



U.S. Department of Transportation

Language Access Plan

September 2023

A Message from the Secretary



I am pleased to present the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Language Access Plan (Plan). This Plan outlines our commitment to providing meaningful access for people with limited English proficiency (LEP) across all programs, services, and activities that DOT conducts. Providing language access helps ensure that the benefits of good transportation is available to everyone in America. It's a critical part of advancing equity, providing support to underserved communities, and combating discrimination based on national origin.

This Plan will help ensure individuals with LEP can communicate effectively with everyone at DOT and participate in our many varied programs and activities, including transportation planning, technical and financial assistance, emergency response messages, or assisting with consumer complaints against companies in the transportation sector, to name a few. The more the public understands our Department's mission and work, and is able to participate in it, the better we can make good on our mission to "deliver the world's leading transportation system and serve the American people and economy through the safe, efficient, sustainable, and equitable movement of people and goods."

This Plan outlines our policies, responsibilities, and strategies for providing language assistance services to persons with LEP. To deliver the most effective language assistance services, we will continue to identify critical engagements with the non-English speaking public, assess LEP communities' particular language assistance needs, and determine how we can ensure timely, meaningful access to DOT programs, services, and activities. Just as important, it applies to all DOT Operating Administrations and Departmental Offices, so it is up to each of us to take action to deliver on the promise of this Plan. And the Plan should continue to evolve as the Department assesses the outcomes of our interactions with persons with LEP and refines how we can better provide these essential language assistance services.

We are committed to carrying out the Plan at all levels of DOT so we can remove barriers to access for persons with LEP—for all America's communities and across all our Department's programs, services, and activities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be "Pete Buttigieg". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation

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1. Language Access Plan Overview

Vision Statement

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT or Agency) is committed to providing meaningful access to equitable, timely, and quality language assistance services to individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) so that all members of the American public with LEP can obtain current information regarding the work DOT performs and the services it provides.

Policy Statement

It is DOT's policy to provide meaningful access for individuals with LEP to Agency programs, services, and activities, consistent with Executive Order 13166 (EO 13166), *Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency*.¹ We are committed to ensuring that all members of the American public, including individuals with LEP, understand how we accomplish our mission and how to engage with our programs and activities. Individuals who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English are entitled to language assistance services to access DOT programs and activities.² These services are designed to enable persons with LEP to communicate or interact with DOT in person, over the phone, in writing, or through electronic media.³

DOT's Language Access Plan (LAP or Plan)⁴ will be available on DOT's public [website](#), the Departmental Office of Civil Rights' (DOCR's) forthcoming internal Language Assistance Services webpage, and the Department of Justice's

¹ [Executive Order 13166](#), *Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency*, 65 FR 50121 (Aug. 11, 2000).

² Throughout this Language Access Plan (LAP or Plan), unless otherwise specified, usage of "DOT" or the "Agency" refers to DOT as a whole, including the Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST), the Office of Inspector General (OIG), and the Operating Administrations (OAs).

³ Although DOT's Language Access Plan (LAP) focuses on providing language assistance to persons with LEP, DOT also has a separate responsibility to ensure effective communication with individuals with disabilities, as required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This may mean ensuring that communications are compliant with both this Plan and DOT's responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act.

⁴ This directive is intended to improve the internal management of the Department's Language Access Program and does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, that is enforceable by law or equity by a party against DOT. It is not intended to be cited in any judicial or administrative proceeding. Administration of the programs discussed herein is within the sole discretion of DOT.

(DOJ's) Limited English Proficiency website on www.lep.gov. This Plan aligns with the following goals outlined in the Agency's [Strategic Plan](#):

- **Safety**

DOT will provide language assistance services to persons with LEP as we make our transportation system safer for all people and advance a future without transportation-related serious injuries and fatalities.

- **Economic Strength and Global Competitiveness**

DOT will develop or enhance existing policies and procedures to meet the language access needs of the people it serves as we grow an inclusive and sustainable economy.

- **Equity**

DOT will provide language assistance services to persons with LEP as it works to reduce inequities across our transportation systems and the communities they affect.

- **Organizational Excellence**

DOT will strengthen our world-class organization and build internal capacity to coordinate across DOT to ensure DOT personnel are empowered to meet the needs of persons with LEP.

DOT will continuously seek to improve and expand the services it provides to enable persons with LEP to communicate with the Agency. DOT will re-evaluate its LAP at least once every five years to ensure its alignment with the Agency's overall strategic plan; to maintain compliance with the requirements set forth in EO 13166 and other LEP-related guidance; and to ensure that persons with LEP have continued meaningful access to DOT's programs, services, and activities.

