

# Language Access Plan

## Public Transportation Department

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Public Transportation Department

Language Access Representative

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This *Language Access Plan* (LAP) has been prepared to address the Municipality of Anchorage's (MOA) responsibilities as a recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) financial assistance as it relates to the needs of Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons. FTA requires funding recipients to develop a Language Access Plan (LAP) to provide meaningful access to LEP individuals in conformance with the prohibition against national origin discrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Act's implementing regulations.

As a recipient of funding from the FTA, the MOA's PTD must provide FTA with assurances that LEP individuals have meaningful access to PTD's programs, services, and activities.

Executive Order No. 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (August 16, 2000), clarifies the existing protections against national origin discrimination afforded to LEP individuals by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Act's implementing regulations. Title VI protections require that LEP individuals have equal access to the programs, services, and activities provided to individuals whose primary language is English.

Furthermore, the MOA's Policy and Procedure #16-6, states the Municipality of Anchorage must "provide timely and meaningful access to LEP and deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals in the conduct of municipal business." Part of meaningful access is up-to-date plans for each Municipal Agency to best support residents and visitors of this city, not only to meet Federal Civil Rights laws but also to create a more welcoming municipal government and community for all people.

### **Department Description**

The Public Transportation Department's (PTD) mission is to connect the community with safe, reliable transportation options, emphasizing customer service while providing economic, social, and environmental benefits. PTD operates three services; People Mover, AnchorRIDES, and RideShare.

People Mover is the largest public transit provider in the State of Alaska. People Mover offers fixed-route bus service within the Anchorage urbanized area.

AnchorRIDES is a shared ride service that provides trips from origins to destinations by advanced reservations. Eligible riders include people with disabilities prevented from using People Mover routes, senior citizens (60+), and Medicaid recipients authorized for NEMT or HCB Waiver trips. The core service area covers up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from People Mover routes. The premium service areas cover most outlying areas in Anchorage.

RideShare provides carpool group subsidies and oversight of *COMMUTE with Enterprise*, hired to manage, and operate carpooling services for the Anchorage commute area. A carpool is a group of five or more riders who work and travel at agreed-upon times, days, and locations. Carpool members receive a variety of benefits in one low, monthly rate plus fuel costs.

### **Plan Summary**

For LEP individuals, language can be a barrier to accessing important benefits and services, understanding important rights, complying with applicable responsibilities, or understanding vital information. The PTD is committed to improving the accessibility of its programs, services, and activities to LEP individuals

The PTD has developed this *Language Access Plan* to help identify reasonable steps for providing language assistance to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) who wish to access services provided. As defined by Executive Order 13166, LEP persons are those who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. This plan outlines how to identify a person who may need language assistance, the ways in which assistance may be provided, staff training that may be required, and how to notify LEP persons that assistance is available.

To prepare this plan, the PTD used the four-factor LEP analysis which considers the following factors:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons in the service area who may be served by the PTD.
2. The frequency with which LEP persons come in contact with the PTD services.
3. The nature and importance of services provided by the PTD to the LEP population.
4. The interpretation services available to the PTD and the overall cost to provide LEP assistance.

## **II. FOUR FACTOR ANALYSIS FOR DETERMINING LEP ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS**

The U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ), in its Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons (2002), outlines four factors federal fund recipients should apply to assess language needs and determine what reasonable steps should be taken to ensure meaningful access for LEP individuals.

USDOT published its Policy Guidance Concerning Recipient's Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons in 2005. This policy guidance applies to all USDOT funding recipients and covers a recipient's entire operations, even if only one of the recipient's programs, services or activities receives Federal assistance. This USDOT LEP guidance, closely following USDOJ LEP guidance, outlines how Federal fund recipients should assess language needs and determine the reasonable steps that need to be taken to ensure meaningful access for LEP individuals. This first requires an individualized assessment of the LEP population in the service area that balances the following four factors:

1. Demography - the number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered or directly affected by a program, service, or activity, and who would potentially be excluded from access to or not receive the benefits from that program, service, or activity absent efforts to remove language barriers.
2. Frequency of Contact - the frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program, service, or activity. The more frequent contact recipients have or should have with LEP individuals from different language groups, the more likely enhanced language services will be needed. The frequency of contact with specific languages should also be analyzed.
3. Importance - the nature and importance of the program, service, or activity to people's lives. The more important the information, program, service, or activity, or the greater the possible consequences of contact to the LEP community, the more likely accessible language services will be needed.
4. Resources - the resources available to the recipient and costs. While a recipient is required to take reasonable steps to remove language barriers, "reasonable steps" may cease to be reasonable if the resources available to the funding recipient are limited, and the costs of language barrier removal would substantially exceed the benefits.

