipient to the LEP population.

In order to better analyze these factors, transit agencies are encouraged to consult with community organizations serving LEP persons and ask some or all of the following questions:

- What geographic area does your agency serve?
- How many people does your agency provide services to?
- Has the size of the population you serve increased, stayed the same, or decreased over the past five years?
- What are the countries of origin from which your population has immigrated?
- Does your population come from an urban or rural background?
- What are the languages spoken by the population you serve?
- What is the age and gender of your population?
- What is the education and literacy level of the population you serve?
- What needs or expectations for public services has this population expressed?
- Has the population inquired about how to access public transportation or expressed a need for public transportation service?
- What are the most frequently traveled destinations?
- Are there locations that the population has expressed difficulty accessing via the public transportation system?
- Do the transit needs and travel patterns of the population vary depending on the age or gender of the population members?
- What is the best way to obtain input from the population?
- Who would the population trust most in delivering language appropriate messages?

## 2. LEP SURVEY/FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Transit agencies implementing the four-factor analysis described in the DOT LEP Guidance are encouraged to consult directly with LEP persons to determine how frequently these persons use the agency's service and the importance of the service to LEP persons.

Section II of this handbook recommends that agencies gather input from LEP persons using focus groups and surveys. Agencies using these methods should consider asking some or all of the following questions:

- Do you use public transportation?

If a person answers "yes," ask the following questions:

- How often do you use public transportation?
- What kinds of public transportation do you use—trains, buses, the city subway?
- When do you use public transportation? For what purpose?
- Are you satisfied with the transportation you use?
- Do you have any suggestions how the people who run the transportation services could improve it to make it work better for you? Please be as specific as you can.

If a person answers "no" to the first question, ask the following questions:

- How do you travel if you have to go somewhere in your area?
- Would you use public transportation if the trains or buses were set up differently?
- If the person answers "yes," to this question, then ask:
  - Which transit systems would you use?
  - How can the people who run that system improve it to make it work better for you?<sup>2</sup>

When possible, survey or focus group questions should be provided to advocacy groups and other interested organizations so that they may provide feedback on the instrument and offer additional suggestions.

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<sup>2</sup> These questions are adopted from "Mobility Information Needs of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Travelers in New Jersey" a report produced by the New Jersey Institute of Technology for the New Jersey Department of Transportation

### 3. LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE MEASURES CURRENTLY BEING OFFERED BY TRANSIT PROVIDERS

The Government Accountability Office and the New Jersey Department of Transportation have identified the following language assistance measures that have been deployed by public transportation providers. Each agency should determine its appropriate mix of services after conducting the DOT LEP Guidance's four-factor analysis.

More information about these assistance measures, including which measures are most frequently used, can be found in the GAO report, "Transportation Services: Better Dissemination and Oversight of DOT's Guidance Could Lead to Improved Access for Limited English-Proficient Populations," and the New Jersey Department of Transportation report, "Mobility Information Needs of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Travelers in New Jersey." Web links to these documents are available in Section V of this handbook.

#### I—Written Language Assistance (check all that applies):

Bilingual or multilingual versions of the following information:

- "How to ride" brochures
- Fare payment instructions
- System maps and timetables
- Public service announcements
- Safety and security announcements
- Service change announcements
- Notices pertaining to upcoming events
- Complaint/commendation forms
- Pictographs in stations and in vehicles
- Ticket vending machines with multilingual functions
- "I Speak" cards to be used by station managers
- Translated information on agency websites
- Translated electronic signs

#### II--Oral language Assistance (check all that applies)

- Hiring permanent, full-time staff interpreters
- Contracting for interpreters on an "as needed" basis
- Using community volunteers to interpret information
- Using bilingual staff to interpret information on an "as needed" basis
- Using telephone interpreter services
- Translated recorded announcements in stations and in vehicles

#### III-Community Outreach (check all that applies)

- Translated TV advertisements

- Translated radio advertisements
- Translated newspaper advertisements
- Advertisements in ethnic media

#### 4. LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE MONITORING CHECKLIST

Periodic monitoring of language assistance measures that have been implemented can help an agency determine if assistance is being provided competently and effectively. Agencies can use the following checklist to monitor their services. Actual monitoring should be tailored to what services the agency has implemented. Depending on the language assistance provided, the following questions could be answered by periodic monitoring:

##### Stations

Are translated instructions on how to make fare payments available?

Are translated schedules, route maps, or information on how to use the system available?

Has the information been placed in a visible location?

How many units of the material have been distributed?

If such information is available, are station managers aware that they have this information?

Are announcements audible?

Are any announcements, such as security awareness announcements, made in languages other than English?

Does the station display information or instructions using pictographs?

Can a person who speaks limited English or another language receive assistance from a station manager when asking for directions? How is this assistance provided?

##### Vehicles

Are translated instructions on how to make fare payments available?

Are translated schedules, route maps, or information on how to use the system available?

Has the information been placed in a visible location?

How many units of the material have been distributed?

If such information is available, are vehicle operators aware that they have this information?

     Are announcements audible?

     Are any announcements, such as security awareness announcements, made in languages other than English?

     Can a person who speaks limited English or another language receive assistance from a bus operator when asking about the destination of the vehicle? How is this assistance provided?

#### Customer Service

     Is the customer service telephone line equipped to handle callers speaking languages other than English?

     Can customer service representatives describe to a caller what language assistance the agency provides and how to obtain translated information or oral interpretation?

     Can a person speaking limited English or a language other than English request information from a customer service representative?

#### Community Outreach

     Are translators present at community meetings?

     Are translated versions of any written materials that are handed out at a meeting provided?

     Can members of the public provide oral as well as written comments?

#### Press/Public Relations

     Are meeting notices, press releases, and public service announcements translated into languages other than English?

     Does the agency website have a link to translated information on its home page?