Purpose and Authority

This Plan updates the Agency's strategy for ensuring meaningful access by persons with LEP to DOT-conducted programs and activities in accordance with EO 13166. Section 1 of EO 13166 sets two overarching goals for each Federal agency:

- (1) "develop and implement a system by which [persons with LEP] can meaningfully access [DOT's and its Operating Administrations'] services consistent with, and without unduly burdening, the fundamental mission of the agency," and
- (2) "ensure that [public and private entities that receive DOT funding] provide meaningful access to their [applicants with LEP] and beneficiaries."

In accordance with Section 2 of EO 13166, this Plan details DOT's policy and plans to improve access for persons with LEP for programs and activities conducted by the Operating Administrations (OAs).⁵

2. Plan Development and Implementation

On November 21, 2022, the U.S. Attorney General issued a memorandum on [Strengthening the Federal Government's Commitment to Language Access](#), which encouraged agencies to further enhance access to multilingual information.⁶ The Attorney General requested federal agencies to provide an updated LAP within 180 days. In drafting this Plan, DOT relied on the following sources: DOJ guidance including the [Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs](#), other Federal agencies' LAPs, and self-assessments of DOT LEP services.

This LAP is designed to assist DOT officials in identifying the language assistance services they need, as well as evaluating the translation and interpretation resources available, to help persons with LEP obtain meaningful access to DOT programs, services, information, activities, public involvement opportunities,⁷ complaint portals, telecommunications, and other operations. Upon its release, DOT's LAP will be distributed across DOT, and Departmental Offices and OAs will implement action steps. Departmental Offices and OAs should budget and dedicate resources to implement the action steps specified in this LAP.

Collectively, the language assistance services provided by DOT comprise its [language assistance program](#). DOCR continues to lead the collaboration on this effort. DOCR's Director or designee will be responsible for coordinating staff training and self-assessments; monitoring language assistance services; and providing notice of availability of language assistance services to external stakeholders through outreach initiatives, social media, and web presence.

3. Language Access Working Groups

DOT National Language Access Working Group

The DOT National Language Access Working Group (NLA WG) is responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and updating DOT's language access activities. DOT will establish the NLA WG in 2023, and the NLA WG will be chaired by DOCR and be

⁵ As used in this Plan, Operating Administration (OA) refers to the DOT OAs and OST.

⁶ In the memorandum, the Attorney General asked Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, with assistance from the DOJ Language Access Coordinator to work with Federal agencies to share best practices and exchange information about language access initiatives and efforts.

⁷ For additional information on public involvement, see DOT's [Promising Practices For Meaningful Public Involvement In Transportation Decision-Making](#) (Oct. 2022).

comprised of representatives from across program offices in OAs and Departmental Offices, as described below.

Upon release of the LAP, DOCR's Director will designate a National Language Access Coordinator, who will serve as the central point of contact and will proactively implement a comprehensive plan for meaningful access to DOT programs, activities, and services for persons with LEP. Comments on the LAP and for the NLAWG can be submitted to the National Language Access Coordinator through lep@dot.gov.

OA Language Access Working Groups

In addition to the NLAWG, each OA will convene its own language access working group (LAWG). Each LAWG will serve as the coordination team as staff and offices implement the action steps contained in the Elements described in Section 4 of the Plan.

Each LAWG will be coordinated by a language access coordinator, who should be a senior member of that OA's Office of Civil Rights. The OA language access coordinator will represent the OA in the NLAWG. The OA LAWGs will be comprised of designated representatives from across program offices, such as the following:⁸

- Office of Civil Rights
- Office of Budget
- Office of Chief Counsel
- Office of Human Resources
- Office of Information Technology
- Office of Planning
- Office of Procurement
- Office of Program Management
- Office of Public Engagement
- Office of Research
- Field, Regional, and Division Offices

Each LAWG will develop and lead language access initiatives within its OA, both at the national and regional level. They will also meet periodically to research and review their respective language access programs. The working groups will report their findings and recommendations for improvements to the NLAWG.

4. Elements and Action Steps

⁸ The OST LAWG will also include the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU); the Office of Intelligence, Security and Emergency Response; and the Build America Bureau.

DOT's language access policy is comprised of the following six elements that are vital to developing and taking reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to DOT-conducted programs, services, and activities:

1. Understanding how persons with LEP interact with DOT
2. Identifying and assessing communities with LEP
3. Providing notice of language assistance services
4. Providing language assistance services
5. Training staff on policies and procedures
6. Monitoring, evaluating, and updating the language access policy directives, plans, and procedures

This policy applies to DOT staff, particularly those who interact with the public. For each element, DOT has set action steps that each OA will take to implement DOT's language access policy at each program and OA level. Each OA will maintain an [LAP Implementation Tracker](#) to assist with tracking and monitoring action steps. To improve accountability with this Plan, DOOCR's Director will designate certain action steps for reporting to the Secretary.