An individualized assessment of these four (4) factors should provide Federal funding recipients with an understanding of the language accessibility needs of LEP individuals within their jurisdiction or "service area," balanced against the resources available to the recipient and the costs required to meet those needs.

**Factor 1. Number or proposition of LEP persons in the service area who may be served or are likely to require PTD services:**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Summary, 5.8% of the Municipality of Anchorage's population, 5 years and over, speak English "less than very well". It should be noted that "less than very well" is inclusive of responses indicating they spoke English "not well," and "not at all."

The Department of Transportation has adopted the Department of Justice's Safe Harbor Provision in determining written translation obligations. These provisions state that the following actions are considered strong evidence of compliance with the recipient's written-translation obligations:

- (a) The DOT recipient provides written translations of vital documents for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes 5% or 1,000, whichever is less, of the population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered. Translation of other documents, if needed, can be provided orally; or
- (b) If there are fewer than 50 persons in a language group that reaches the 5% trigger in a), the recipient does not translate vital written materials but provides 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.

These safe harbor provisions apply 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.

The ACS tracks twelve languages or language categories in Anchorage. The chart below shows the number of people who speak English less than very well.

**Table 1. Populations Exceeding the LEP Safe Harbor Threshold  
(5% of the total population or 1,000 individuals – whichever is less)**

Language Spoken	Speak English Less Than "Very Well"	% LEP Population	% of Anchorage Population
Spanish	3439	21.9%	1.3%
French, Haitian, or Cajun	105	0.7%	0.0%
German or other West Germanic languages	288	1.8%	0.1%
Russian, Polish, or other Slavic languages	514	3.3%	0.2%
Other Indo-European languages	584	3.7%	0.2%
Korean	1444	9.2%	0.5%
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)	497	3.2%	0.2%
Vietnamese	149	0.9%	0.1%
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)	3486	22.2%	1.3%
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages	4132	26.3%	1.5%
Arabic	141	0.9%	0.1%
Other and unspecified languages	917	5.8%	0.3%
<b>Total</b>			<b>5.8%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table C16001

To supplement the ACS data, PTD used data from the Anchorage School District (ASD). Each student's language spoken at home is shown in the table below.

It is reasonable to assume that at least one of each student's parents speaks the same language. The total number of speakers of each language, therefore, could be at least double the number of students identified.

**Table 2. 2023/24 Anchorage School District Enrollment by Home Language**

Language	Students
English	35818
Spanish	1601
Samoan	904
Hmong	891
Filipino	832
Yupik	194
Russian	173
Korean	164
Lao	126
Albanian	75
Arabic	73
Nuer	70
Vietnamese	63

Source: Anchorage School District (Data updated on 8/21/23)

Because the ACS does not further break down the category of “Other Asian and Pacific Island Languages” and that category meets the LEP safe harbor threshold, the ASD data is used to identify which languages may make up the largest percent of that category within Anchorage. Based on ASD’s data, it is reasonable to assume that the Samoan and Hmong languages would reach the LEP safe harbor threshold.

**Factor 2. Frequency with which LEP persons interact with the Public Transportation Department:**

The PTD Customer Service office interacts with individuals who speak English as a second language. During the summer months, some of these encounters include tourists, but most encounters year-round are from residents.

Between January 1, 2018, and October 19, 2023, the PTD logged thirty-seven (37) calls through Language Link. Most Language Link interpretation services (51.4%) were needed for Spanish speakers. Other interpretation services were needed in Russian (24.32%), Korean (10.8%), Pashto (2.7%), Armenian 2.7%), Chinese (2.7%), French (2.7%), and Tagalog (2.7%).

**Table 2. Language Link Completed Jobs History 01/01/2018 – 10/19/2023  
Public Transportation Department Translated Phone Calls**

Language	Minutes	Calls	Average Call Length (Mins)	Percent of Total Calls
Spanish	193	19	10.16	51.35%
Russian	73.1	9	8.12	24.32%
Korean	40.4	4	10.1	10.81%
Pashto	23.8	1	23.8	2.70%
Armenian	2.7	1	2.7	2.70%
Chinese	8.3	1	8.3	2.70%
French	31.3	1	31.3	2.70%
Tagalog	53.5	1	53.5	2.70%

Source: Language Link Telephonic Language Report for PTD

The Planning and Marketing teams regularly hold public meetings and promotional events. Meeting notices include instructions with how to request language assistance or special accommodations that are translated into Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, and Hmong. Between 2015 and 2023, no requests for language assistance have been made. The PTD hired Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, Hmong, and American Sign Language interpreters for the May 5, 2016 kick-off meeting for the redesign of the bus network, but no one utilized the services. In February 2019, a postcard was mailed to every resident in the Municipality of Anchorage inviting them to participate in the first meeting to develop a short-range transit plan. The flyer had the following sentence translated into Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, and Hmong; “For more information or to request language assistance to attend one of the meetings, please contact us or visit the website listed below.” No one requested language assistance.

