

**FINAL**



**Coast Transit Authority  
Language Assistance  
Implementation Plan  
for  
Limited English Proficiency Persons**

**August 3, 2009**

Version 1.0

**FINAL**



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# **Coast Transit Authority**

## **Language Assistance Implementation Plan**

### **for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Persons**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to fulfill the requirements of the Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency,” reprinted at 65 FR 50121 (August 16, 2000), as well as guidance from the Federal Transit Administration on LEP issued in the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients’ Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons (DOT LEP Guidance, Federal Register, vol. 70, no. 239, pp. 74087–74100, December 14, 2005)

#### **Legal basis for language assistance requirements<sup>1</sup>**

**Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.**, and its implementing regulations provide that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance. The Supreme Court, in *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974), interpreted Title VI regulations promulgated by the former Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to hold that Title VI prohibits conduct that has a disproportionate effect on LEP persons because such conduct constitutes national origin discrimination.

Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency,” reprinted at 65 FR 50121 (August 16, 2000), directs each Federal agency to examine the services it provides and develop and implement a system by which LEP persons can meaningfully access those services. Federal agencies were instructed to publish guidance for their respective recipients in order to assist them with their obligations to LEP persons under Title VI. The Executive Order states that recipients must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons.

President Bush affirmed his commitment to Executive Order 13166 through a memorandum issued on October 25, 2001 by Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Ralph F. Boyd, Jr. Federal agencies were directed to provide guidance and technical assistance to recipients of Federal funds as to how they can provide meaningful access to limited English proficient users of Federal programs.

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<sup>1</sup> As extracted from *Implementing the Department of Transportation’s Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients’ Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons, A Handbook for Public Transportation Providers*, Prepared by: The Federal Transit Administration Office of Civil Rights, April 13, 2007.

The U.S. DOT published revised guidance for its recipients on December 14, 2005. This document states that Title VI and its implementing regulations require that DOT recipients take responsible steps to ensure meaningful access to the benefits, services, information, and other important portions of their programs and activities for individuals who are Limited English Proficient (LEP) and that recipients should use the DOT LEP Guidance to determine how best to comply with statutory and regulatory obligations to provide meaningful access to the benefits, services, information, and other important portions of their programs and activities for individuals who are LEP.

### **Goal of Coast Transit Authority's LEP Plan**

It is the goal of this plan to identify actions which will be taken to reduce the language barriers for LEP individuals in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson County, MS who seek to utilize services provided by Coast Transit Authority (CTA). To achieve this goal, CTA will undertake those reasonable steps required to ensure meaningful access by LEP persons to public transportation services.

### **Coast Transit Authority (CTA) Service Overview**

In 1970, the Mississippi Legislature created, by Act, the Mississippi Coast Transportation Authority (MCTA). Under this act, the MCTA was created with the responsibility to provide public transportation services. Operations of services under this authority did not officially commence until August 16, 1974. The MCTA does business as the Coast Transit Authority (CTA), a name change which occurred in 1985.

CTA receives contributions to support transit operations from the following local governments: City of Biloxi, City of Gulfport, City of D'Iberville, City of Ocean Springs, Harrison County and Jackson County. The Coast Commuter vanpool program is funded through voucher supplied by participating employers.

CTA offers Fixed-Route Public Transportation on ten (10) routes which provide service in portions of the incorporated cities of Biloxi, D'Iberville, Gulfport, Long Beach and Ocean Springs. CTA offers complementary curb-to-curb ADA paratransit services within Harrison and Jackson Counties to qualified individuals within three-fourths of a mile on either side of CTA's fixed route bus system. Individuals may go anywhere they want, as long as the destination is on an existing CTA fixed route. Under contract to the Hancock and Harrison County Commissions, CTA offers limited non-emergency curb-to-curb service to qualifying senior citizens residing in Hancock and Harrison Counties. Applications for this service are collected through the Gulf Coast Community Action Agency and the Biloxi Citizen Center. Advance appointments are required with a 24-hour notification. CTA offers park-and-ride services from five locations within Harrison County. Additionally, CTA offers commuter carpool and vanpool services to all interested employers located in the three county Gulf Coast area. This service includes carpool ride match, along with a turn-key vanpool program.