Element 1 – Understanding How Persons with LEP Interact with DOT

DOT, via its LAWGs, will regularly assess whether DOT meets the needs of persons with LEP and will identify DOT's capacity to meet these needs in accordance with the elements outlined in this Plan.

Action Steps

To implement Element 1, each OA will:

1. At least once every two years, conduct a language access needs assessment, as described in Action Steps 2-4 below.
2. Identify the language access needs of specific regions of the country and territories being served using demographic data.
3. Assess the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the services being provided, using LEP data from sources such as customer satisfaction surveys and program reviews.
4. Identify gaps where language assistance services are inadequate to meet LEP needs.
5. Recommend improvements to enhance language assistance services.

To implement Element 1, DOOCR will:

1. Provide technical assistance and guidance on OA language access assessments.
2. Provide technical assistance on contracting for language assistance services and seeking volunteer assistance from multilingual employees.

3. Coordinate regularly across OST and the OAs, as well as with other Federal agency partners, on LEP issues, to leverage existing intra-agency and interagency working groups and partnerships.
4. Research new procedures and practices proven to enhance the provision of more efficient language assistance services and share them throughout DOT and with Federal partners.

Element 2 – Identifying and Assessing Communities and Individuals with LEP

DOT will consult with its stakeholders to identify language assistance needs of persons with LEP; implement the most effective language access strategies; and obtain information to conduct assessments of customer needs, agency capacity to meet those needs, and accessibility of LEP services as outlined in Element 1. DOT will also consult with outside stakeholders, such as persons with LEP and groups who work with LEP communities, for their evaluation of DOT's delivery of language access and to gain their assistance in the continued implementation of the LAP.

DOT will, at the point of first contact with an individual with LEP, make reasonable efforts to conduct or arrange for an initial assessment of the need for language assistance services. Persons with LEP and DOT recipients can request information be provided in the language they read, write, speak, or understand best. The Agency promotes its language access services nationally to DOT staff through available internal communication outlets, including [DOTnet](#).

DOT staff should determine whether a person needs language assistance in several ways:

- Voluntary self-identification by the individual with LEP or their companion;
- Affirmative inquiry regarding the primary language of the individual if they have self-identified as needing language assistance services;
- Engagement by a qualified multilingual staff or qualified interpreter to verify an individual's primary language;
- Use of an "I Speak" language identification card or poster; or
- Asking the individual about their region, municipality, village, or specific community, to ensure the correct identification of language.

Staff should not make assumptions about an individual's primary language based on race, color, or national origin.

Action Steps

To implement Element 2, each OA will:

1. Establish OA-specific actions for identifying the language needs of persons with LEP to improve services.
2. Involve stakeholders in developing plans to provide language access to improve access to DOT programs, services, and activities.
3. Consult stakeholders to assess the accessibility, accuracy, cultural appropriateness, and overall quality of DOT's language assistance services.

To implement Element 2, DOOCR will:

1. Gather feedback about the Plan's effectiveness and collect recommendations for future updates.
2. Explore methods to address access to DOT information by persons with LEP. These methods will capture data on the experience of individuals with LEP in accessing DOT-conducted and assisted programs, services, and activities.
3. Use data resources—such as U.S. Census data (e.g., American Community Survey), DOT's [Equitable Transportation Community \(ETC\) Explorer](#), Bureau of Transportation Statistics' (BTS) suite of [Transportation Maps and Geospatial Data](#), or FHWA's [GIS maps](#)—when program-specific data is unavailable, to evaluate the extent of need for language assistance services in particular languages or dialects at the national and regional level.

Element 3 – Providing Notice of Language Assistance Services

DOT will provide notification to individuals with LEP who seek information on DOT programs, services, and activities that language assistance services are available at no cost. Notifications may take the form of, but are not limited to, multilingual posters, signs, brochures, social media posts, forms on DOT's website, or text within materials distributed to the public.