**Factor 3. Nature and importance of services the Public Transportation Department provides to LEP population:**

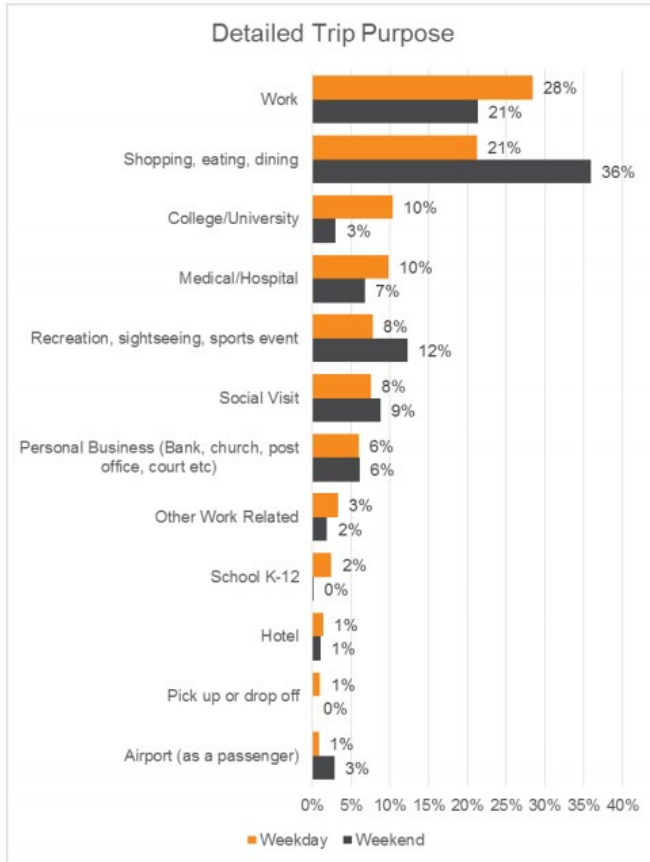
Access to public transportation is critical for minority and LEP individuals who may not have personal transportation. The PTD anticipates public transportation riders have multiple travel needs that include rides to work, school, job interviews, grocery, and retail stores, medical appointments, community and social service agencies, and entertainment. Recent immigrants to the United States (including those persons who may not be limited English proficient) typically use public transit at higher rates than native-born adults.

According to the Onboard Origin-Destination Survey in 2014, most weekday riders (58%) came from a household without any vehicles while 62% did not have a valid driver’s license. Weekend riders were even more likely to come from a household without vehicles (68%) while 64% do not have a driver’s license.

On weekdays, the most common trip purposes were to and from work (28%), and shopping, eating, or dining (21%). College or university related travel accounted for 10% of trips and travel for medical purposes also accounted for 10%. On weekends, travel to and from work accounted



for 21% of trips while shopping, eating, or dining accounted for 36%. Travel for the purpose of recreation, sightseeing or sporting events accounted for 12% of weekend trips.



Source: PTD’s Onboard Origin-Destination Survey (2014)

**Factor 4. Resources available to the Public Transportation Department and overall costs to provide LEP assistance:**

The PTD will use Language Link for telephonic interpretation services, and the Alaska Institute for Justice-Language Interpreter Center for in-person interpretation. Written interpretation will be done by either Language Link or the Alaska Institute for Justice-Language Interpreter Center. Currently, Language Link does not provide services in any Alaska Native language. The PTD will exclusively use the Language Interpreter Center for these needs.

The Municipality of Anchorage has a contract with Language Link to provide telephonic language interpreter services 24/7. Link provides a customer portal to track and monitor how often this system is used and for which languages.

Written translation services and onsite interpreters can be provided by the Alaska Institute for Justice-Language Interpreter Center.

Pursuant to the USDOT's Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons, and the USDOJ's Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons (2002), recipients of Federal assistance are required to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs, services, and activities by LEP persons. "Reasonable steps" might cease to be reasonable where available resources and the costs imposed substantially exceed the benefits.