**Section 1 - Four Factor Analysis**

**Factor #1** - *Assessing the number and proportion of LEP persons served or encountered in the eligible service population*

US Census Bureau data for the three county Coast Transit Authority (CTA) service area has been obtained for the year 2000 from the American Factfinder<sup>2</sup>.

According to this data, 2.09% of the population in the three county area or 7,084 persons, speak English less than “very well”. Review of data at the Census Tract levels identifies the highest concentrations of individuals in the population who speak English less than “very well” in the following areas:

**Table 1: Ability to Speak English within the Population, 5 Years and Older**

Selected Census Tracts in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson Counties, MS  
Language Spoken at Home (Table PCT 12, SF3, 2000 Census)

Census Tract	Total Population 5 Years and Older	Total Population, 5 Years and Older, Considered LEP (Speak English < Very Well)	% of the Total Population, 5 Years and Older
Census Tract 301, Hancock County	5,379	141	2.62%
Census Tract 1, Harrison County	1,300	195	15.0%
Census Tract 2, Harrison County	2,144	181	8.44%
Census Tract 3, Harrison County	2,628	275	10.46%
Census Tract 5, Harrison County	158	16	10.13%
Census Tract 6, Harrison County	2,459	69	2.81%
Census Tract 7, Harrison County	1,551	105	6.77%
Census Tract 9, Harrison County	4,756	142	2.99%
Census Tract 10, Harrison County	2,745	73	2.66%
Census Tract 12.01, Harrison County	4,878	109	2.23%
Census Tract 12.02 Harrison County	5,345	132	2.47%
Census Tract 13 Harrison County	3,494	156	4.46%
Census Tract 14, Harrison County	3,993	100	2.50%
Census Tract 15, Harrison County	7,200	203	2.82%
Census Tract 20, Harrison County	4,275	127	2.97%
Census Tract 25, Harrison County	1,886	52	2.76%
Census Tract 27, Harrison County	5,967	170	2.85%

<sup>2</sup> Table PCT 12, Nativity by Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English, for the Population 5 Years and Over, US Bureau of the Census, 2000.

**Table 1: Ability to Speak English within the Population, 5 Years and Older (cont'd)**  
 Selected Census Tracts in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson Counties, MS  
 Language Spoken at Home (Table PCT 12, SF3, 2000 Census)

Census Tract	Total Population 5 Years and Older	Total Population, 5 Years and Older, Considered LEP (Speak English < Very Well)	% of the Total Population, 5 Years and Older
Census Tract 29, Harrison County	2,687	60	2.23%
Census Tract 30, Harrison County	4,150	179	4.31%
Census Tract 33.01 Harrison County	6,917	363	5.25%
Census Tract 33.02 Harrison County	7,420	240	3.23%
Census Tract 403, Jackson County	6,285	264	4.38%
Census Tract 404, Jackson County	5,649	200	3.67%
Census Tract 406, Jackson County	5,463	122	2.28%
Census Tract 407, Jackson County	7,388	179	2.48%
Census Tract 408, Jackson County	4,303	133	3.19%
Census Tract 411, Jackson County	6,271	176	2.89%
Census Tract 412, Jackson County	850	36	4.42%
Census Tract 420, Jackson County	5,011	207	4.31%
Census Tract 421, Jackson County	3,263	113	3.59%
Census Tract 422, Jackson County	4,746	206	4.54%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

CTA operates fixed-route transit services and ADA Paratransit within portions of Census Tracts 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12.01, 12.02, 13, 14, 15, 33.01 in Harrison County. CTA operates Senior Citizen demand-response in all Census Tracts shown in Harrison County. CTA operates fixed-route and ADA Paratransit within portions of Census Tracts 403, 404, 406, and 407 in Jackson County. CTA’s public transit service is not currently provided in the remaining portions of Jackson County or Hancock County where LEP populations were identified. However, as services are planned for these areas, CTA will work to incorporate LEP concerns and needs in its outreach, marketing and route planning efforts.