Action Steps

To implement Element 3, each OA will:

1. Develop and implement strategies to ensure that persons with LEP are aware that language assistance services are available to them at no cost. Strategies should leverage various methods and networks.
2. Distribute and make available resources, such as DOT's [Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient \(LEP\) Persons](#) to current recipients, contractors, vendors, and the public.
3. Leverage social media to increase awareness of language assistance services and products available in non-English languages to persons with

- LEP.
4. Display links on the Agency's website to indicate that documents may be available for viewing or downloading in languages other than English. Whenever practicable, the text displayed for these links should be written in the non-English languages available.
 5. Review [Improving Access to Public Websites and Digital services for Limited English Proficient \(LEP\) Persons](#) to ensure that individuals with LEP are notified about the availability of language assistance services at DOT.

To implement Element 3, DOOCR will:

1. Distribute and make available resources, such as DOT's [Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient \(LEP\) Persons](#) to current recipients, contractors, vendors, and the public.
2. Assess external-facing systems to determine whether language assistance services are needed.
 - a. Incorporate LEP accessibility into external-facing systems that lack an LEP component.
 - b. Improve LEP accessibility into external-facing systems with an existing but inadequate LEP component.
3. Leverage social media to increase awareness of language assistance services and products available in non-English languages to persons with LEP.
4. Display links on the Agency's website to indicate that documents may be available for viewing or downloading in languages other than English. Whenever practicable, the text displayed for these links should be written in the non-English languages available.
5. Review [Improving Access to Public Websites and Digital services for Limited English Proficient \(LEP\) Persons](#) to ensure that individuals with LEP are notified about the availability of language assistance services at DOT.

Element 4 – Providing Language Assistance Services

As described above, DOT, OAs (including regional and field offices), and Departmental Offices will develop strategies tailored to the needs of the LEP communities they serve to provide efficient and effective language assistance services.

Each OA will provide oral language assistance and written translation for persons with LEP to ensure meaningful access to DOT-conducted programs, services, and activities. This Plan applies to DOT interactions with members of the public and generally not to interactions with recipients. When translating documents that may contain legal obligations, the translated document should clearly state that the English-version prevails and that the translation does not create any new legal rights or requirements. DOOCR will coordinate and monitor OA program-office provision of language assistance services.

Oral Language Assistance

DOT will provide oral language assistance (e.g., qualified interpreters) in both face-to-face (i.e., onsite oral interpretation) and telephonic or virtual encounters to facilitate meaningful access to DOT programs and improve administrative effectiveness. The oral telephonic interpretation service will allow DOT employees to communicate with persons with LEP, at no charge to them, in more than 125 languages. This service will be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year.

Written Translation

DOT will provide written translation of vital documents and important information to ensure meaningful access and equal opportunity to participate in DOT programs, services, and activities. For these purposes, a vital document is a paper or electronic written material that contains information that is critical for a member of the public to access an OA's program or activities or is required by law.⁹ Each OA will identify its vital documents.

Once an OA or program office identifies its vital documents, it must determine how to prioritize translating them. DOT currently prioritizes translation of written communications, such as public information materials, notices, forms, and letters using the following criteria:

1. Document must be a DOT vital document. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Complaint, consent, release, or waiver forms
 - DOT-specific application forms for services, programs, or activities
2. Document is targeted to the public. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Public awareness or public involvement campaigns
 - Notices
 - Brochures, posters, or flyers
 - Announcements
 - Websites
 - Letters of findings.
 - Letters or notices pertaining to statutes of limitations, referrals to other federal agencies, a decision to decline to investigate a case or matter, or closure of an investigation, case, or matter.
 - Written notices of rights, denial, loss, or decreases in benefits or services, parole, and other hearings.
3. Expansion of translated material due to a change in demographics
4. DOT or OA website or webpage updates

⁹ See Appendix A for types of documents that DOT considers vital. But note that all Federal financial assistance announcements and Federal award information must be in the English language (2 CFR § 200.111).

After an OA or program office has deemed a document vital and followed translation priority, it will consider having the vital documents accessible in the most frequently encountered non-English languages among persons with LEP.

All Departmental Offices and OA Program Offices will translate vital documents based on Agency needs and capacity. To assist with prioritizing which documents will be translated into which languages, DOT will begin reviewing and analyzing data collected by contract interpreters to determine the nature and frequency with which the documents are needed for translation. For non-vital documents that would benefit from being translated, and many larger documents, such as Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and Environmental Assessments (EA), an OA should consider providing a translated executive summary that highlights critical information from the document and providing notice that a competent interpreter can be provided to discuss the document further in a requested language.

DOCR will construct a "DOT LEP Translated Documents" webpage where DOT-translated materials in the most frequently encountered non-English languages can also be accessed publicly.