### **III. LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN**

#### **Identification of a LEP Person who needs language assistance services**

A person who does not speak English as their primary language and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English may be a Limited English Proficient person and may be entitled to language assistance with respect to the PTD services. Language assistance can include interpretation, which means oral or spoken transfer of a message from one language into another language, and/or translation, which means the written transfer of a message from one language into another language.

The data assembled in the four-factor analysis shows that Tagalog, Spanish, Hmong, Samoan, and Korean are the most prevalent of non-English languages spoken in the Municipality of Anchorage with the highest number of individuals who speak English "less than very well." In addition to those languages, the PTD has encountered a growing number of individuals who speak Russian, but the overall population does not meet the LEP Safe Harbor Threshold.

Based on the language distribution data summarized above, the PTD will translate public communication materials and vital documents into Tagalog, Spanish, Hmong, Samoan, and Korean when feasible within available resources. The PTD will try to translate materials into other commonly spoken non-English languages upon request and if resources are available.

#### **How the Public Transportation Department staff may identify an LEP person who needs language assistance:**

Below are tools to help identify persons who may need language assistance:

- Signage about language services in different languages
- "Point to Your Language" Posters
- Self-identify as needing an interpreter
- Assessed and trained bilingual staff to assist
- Examine records requests for language assistance from past meetings and events to anticipate the possible need for assistance at upcoming meetings
- At public meetings, set up a sign-in sheet table and have a staff member greet and briefly speak to each attendee. This method will allow staff to informally gauge the attendee's

ability to speak and understand English while asking an open-ended question that requires a full sentence reply

- Survey bus operators and other frontline staff of any direct or indirect contact with LEP individuals

Individuals maintain the right to self-identify as an LEP person and should not in any circumstances be expected to pay for translation or interpretation services to effectively communicate with the department.

### **Language assistance measures:**

The Public Transportation Department typically uses Language Link and the Language Interpreter Center.

1. The PTD staff will take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for meaningful access to LEP clients who have difficulty communicating in English.
2. The following resources will be available to accommodate LEP persons:
  - i) Language Link brochures with “iSpeak” language identification and instructions will be available at all public meetings, events, and at the Customer Service office.
  - ii) The PTD staff will be trained on how to identify the language of LEP individuals. Staff will utilize Google Translate for quick LEP assistance or Language Link if required. Staff will determine if paid translation of long documents is necessary.
3. The PTD may use alternative forms of language assistance when the alternative is more effective or practical. One alternative approach is to place a notice on public communication materials about the availability of interpretation services. Another alternative is to include a summary of a communication piece in Tagalog, Spanish, Hmong, Samoan, and Korean, offering a full translation upon request.

## **IV. STAFF TRAINING**

The following training will be provided to all staff:

- Information about Title VI policy and LEP responsibilities
- Description of language assistance services that are offered to the public
- Use of “iSpeak” and point-to-your-language cards
- Documentation of language assistance requests
- Title VI/LEP complaint procedures

\*Note that PTD staff / all Municipal employees are prohibited from asking for any individual’s citizenship status.

All contractors or subcontractors performing work for the PTD and/or Municipality of Anchorage must follow applicable Title VI/LEP guidelines.

## **V. TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENTS**

It is important to ensure that written materials routinely provided in English also are provided in regularly encountered languages other than English. It is particularly important to ensure that vital documents are translated into the non-English language of each regularly encountered LEP group eligible to be served or likely to be affected by the program or activity. A document will be considered vital if it contains information that is critical for obtaining federal services and/or benefits or is required by law.

The following documents are considered vital documents by the Public Transportation Department (PTD) and must be translated in the languages identified in the PTD's four factor analysis.

- People Mover Ride Guide (
  - To be discontinued in January 2024 and replaced with a Rider Policy Booklet
- Rider Policy Booklet
  - This will replace the Ride Guide in January 2024
- Title VI Policy and Complaint Procedure
- Rider Code of Conduct
- Service and Fare Information
- Fare and Service Change Public Comment Policy and Procedure
- Half Fare Application
- AnchorRIDES Rider Guide
- AnchorRIDES Application and Visitor's Application
- AnchorRIDES Eligibility Policy and Process
- AnchorRIDES Service and Fare Information
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy & Procedures
- Reasonable Accommodation Request Form

Other documents will be translated on an as-needed basis and within available resources.

When staff prepare public meeting notices, documents, flyers, and agendas, information on how to request language assistance should be printed in Tagalog, Spanish, Hmong, Samoan, and Korean.