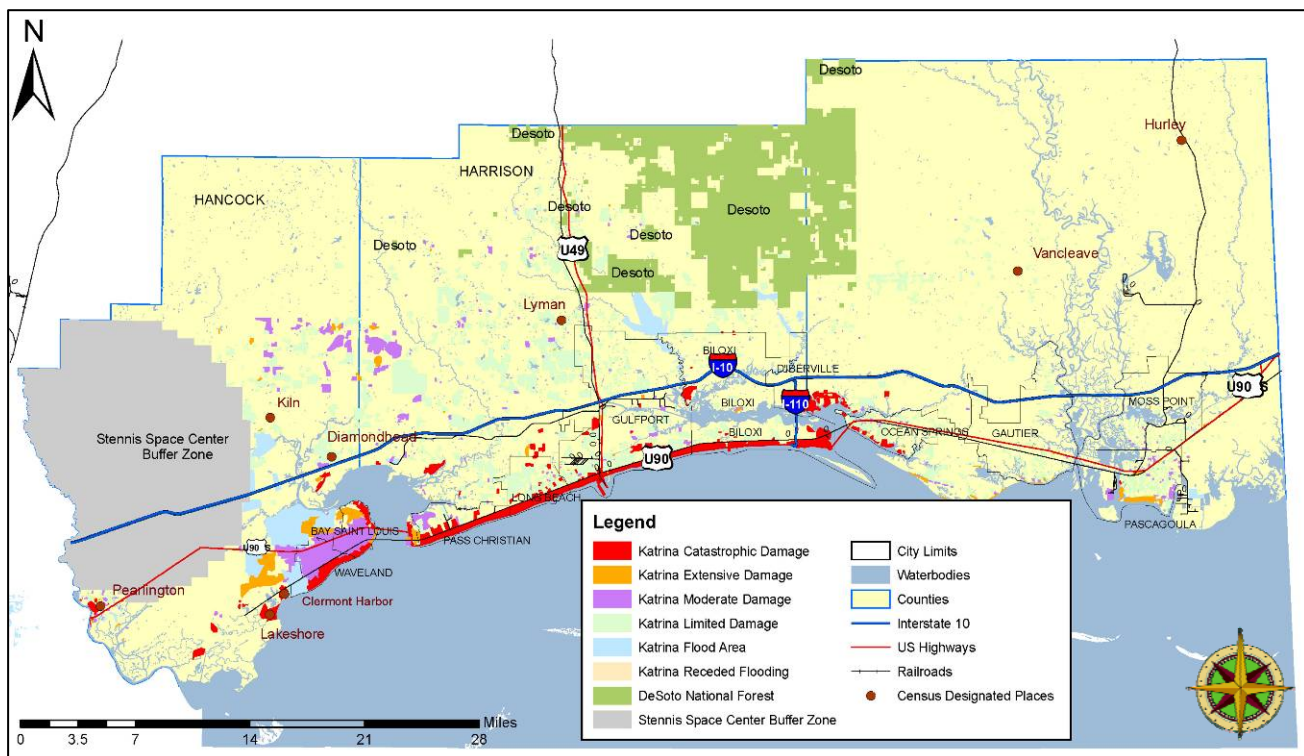
**Factor #2 - Assessing the frequency with which LEP individuals come into contact with the program, activity, or service**

CTA drivers have noticed an increase in individuals using transit who appeared not to speak or understand English. Some of this increase is attributed to a rise in migrant labor in the region that came to work on recovery and reconstruction projects following Hurricane Katrina.

In 2006, CTA implemented a program of providing Spanish-language materials (schedules, flyers, fare information and public announcements) to address the growing number of Spanish-speaking riders in the system.

As part of the ongoing Title VI Demographic review of the system, on-board passenger surveys have been conducted to monitor passenger characteristics and demographics. In the latest round of surveys, conducted in April 2009, survey teams helped determine information on the number of riders who speak or understand English “not well” or “not at all”. Survey results indicate of those choosing to respond to this question, 86% of those surveyed across the fixed-route system identified English as their primary language. Of those indicating another language (4%), the majority identified Spanish (3.35%), followed by German and Chinese (at less than 1% each). A total of 11% of those surveyed choose not to respond to this question. The number of persons speaking Spanish is higher than the three county average, but is consistent with the percentage of those speaking English less than very well within most of the individual Census Tracts identified in Table 1.