Coordination and Monitoring of Language Assistance Services

DOCR has responsibility for:

1. Coordinating language assistance services across OAs and program offices by providing customer service and technical assistance to DOT staff and the public.
2. Monitoring to ensure language assistance services are available to assist DOT staff who communicate and interact with persons with LEP.
3. Coordinating with relevant offices on securing qualified and reputable DOT-contracted vendors.

OA staff will be able to access DOT language assistance services via the forthcoming DOT Language Assistance Services webpage, which provides information on the DOT Interpretation Line, demographic analysis tools, and other language assistance resources.

Acquisition Planning

OAs and OST Program Offices must take affirmative steps to ensure that LEP policies and requirements are integrated into the Agency's acquisition actions. The Agency is responsible for following all laws, executive orders, regulations, and other applicable procedures to confirm sound business decisions are made in meeting the government's contractual obligations. The Agency must establish an effective foundation for acquisitions by adding standard language to

contracts to which this Plan applies that fully outlines the organization's requirements to provide access to persons with LEP. Through a centrally coordinated acquisition strategy, DOT is better supported to fulfill its responsibilities to provide meaningful access to persons with LEP, which sets the stage for crafting an acquisition in which the performance goals of the contractor and the government are in sync.

Action Steps

To implement Element 4, each OA will:

1. Develop a process for classifying vital documents.
2. Identify materials already available in non-English languages, inform the DOOCR of such materials, and consider revising as needed to ensure quality and accuracy.
3. Establish centralized storage procedures that retain previously translated vital documents, consistent with applicable records management regulations, policies, and guidance.
4. Continue to contract with qualified language-assistance professionals who meet DOT language assistance service needs based on experience, education, and training certifications.
5. Periodically review the safeguards included in LEP services contracts to ensure quality assurance.
6. Continue identifying and translating vital documents (current and new).
7. Review current standard terms to ensure adherence to EO 13166 (including translation quality and accuracy requirements) is included in all acquisition actions.

To implement Element 4, DOOCR will:

1. Continue managing a program that ensures persons with LEP are provided oral language assistance services or written language assistance when needed to ensure meaningful access to DOT programs and in accordance with Agency needs, capacity, and this Plan.
2. Create standard procedures and language access campaigns to provide language assistance services.
3. Maintain and monitor DOT's internal webpage that provide resources available to DOT staff, including maintaining and monitoring the availability of DOT's technology for DOT staff to request document translation.
4. Identify contract opportunities with qualified language-assistance professionals who meet DOT language assistance service needs based on experience, education, and training certifications.
5. Participate in DOT's Acquisition Council to assist in and review acquisition policies and procedures regarding language access.
6. Research policies and procedures to ensure that all DOT acquisition plans and strategies comply with laws, executive orders, regulations, and other applicable LEP requirements.
7. Review current standard contract terms to ensure adherence to EO 13166

(including translation quality and accuracy requirements) is included in all DOT grants and acquisition actions. Create model contract language for OAs that can also be shared with DOT recipients.

8. Review existing policies for the recruitment, hiring, assessment (*i.e.*, formal qualifications), and training of multilingual applicants. This review includes the need to further outline the hiring strategy for assessing applicants' proficiency and competency in the identified non-English languages.
9. Establish criteria for multilingual staff to be eligible to provide language assistance services. These criteria should consider experience, education, professional testing, training, and certifications.
10. Develop a process for DOT staff to submit requests for translation through DOT's internal LEP SharePoint site.

Element 5 – Training Staff on Policies and Procedures

DOT has committed the needed resources and will provide employee training as necessary to ensure staff understand the Agency's LEP policies and procedures. This training helps ensure that all DOT employees are aware of the resources available, the procedures to access these resources (e.g., interpreters, multilingual staff, translation services, telecommunication interpretation, and on-site interpretation), and DOT points of contact for technical assistance. These efforts assist staff to effectively communicate and interact with persons with LEP. During new employee orientation, DOT will provide training on DOT's LEP and LEP services, such as interpretation and translation policies, how to access the services, and whom to contact for additional information about the services. In addition to the new employee orientations, DOT will provide refresher training to current staff, especially those in public-contact positions, on the procedures for accessing DOT's language assistance services when encountering or seeking oral and written communications in non-English languages.

Action Steps

To implement Element 5, each OA will:

1. Provide ongoing staff training, in coordination with DOOCR, especially for those in public-contact positions, on identifying the language needs of an individual, requesting documents for translation, appropriate use of multilingual employees, when and how to access and use oral and written language assistance services, how to work with interpreters and translators, and how to obtain technical assistance.
2. Follow DOT training schedule for new and current employees.
3. Tailor approaches to meet OA language access responsibilities in coordination with DOOCR.