## **VI. MONITORING**

### **Monitoring and Updating the LAP**

The PTD will update its LAP as required. At a minimum, the plan will be reviewed annually and updated with data points from the following year and incorporate any new U.S. Census data as

available. Updates will incorporate data gained from the reporting tool and staff observation, including:

- Evaluate the number of documented LEP persons encountered during the previous year
- Assess current LEP population in the service area
- Determine if LEP needs have been accommodated
- Determine if translation services needs have changed
- Determine if local language assistance programs have been effective and sufficient to meet needs
- Verify the PTD's financial resources are sufficient to fund necessary language resources
- Determine if the PTD meets the goals of this Language Access Plan
- Access complaints regarding the PTD's failure to meet LEP needs

## **VII. DISSEMINATION AND COMPLAIN PROCEDURES**

The PTD includes the LAP Plan with its Title VI Policy and Complaint Procedures. The Notice of Rights under Title VI to the public is posted on all public transportation department vehicles, in public offices, on the PTD website, and in selected printed materials. Copies of the LAP Plan will be provided, upon request, to any person(s) requesting the document via phone, in person, by mail, or by email. LEP persons may obtain copies/translations of the plan upon request. Any questions or comments regarding the Title VI plan should be directed to:

Municipality of Anchorage Public Transportation Department  
Title VI Coordinator  
P.O. Box 196650 Anchorage, AK 99519-6650  
907-343-8246 (phone)  
907-563-2206 (fax)  
[titlevi@muni.org](mailto:titlevi@muni.org)

Questions or comments regarding this plan should be directed to:

Municipality of Anchorage Public Transportation Department  
Language Access Liaison  
Bart Rudolph  
P.O. Box 196650 Anchorage, AK 99519-9980  
[Bart.rudolph@anchorageak.gov](mailto:Bart.rudolph@anchorageak.gov)

### **Language Access Services Complaint Process:**

- Complaints regarding denial of language accessible services or the quality of language accessible services, including interpreters or translated materials, may be made in person, or in writing, or online at:  
[https://moaonlineforms.formstack.com/forms/language\\_access\\_complaint](https://moaonlineforms.formstack.com/forms/language_access_complaint)

- The complaint should specify the date of the incident, individuals involved, and the nature of the client (i.e., the interpreter was summarizing, or an LEP individual was denied services because they did not bring their own interpreter).
- All complaints will be directed to the department's Language Access Plan Representative, and the Mayor's Language Access Liaison, who will respond timely and make recommendations for corrective action, if needed.

Complaint form is online at:

[https://moaonlineforms.formstack.com/forms/language\\_access\\_complaint](https://moaonlineforms.formstack.com/forms/language_access_complaint)

Hard Copies will be available at City Hall and will be translated into Spanish, Tagalog, Korean, Hmong, Samoan, and Yupik.

## VIII. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Essential Public Information:** Any information used by a department when dealing with the public which is necessary to accomplish the department's mission and with respect to public safety, public health, and economic development.
- B. **Department Language Access Representative:** The employee designated by the department director to be responsible for the department Language Access Plan (LAP) program.
- C. **Four Factor Analysis:** The procedure to determine the level of need for language services by documenting: 1) the number and proportion of LEP persons as reported by the most recent census; 2) the frequency with which LEP persons visit various MOA locations; 3) the nature and kind of programs or activities LEP persons use; and 4) the available resources and overall costs for LEP services.
- D. **Interpretation:** The immediate spoken communication of meaning from one language (the source language) to another (the target language).
- E. **Interpreter:** A person who is bilingual or multilingual and possesses the ability to successfully convey a message from one language to another through oral communication.
- F. **Language Access Plan (LAP):** Department specific documents outlining the procedures and practices that the department will implement to provide language access services to LEP individuals.
- G. **Limited English Proficient (LEP):** Someone who is not able to speak, read, write, or understand English at a level that allows the person to interact effectively with department staff. Individuals maintain the right to self-identity as a LEP person and should not in any circumstances be expected to pay for translation or interpretation services to effectively communicate with the department.
- H. **Mayor's Language Access Liaison:** The employee designated by the mayor to support the LAP program and to support the Department Language Access Representative.
- I. **PTD:** Public Transportation Department
- J. **Telephonic Interpretation:** A service that connects human interpreters via telephone to individuals who wish to speak to each other but do not share a common language. The telephone interpreter converts the spoken language from one language to another, enabling listeners and speakers to understand each other. Interpretation over the telephone most often takes place in a consecutive mode, which means that the interpreter waits until the speaker finishes an utterance before rendering the interpretation into the other language.
- K. **Translation:** The written communication of meaning from one language (the source language) to another (the target language).
- L. **Translator:** A person who is bilingual or multilingual and possesses the ability to translate from one language to another in written form.