At the time of the April 2009 survey, teams examined land use patterns along routes and within walking distance of the routes for evidence of the presence of any other language groups in the area which need to be addressed. Of special interest was the areas covered by Census Tracts 1, 3 and 5 in Harrison County, which had the highest percentages of persons who did spoke English less than very well. These areas are within the City of Biloxi, east of the Interstate 110 corridor. Most of this area was heavily damaged by storm surge associated with Hurricane Katrina. (*See Exhibit 1*).



**Exhibit 1:** Tri-County Damage Summary, Post Hurricane Katrina (2005)  
Prepared by the Gulf Regional Planning Commission, 2005.

Residential redevelopment in this area has been slower than other areas in the City. Some businesses and community facilities have been restored, along with public facilities (public housing, schools, parks, recreation centers, City Hall, etc.). Transit ridership in these areas is among the lowest in the CTA system. However, CTA continues to monitor these areas working closely with the business community, City and social service agencies to establish information needed for the population.

CTA has begun working to establish ties to a local organization representing the Vietnamese community (Boat People SOS) in the area to maintain contact and provide information on services. This community contributed to the high number of non-English speakers in the area at the time of the 2000 Census, but is yet to re-populate the area in the numbers seen around the time of the 2000 Census. CTA proposes to continue working through this group in the coming year to identify the Vietnamese community's transit needs and those associated materials and information items which require translation.

The American Community Survey (ACS) of the US Census Bureau provided estimates on the number of persons who have limited English skills in Harrison and Jackson Counties. Data for Hancock County was not available due to limitations on the sample size at the time of survey. Data is available for the county between 2005 and 2007.

According to the Survey, the total population, older than 5 years old, who speak English less than "very well" is estimated to have increased by 3% in Harrison County and 4% in Jackson County since 2000. Those speaking Spanish are in the group estimated to have seen the greatest increases in both Counties. Those speaking Asian and Pacific Islander languages have been estimated to have decreased by 27% in Harrison County between 2000 and 2007, but have increased by 38% in Jackson County during the same period.

Relocation of Some with Limited English Proficiency – Interviews with local planning officials were conducted to identify trends tracked locally concerning the movement of individuals and groups which may be classified as falling into the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) category. This information is at-best, anecdotal and should be considered only in a planning context.

According to the Executive Planner of the City of Biloxi, many within the local Vietnamese community who lived in East Biloxi have left the area as a result of Hurricane Katrina. The exact number is not known, but it has resulted in a reduction in remaining population within the area. Those opting to remain in Biloxi have settled in the North Bay area, in the City of D'Iberville as well as the adjacent unincorporated area of Jackson County north of Ocean Springs. This supports the trend shown in the American Community Survey data.

**Factor #3 - *Assessing the nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the program***

CTA provides general public transportation to individuals who have no or very limited English skills on a daily basis. Some of these individuals, based upon CTA staff comments and observations, have a limited knowledge of English or travel with individuals who possess the necessary skills to communicate with the bus driver.

However, recognizing an increase in the transitory Hispanic population following Hurricane Katrina, CTA has taken steps to accommodate LEP individuals in the CTA service area. These steps are outlined in the following Section.

**Factor #4 - *Assessing the resources available to the recipient and costs***

CTA has no dedicated local source of local funding. Local funding comes from a combination of local government appropriations and fare revenues. As such, the amount of local funding for operations will vary from year-to-year based upon passenger volume and competing local demands of other community service providers.

However, CTA has taken several steps to enhance its ability to communicate effectively with the local LEP population and provide the necessary language and translation services to those who require assistance. This includes the provision of news bulletins and schedules in Spanish and English. Translation services are made available, upon request, at all public hearings.

A bi-lingual coordinator is on-staff to handle phone calls and inquiries from the Spanish population. Access to a Vietnamese translator is available through local social service agencies and constituency groups (Boat People SOS). Outreach continues to be made to the local groups in order to monitor service needs and issues regarding access.