To implement Element 5, DOOCR will:

1. Coordinate with appropriate DOT offices, including OST-M, to create LEP

- policies and procedures training.
2. Provide and/or identify training resources to carry out language access responsibilities and how to tailor language services to their LEP population.
 3. Train DOT language coordinators on the Agency's language assistance program, policies, and procedures.
 4. Issue an annual training schedule to increase awareness of DOT's language assistance program.
 5. Coordinate routine promotion of available LEP services to DOT staff.

Element 6 – Monitoring, Evaluating, and Updating the Language Access Policy Directives, Plans, and Procedures

Every two years, DOT will assess the accessibility and quality of language assistance services and activities for persons with LEP. Ensuring persons with LEP receive quality and accurate language assistance services is critical to providing meaningful access to DOT programs, services, and activities. OAs will review the Interagency Working Group on Limited English Proficiency's Foreign Language Services Ordering Guide (see Appendix C).

DOT will take reasonable steps to ensure that all vendors providing language services include quality assurance and performance standards in the contracts for their services. DOT will also take reasonable steps to identify, train, and deploy multilingual DOT staff on translation work to assist individuals with LEP.

Contracts with language assistance provisions will include requirements for providing evidence of linguists' /interpreters' /translators' language proficiency, professional certifications, educational background, and work experience; a Quality Control Plan that details a contractor's methodology for recruiting qualified personnel; and a Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan that allows the procuring office to evaluate the contractor's performance in meeting standards identified in the contract. Departmental Offices and OAs will use the following criteria to ensure access and quality for language assistance services:

- DOT will contract with qualified and professional linguists that meet DOT language assistance service needs based on experience, education, and training certifications.
- DOT's translations will be contractually performed by qualified linguists. The use of or reliance on free or automatic translation services, such as Google Translate, is not a best practice and should not solely be used for translation purposes.
- DOT staff will monitor and track all feedback received regarding the quality of DOT-contracted translators or interpreters to ensure vendors' compliance with DOT requirements and policies.
- DOT vendors are given a glossary of terms that are used within DOT to ensure consistency.
- DOT vendors must understand and follow confidentiality rules and avoid apparent or actual conflicts of interest.

At least once every five years, the NLAWG will evaluate and update the Plan and its policies and procedures to ensure the language access program effectively maintains language accessibility to persons with LEP. Any update made within the five-year timeframe will be recorded as an addendum to the LAP and then incorporated at the scheduled evaluation period. DOT will maintain notices on the DOT intranet site informing employees about the availability of translation and interpretation services, and ensure information is updated to reflect the most recent Census Bureau data.

When evaluating existing and emerging technologies, DOT considers the needs of persons with LEP, the resources available to meet those needs, and the effect technology can have on LEP populations. To ensure persons with LEP have meaningful access to digital information, DOT is exploring cost-effective options for updating the existing IT infrastructure to improve the accessibility of DOT's translated materials on its website.

Action Steps

To implement Element 6, each OA will:

1. Regularly monitor its LAP Implementation Tracker and take the necessary steps to improve the quality and accuracy of services provided to persons with LEP.
2. Collect and track LEP data at the national, regional, and local levels to determine the needs of the community and to allocate resources accordingly. This data may include the number of cases, matters, or outreach initiatives, where language assistance was provided, the primary language requested or provided, the type of language assistance services provided, or the cost of any language assistance services provided.
3. Collect data to identify language needs demographically and the language services required at various service delivery contact points.
4. Identify best practices for continuous quality improvement regarding its language assistance services.
5. Implement methods for measuring improvements in access to the OA's language assistance services.

To implement Element 6, DOOCR will:

1. Designate OA action steps for periodic reporting to the Secretary to regularly assess the language assistance program and take the necessary steps to improve the quality and accuracy of services provided to persons with LEP.
2. Collect and track LEP data at the national level to determine the needs of the community and to allocate resources accordingly. This data may include the number of cases, matters, or outreach initiatives, where language assistance was provided, the primary language requested or provided, the type of language assistance services provided, or the cost of any language assistance services provided.

3. Collect data to identify language needs demographically and the languages services required at various service delivery contact points.
4. Identify best practices for continuous quality improvement regarding its language assistance services.
5. Implement methods for measuring improvements in access to the Agency's language assistance services.
6. Regularly monitor the efficacy of services provided and share effective practices with executive leadership and OAs.
7. Once an interpretation line is established, review and collect data from DOT's interpretation line to determine the frequency at which various languages are being requested and the areas where services in these languages are most needed.
8. Re-examine data collection methods to capture LEP population data accurately and fully.
9. Explore the feasibility of leveraging DOT multilingual staff to aid translation and interpretation efforts for persons with LEP.

