

Limited English Proficiency Plan for Whitfield County Transit System

CREATED
June 5, 2013

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Whitfield County BOC

The Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP) is established pursuant to and in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons With Limited English Proficiency."

The opinions, findings, and conclusions in this publication are those of the author(s) and are not necessarily those of the Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration, or Georgia Department of Transportation.

Introduction

On August 11, 2000, President William J. Clinton signed Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Service for Persons with Limited English Proficiency”, to clarify Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on the grounds of race, color, or national origin by any entity receiving federal financial assistance. Administrative methods or procedures that have the effect of subjecting individuals to discrimination or defeating the objectives of these regulations are prohibited. The purpose of Executive Order 13166 is to ensure accessibility to programs and services to otherwise eligible persons who are not proficient in the English language.

Purpose

The purpose of this Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan is to demonstrate compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166. The LEP Plan is for persons who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. Such persons may be eligible to receive language assistance with respect to a particular service, benefit, or encounter. This Plan will examine the services and products provided by the Whitfield County Transit System (WCTS). The Plan will outline current accommodations made for LEP persons and possible future accommodations that can and/or should be made to make these services and products more accessible to LEP persons.

Four Factors to Formulate an LEP Plan

In determining how to provide effective and meaningful access for LEP customers, the U. S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has established the following four guidelines to consider in determining “reasonable steps” to be taken by WCTS:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons served or encountered in the eligible service population,
2. The frequency with which LEP persons encounter the services, programs, or activities provided,
3. The nature and importance of the services, programs, or activities; and
4. The resources available to the program and the costs of providing interpretation/translation services.

The greater the number or proportion of eligible LEP persons; the greater the frequency with which they have contact with a program, activity, or service; and the greater the importance of that program, activity, or service, the more likely enhanced language services will be needed. Smaller recipients with more limited budgets are typically not expected to provide the same level of language service as larger recipients with larger budgets. The intent of DOT’s guidance is to suggest a balance that ensures meaningful access by LEP persons to critical services while not imposing undue burdens on small organizations and local governments.

LEP Assessment for the Whitfield County planning area

Factor 1: The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served by WCTS.

The planning area of the WCTS consists of the incorporated cities of Dalton, Cohutta, Tunnel Hill, Varnell and unincorporated areas within the confines of Whitfield County. The county's total population based on The U.S. 2010 Census is 102,599.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the primary language for Whitfield County is English and the second most common language spoken is Spanish at 12.6%. Census data for primary language spoken at home within each city and/or within Whitfield County is unavailable. Speak a language other than English data is also unavailable.

Table 1 – Primary Language spoken by the residents of Whitfield County.

Primary Language	Percentages	Number of Citizens
English Only	86.6%	88,850
Spanish or Spanish Creole	12.6%	12,927
Other	0.8%	820

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010 American Community Service

Factor 2: The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with WCTS Services.

WCTS has not received any formal requests by LEP individuals for language translation of any document nor for an interpreter at any public meeting since first being designated in 2009. Whitfield County Board of Commissioners (BOC) has provided Spanish speakers and funds for interpreters and provided public notices in both English and Spanish at any public meeting.

Factor 3: The nature and importance of the WCTS, or service provided by The WCTS to the LEP community.

The WCTS uses local and DOT funds to plan for routes review and routes expansion projects and therefore does not include any direct service or program that requires vital, immediate or emergency assistance, such as medical treatment or services for basic needs (like food or shelter).

WCTS does not conduct activities which require residents to fill out applications or submit to interviews prior to receive public benefits. The Whitfield County BOC has some Spanish speaking staff members who are available to assist WCTS when needed. Brochures, detailing services, route maps and bus schedules are also available in Spanish when requested.

Factor 4: The resources available to WCTS and overall costs.

The final factor weighs the previous factors to assess the needs of LEP individuals against the resources available to WCTS to provide assistance in a language other than English. The WCTS does have a significant number of LEP residents within Whitfield County but historically the frequency of contact with the WCTS has been low.

LEP Implementation Plan

WCTS buses display in Spanish and English, that the transportation services are available and the phone number where to call for more information or to schedule a trip. Translation of other documents, if needed, can be provided orally.

Identifying persons who may need language assistance

- When and if the WCTS needs to sponsor a public function, they have a sign-in sheet table, a staff member or designate will greet and briefly speak to each attendee. To informally gauge the attendee's ability to speak and understand English, he or she will ask a question that requires a full sentence reply.
- WCTS can use "I Speak Cards" at the sign-in table for those who speak a language other than English. While staff may not be able to provide translation assistance at this meeting, the cards can be an excellent tool to identify language needs for future meetings.

Language Assistance Measures

In the event that WCTS should receive a request for assistance in a foreign language, staff members will take the name and contact information of the person. We can contact an individual who speaks Spanish but for other languages we will use a free online written translator website or we could to contact a local community volunteer if available. If the required language is not available or if a formal interpretation is required, staff shall use the telephone interpreter service, Language Line, at 1-800-752-6096.

WCTS Staff Training

Incoming staff members will be briefed on the WCTS's LEP Plan and how to assist LEP residents. They will be told to keep a record of language assistance requests to assess future LEP population needs.

Providing Notice to LEP persons

WCTS will provide notice in both English and Spanish for all public meetings in accordance with its Public Participation Plan:

Non-English Speaking Communities

WCTS will utilize the following media resources and techniques to reach the non-English speaking communities:

- Local Spanish newspapers
- Local Spanish Radio Stations

Monitoring and Updating the LEP Plan

Monitoring the success of the LEP Plan will be an ongoing process. USDOT guidance recommends updates should consider the following elements:

- How many LEP persons were encountered?
- Were their needs met?
- What is the current LEP population in Whitfield County?
- Has there been a change in the types of languages where translation services are needed?
- Is there still a need for continued language assistance for previously identified programs/benefits? Are there other programs that should be included?
- Have the WCTS's available resources, such as technology, staff, and financial costs changed?
- Has the WCTS fulfilled the goals of the LEP Plan?
- Were any complaints received?

Dissemination of the MPO Limited English Proficiency Plan

WCTS will post the LEP Plan on its website at: www.whitfieldcountyga.com . Copies of the LEP Plan will be provided to any person or agency requesting a copy.

Any questions or comments regarding this plan should be directed to:

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