**Section 2 - Providing Assistance to LEP Persons in the CTA Service Area****Identification of LEP Persons Who Need Language Assistance**

Results of an assessment of the frequency with which this CTA has had or should have contact with LEP individuals seeking assistance in using its services during the most recent fiscal year include:

- LEP Passengers using CTA Fixed-Route services, as evidenced through the on-board survey and discussions with CTA drivers.
- Provision of Spanish-language materials for all CTA route schedule announcements posted on vehicles and in the two Transit Centers (Gulfport and Biloxi).
- Update to the general schedule books continued to include English and Spanish-language schedules (newspapers, schedule books) for the general public.

- There were no requests for translation services made of CTA in the past fiscal year for translation services in connection with a public hearing or meeting.

### **Language Assistance Measures**

Although the data indicates the number of LEP persons in the local population is small, CTA has made several changes in response to the presence of the LEP population in the CTA Fixed-route rider population. These changes have been made at no cost to the LEP or general population:

- Hiring of a bi-lingual coordinator on the CTA staff to provide English to Spanish translation services. Two members of CTA staff (including this person) speak Spanish and offer language translation services to assist in the delivery of services.<sup>3</sup>
- Provision of Spanish-language materials for all CTA route schedule announcements posted on vehicles and in the two Transit Centers (Gulfport and Biloxi).
- Update to the general schedule books continued to include English and Spanish-language schedules (newspapers, schedule books) for the general public.
- Outreach to groups representing the interests of the LEP community, including the Gulf Coast Latin American Association and Boat People SOS, Biloxi. Regular contact with these groups occurs at-least annually, to discuss services offered and proposed changes.

As CTA updates its public information materials, it has routinely incorporated Spanish language items as a matter of practice.

CTA also makes available its management and operations staff to meet with groups on a routine basis to discuss service options available within its service area and its individual communities. These sessions include orientation to routes, schedules and existing services. Requests to have such meetings or events can be made by the community to the Executive Director's office.

### **Training Staff**

CTA staff is instructed to direct LEP persons to one of the two language specialists (Bi-lingual coordinator and additional staff person) on CTA's permanent staff. Phone calls which come into the CTA offices from LEP persons are connected to these individuals. If CTA personnel (drivers or staff) encounter an individual on-route that is LEP and speaks Spanish, they place this individual in radio contact with the appropriate CTA staff for translation.

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<sup>3</sup> CTA also makes these staff available, upon request and availability, to other agencies in need of English to Spanish translation services.

**Providing Notice to LEP Persons**

CTA makes available all public notices regarding changes and updates in services provided in English and Spanish language through the following outlets:

- CTA Administrative Offices, 333 DeBuys Road, Gulfport, MS.
- CTA Transit Center Facilities: Biloxi Transit Center (Reynoir and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Biloxi); Gulfport Transit Center (15<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, Gulfport, MS) and Edgewater Mall interline transfer point (2600 Beach Boulevard/US Highway 90, Biloxi, MS).
- Posting on all CTA Fixed-Route and Demand-Response Buses for a period of at-least 30 days in advance of all advertised changes.

The following service-related items are made available at no cost to the LEP population:

- Provision of Spanish-language materials for all CTA route schedule announcements posted on vehicles and in the two Transit Centers (Gulfport and Biloxi).
- Update to the general schedule books continued to include English and Spanish-language schedules (newspapers, schedule books) for the general public.

All announced changes in CTA services in response to natural disaster or general public emergency, are made in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Please see the Checklist of LEP Written Language Assistance Used by CTA (*Table 2, page 11*) which identifies items currently used, as well as those items proposed for implementation within the next fiscal year. A decision to provide Vietnamese language materials for general service information will be made during 2010.

**Section 3 - Monitoring and Updating the LEP Plan**

This plan will be reviewed and re-evaluated on a regular basis to determine if changes in the LEP population within the CTA service area require an update to the currently used measures to provide information and communication. At a minimum, this review will follow the identified Title VI program schedule for service expansion/retraction.