5. Conclusion

By implementing the Plan at all levels within DOT, we can remove barriers to meaningful access for persons with LEP in all DOT-conducted programs, services, and activities. For questions or technical assistance, reach out to the National Language Access Coordinator at lep@dot.gov.

Appendix A: Definitions

This Appendix provides definitions of some of the terms used in the LAP.

Direct In-Language Communication – Monolingual communication in a language other than English between a multilingual staff member and a person who is LEP (e.g., Korean to Korean)

Interpretation – The act of listening to a communication in one language and orally converting it to another language while retaining the same meaning. There are various types of interpretation, including simultaneous, consecutive, and sight.

Language Access – Is achieved when persons with LEP can communicate effectively with DOT employees and contractors and participate in DOT programs and activities.

Language Access Coordinator – A designated individual in an OA who coordinates language access within the OA and with the NLAWG. They are responsible for coordinating, tracking, and reporting on the applicable Action Steps in this Plan.

Language Access Program – An array of language assistance services that are managed and coordinated by DOT to allow persons with LEP to receive equivalent information and access to DOT programs, services, and activities.

Language Assistance Services – Oral and written language services needed to assist persons with LEP to communicate effectively with staff, and to provide persons with LEP with meaningful access to, and an equal opportunity to participate fully in, the services, activities, or other programs administered by the Agency.

LAP Implementation Tracker – A table maintained by an OA to track and monitor its required actions steps under the Elements of the LAP.

Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons, or Persons with LEP – Individuals for whom English is not their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. Individuals with LEP may be competent in English for certain types of communication (e.g., speaking or understanding), but have limited proficiency in English in other areas (e.g., reading or writing). LEP designations are also context-specific; an individual may possess sufficient English language skills to function in one setting (e.g., conversing in English with coworkers), but these skills may be insufficient in other settings (e.g., addressing court proceedings).

Meaningful Access – Language assistance that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the person with LEP. For persons with LEP, meaningful access denotes access that is not significantly restricted, delayed, or inferior as compared to programs or activities provided to English proficient individuals.

Multilingual Staff – An employee who has qualified proficiency, as authorized by DOT, in reading, writing, speaking, or understanding at least one language in addition to English.

Operating Administration (OA) – As used in this Plan, Operating Administration (OA) refers to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (GLS), Maritime Administration (MARAD), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), and the Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST). See [49 CFR §1.2\(b\)](#).

Preferred/Primary Language – The language that a person with LEP identifies as the preferred language that they use to communicate effectively.

Program or Activity – The term “program or activity” and the term “program” mean all the operations of the Agency.

Qualified Interpreter – An in-house or contracted interpreter who has demonstrated their competence to interpret or translate through qualification, court certification or is otherwise authorized to do so by contract with the Agency.

Sight Translation – Oral rendering of written text into spoken language by an interpreter without change in meaning based on a visual review of the original text or document.

Translation – The replacement of written text from one language into an equivalent written text in another language. Note: DOT’s translations are performed by qualified language professionals, either by contractors or multilingual staff. The use of or reliance on free or automatic translation services, such as Google Translate, is not a best practice and should not be used for translation purposes.

Vital Documents – Paper or electronic written material that contain information that is critical for accessing an OA’s program or activities or is required by law. Vital documents include but are not limited to the following: application, consent, and complaint forms; notices of rights and disciplinary action; notices

advising persons with LEP of the availability of free language assistance; and letters or notices that require a response from the individual. For instance, if a complaint form is necessary to file a claim with an agency, that complaint form would be vital. Non-vital information includes documents that are not critical to access such benefits and services.

Appendix B: Implementation Tracker

This appendix provides tables for use in tracking implementation of the action steps under each element of the Plan.

Element 1 – Understanding How Persons with LEP Interact with DOT

#	Action Step	Point of Contact, Office	Coordinating Offices	Milestones	Progress Report
1	At least once every two years, conduct a language access needs assessment, as described in Action Steps 2-4 below.				
2	Identify the language access needs of specific regions of the country and territories being served using demographic data.				
3	Assess the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the services being provided, using LEP data from sources such as customer satisfaction surveys and program reviews.				
4	Identify gaps where language assistance services are inadequate to meet LEP needs.				
5	Recommend improvements to enhance language assistance services.				

Element 2 – Identifying and Assessing LEP Communities

#	Action Step	Point of Contact, Office	Coordinating Offices	Milestones	Progress Report
1	Establish OA-specific actions for identifying the language needs of persons with LEP to improve services.				
2	Involve stakeholders in developing plans to provide language access to improve access to DOT programs, services, and activities.				
3	Consult stakeholders to assess the accessibility, accuracy, cultural appropriateness, and overall quality of DOT's language assistance services.				

Element 3 – Providing Notice of Language Assistance Services

#	Action Step	Point of Contact, Office	Coordinating Offices	Milestones	Progress Report
1	Develop and implement strategies to ensure that persons with LEP are aware that languages assistance services are available to them at no cost. Strategies should leverage various methods and networks.				
2	Distribute and make available resources, such as DOT's Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons to current recipients, contractors, vendors, and the public.				
3	Leverage social media to increase awareness of language assistance services and products available in non-English languages to persons with LEP.				
4	Display links on the Agency's website to indicate that documents may be available for viewing or downloading in languages other than English. Whenever practicable, the text displayed for these links should be written in the non-English languages available.				
5	Review Improving Access to Public Websites and Digital services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons to ensure that individuals with LEP are notified about the availability of language assistance services at DOT.				

Element 4 – Providing Language Assistance Services

#	Action Step	Point of Contact, Office	Coordinating Offices	Milestones	Progress Report
1	Develop a process for classifying vital documents.				
2	Identify materials already available in non-English languages, inform the DOCR of such materials, and consider revising as needed to ensure quality and accuracy.				
3	Establish centralized storage procedures that retain previously translated vital documents, consistent with applicable records management regulations, policies, and guidance.				
4	Continue to contract with qualified language-assistance professionals who meet DOT language assistance service needs based on experience, education, and training certifications.				
5	Periodically review (via a multi-tiered review process) the safeguards included in LEP services contracts to ensure quality assurance.				
6	Continue identifying and translating all vital documents (current and new).				
7	Review current standard terms to ensure adherence to EO 13166 (including translation quality and accuracy requirements) is included in all DOT grants and acquisition actions.				

Element 5 – Training Staff on Policies and Procedures

#	Action Step	Point of Contact, Office	Coordinating Offices	Milestones	Progress Report
1	Provide ongoing staff training, in coordination with DOOCR, especially for those in public-contact positions, on when and how to access and use oral and written language assistance services, how to work with interpreters and translators, and how to obtain technical assistance.				
2	Follow DOT training schedule for new and current employees.				
3	Tailor approaches to meet OA language access responsibilities in coordination with DOOCR.				

Element 6 – Monitoring, Evaluating, and Updating the Language Access Policy Directives, Plans, and Procedures

#	Action Step	Point of Contact, Office	Coordinating Offices	Milestones	Progress Report
1	Regularly monitor its LAP Implementation Tracker and take the necessary steps to improve the quality and accuracy of services provided to persons with LEP.				
2	Collect and track LEP data at the national, regional, and local levels to determine the needs of the community and to allocate resources accordingly. This data may include the number of cases, matters, or outreach initiatives, where language assistance was provided, the primary language requested or provided, the type of language assistance services provided, or the cost of any language assistance services provided.				
3	Collect data to identify language needs demographically and the language services required at various service delivery contact points.				
4	Identify best practices for continuous quality improvement regarding its language assistance services.				
5	Implement methods for measuring improvements in access to the OA's language assistance services.				

Appendix C: Additional Resources

This appendix provides links to additional resources.

DOT

[Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient \(LEP\) Persons](#) (December 12, 2005)

[Equity and Access Policy Statement](#) (June 2, 2022)

[Equity Action Plan](#) (January 2022 and subsequent annual updates)

[DOT Title VI Program](#), DOT Order 1000.12C (June 11, 2021)

[Equitable Transportation Community \(ETC\) Explorer](#)

[Transportation Maps and Geospatial Data](#), Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS)

DOCR Multilingual Glossary of Transportation Terms

Federal

[Executive Order 13166](#), Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (August 16, 2000)

[Executive Order 13985](#), Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government (January 20, 2021)

[Executive Order 14091](#), Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government (February 16, 2023)

[Foreign Language Services Ordering Guide](#), U.S. General Services Administration (May 2023)

[Improving Access to Public Websites and Digital Services for Limited English Proficient \(LEP\) Persons](#), Title VI Interagency Working Group (December 2021)

[LEP.gov](#), U.S. Department of Justice

[Multilingual Community](#), Digital.gov, U.S. General Services Administration

[Climate and Economic Justice Screen Tool](#), Council on Environmental Quality

External Non-Federal

[PIARC \(World Road Association\) Road Dictionary](#)

Transportation Research Board (TRB) [Transportation Research Thesaurus \(TRT\)](#)



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