During the review, the following items, at a minimum, will be assessed using the checklist provided in Table 3, page 11:

- Level of current LEP populations in the CTA service area;
- Frequency of LEP population encounters, based upon CTA surveys and staff reports;
- Requests for translation and second language information to CTA staff;
- Review of contact with community agencies and others representing LEP persons and requests made for transit information and services;

- Participation of LEP groups (or their representatives) at public meetings or hearings regarding changes in service;
- Whether the materials provided and methods used are meeting the needs of the LEP population.

#### **Section 4 - Dissemination of the LEP Plan**

This plan will be made available for review at no cost to the community. Copies of the plan will be posted on the CTA website ([www.coastransit.com](http://www.coastransit.com)), as well as at the CTA Administrative Offices at 333 DeBuys Road (which are served by Route 34, Pass Road). For those without internet access, the local libraries in Gulfport, Biloxi, Ocean Springs, D'Iberville, Harrison County and Jackson County provide terminals with access. A Spanish translation of this document will also be made available at the CTA offices and on the CTA website.

**Table 2: Checklist of LEP Written Language Assistance Used by CTA (2009)**

Items currently in use, as well as those proposed for implementation in next Fiscal Year

Measure	Provided by CTA as of May 2009	Date of Application	Languages Available
<b>Written/Read Information</b>			
<u>System Maps and Timetables</u>			
Fare Payment Instructions	YES	10/2008 Update	<i>English to Spanish</i>
“How to Ride” Information	YES	10/2008 Update	<i>English to Spanish</i>
System Maps/Timetables <sup>4</sup>	YES	10/2008 Update	<i>English to Spanish</i>
<u>General Announcements</u>			
Safety and Security	YES	Ongoing	<i>English to Spanish</i>
Service Changes	YES	Ongoing	<i>English to Spanish</i>
Notices about Events	YES	Ongoing	<i>English to Spanish</i>
Complaint/Commendations	NO	<i>Proposed by 2010</i>	<i>English to Spanish</i>
Translated information on Website	NO	<i>Proposed by 2010</i>	<i>English to Spanish</i>
Ticket Vending w/Multilingual Functions	NO	<i>Proposed by 2010</i>	<i>English to Spanish</i>
<b>Oral Language Assistance</b>			
Permanent, full-time staff interpreters	YES	As of 2006	<i>English to Spanish</i>
Using community volunteers to interpret information	YES	As of 2008	<i>English to Vietnamese</i>
Using bilingual staff to interpret information on an “as needed” basis	YES	As of 2006	<i>English to Spanish</i>
<b>Community Outreach</b>			
Translated TV or Radio advertisements	YES	As of 2006	<i>English to Spanish</i>
Translated Newspaper advertisements	YES	As of 2006	<i>English to Spanish</i>
Advertisements in ethnic media	YES	As of 2006	<i>English to Spanish</i>

<sup>4</sup> Posted at Terminals in Gulfport, Biloxi and Edgewater Mall, Biloxi, MS.

**Table 3: Monitoring Checklist, LEP Populations in CTA Service Area**  
 For use by CTA during Route/Service Evaluation Program, For Planning Purposes Only

Location	Measure
<u>Transit Centers</u> – locations on the CTA system where transfers would occur between 2 or more CTA Fixed-routes or from CTA Demand-Response services to Fixed-Route	Have translated instructions on how to make fare payments been made available?
	Have translated schedules, route maps, or information on how to use the system been made available?
	Has the information been placed in a visible location?
	Can a person who speaks limited English or another language receive assistance from CTA staff when asking for directions? How is this assistance provided?
<u>CTA Revenue Vehicles</u> – All buses which are used in revenue service on the fixed-route and demand-response systems	Have translated instructions on how to make fare payments been made available?
	Is the same information included in existing schedules and route books?
	Has the information been placed in a visible location on all vehicles?
<u>Customer Service</u> – All interactions with the public by CTA transit service personnel (Administrative staff, Drivers) regarding services provided	How many customer service calls come in from an individual who 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?
<u>Community Outreach</u> – All interactions with the public by CTA transit service personnel (Administrative staff, Drivers) regarding updates/changes in services and programs	Have translators been requested or made 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 in languages other than English?
	Are meeting notices, press releases, and public service announcements requested to be translated into languages other than English?