



Tri-Valley
Opportunity Council, Inc.
Transportation Programs

**Language Assistance Plan
for
Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, INC.**

**Effective:
March 31, 2014**

Purpose

The purpose of this Language Assistance Plan (hereinafter "plan") is to meet Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) requirements to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. As a subrecipient of FTA funds, this transit system is pledged to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to its transit services for persons who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. The FTA refers to these persons as Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons.

The completion of this plan for persons with Limited English Proficiency conforms to the requirements of the FTA Circular 4702.1B Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients.

The U.S. DOT's FTA Office of Civil Rights' publication "Implementing the Department of Transportation's Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient Persons – A Handbook for Public Transportation Providers," dated April 13, 2007, was used in the preparation of this plan.

The plan for Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. contains:

- A. A needs assessment based on the four-factor analysis
- B. Language assistance measures
- C. A staff training plan
- D. Methods for notifying LEP persons about available language assistance
- E. Methods for monitoring, evaluating and updating the plan

A. LEP Needs Assessment – the Four-Factor Analysis

Factor 1. The number or proportion of LEP persons in Tri-Valley's service area who may be served or are likely to encounter a transit program, activity, or service.

Tri-Valley's Transportation Department assessed the following information (as checked) about LEP persons to determine the number or proportion of LEP persons who might use or want to use our transit services:

- 2010 US Census data/American Community Survey data
- Survey results
- Local school district data
- Locally Coordinated Human Services Plan

- Other Human Services data
- Area/Metropolitan Planning Organizations/Regional Development Commission data
- Information from local organizations (religious, legal, social service, etc.) about LEP persons in Tri-Valley's Transportation Department service area
- Reports from drivers, dispatchers and others about contact with LEP persons
- Other information: Describe: _____

According to data provided by Mn/DOT from the 2010 American Community Survey 2007-2011 Five-Year estimate:

- 1) The total number of LEP persons in our service area is 1211.
- 2) The total eligible population in our service area is 66048.
- 3) The proportion of LEP persons to the total eligible service population is 2%.

Tri-Valley has also assessed the Primary Home Language Counts data for the 7-county service area of the Tri-Valley Heartland Express. This information was gathered by the Minnesota Public School System. Families, who speak languages other than English, but do not have children in the public school system was not included in this data. Bus drivers were also interviewed about riders who ride the public transit system. There are a number of students attending college at the University of Minnesota-Crookston Campus and the Northland Community and Technical College in Thief River Falls utilizing English as a Second Language Program.

Factor 2. The frequency with which LEP persons come in contact with Tri-Valley's Transportation programs, activities, or services.

Within the Tri-Valley Heartland Express service area, the predominant second language is Spanish. Many riders utilize the transit service to go to work, attend training, and access goods/services within their home community as well as going to larger hub communities for more specialized services. Tri-Valley currently provides many resources printed in Spanish. The agency has bi-lingual staff available to translate materials in Spanish. To date, minimal transportation materials have been translated in Spanish. Plans are in the process of translating the rider's guide, and ensuring all buses are equipped with language cards and are readily available for drivers and/or passengers to access if they are unable to speak English.

Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. has a rich history of working with many clients who speak English as their second language. Many programs are already using the Department of Human Services Language Line, translators (both agency staff and community members), and have actively collaborated with other agencies to improve the accessibility of services to community members who speak English as their second language.

The conclusions drawn from examining this information about LEP persons seeking transit services are; Tri-Valley Heartland Express needs to make language cards readily available for all passengers and needs to have printed materials available in Spanish. Tri-Valley is seeing an increase in LEP person's in the service area who may want to access public transportation services.

Factor 3 . The nature and importance of programs, activities, or services provided to the LEP population.

Tri-Valley's Transportation Department considers transit to be an important and essential service for many people living in the service area. Many LEP persons use our transit service to travel to human services, government centers, shopping centers, medical facilities, education services and employment opportunities.

Annually Tri-Valley Heartland Express provides close to 100,000 rides to passengers within seven counties. These rides provide transportation options for passengers to receive goods and services needed to remain in their current community. Many of these destinations are to medical facilities, higher education services and employment options. Providing reliable and affordable transportation is the ultimate goal of Tri-Valley Heartland Express.

Minnesota's population is rapidly changing and growing. Many recent arrivals are new Americans who will face linguistic and cultural barriers as they work to become self-sufficient. In the mid-1990s the Minnesota Department of Human Services (MN DHS) began a series of initiatives to improve access to services for those with limited English proficiency. The initiatives resulted in Limited English Proficient (LEP) plans for DHS and each county. These plans, developed in response to state and county human services' legal obligation to provide language assistance, outline approaches and services to provide meaningful access for all program applicants and recipients to programs and services. As a grantee of MN DHS, Tri-Valley has developed LEP Plans for programs providing DHS services to residents living within the service area with limited English proficiency.

The Tri-Valley Transportation Department considers transit to be an important and essential service for many people living in our service area. This public service is available to all residents, no matter their gender, race, age, religion, etc. The Tri-Valley Transportation Department not only provides public transit (dial a ride system), but also includes commuter routes to transport individuals to work and/or training, a travel training program to assist new riders in using transit services, and a volunteer driver program to meet more specific transit needs not achievable through public transit. These services are available to best meet the needs of the ever changing population within the service area in northwest Minnesota.

Factor 4. The resources available to Tri-Valley's Transportation Department and the overall cost to provide language assistance.

The Tri-Valley Transportation Department's current budget for marketing to or communicating with LEP persons in their language about transit services that are available to them is \$1,500. This may include funding for staff training, translation services, brochures, flyers, posters, newspaper ads, radio ads, website, etc.

In addition to financial resources and bilingual agency staff to address the language needs of LEP persons, the Transportation Department also has access to resources from other mainstream community resources that are available to assist in effective communications with LEP community members.

These resources include:

- The Minnesota Department of Human Services Language Line.
- The Language Department at the University of North Dakota, located in Grand Forks, ND.
- Professional translators who work with specific LEP community members
- Staff available at Polk County Social Services to assist with LEP community members.

B. Language Assistance Measures

Based on the four-factor analysis in Part A above, which should reflect your past experience and efforts to reach LEP persons, describe the efforts your transit system will take in 2014 to provide meaningful access to LEP persons who are eligible for your transit services.

There are several language assistance measures that are available to Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. These include: Check off any items below that are relevant and provide a short narrative to explain your future efforts.

- Translation of key documents in the following language(s): Spanish, Russian
- Arranging for availability of oral translators
- Communication with LEP persons' groups about transit services
- Posting notices in appropriate languages informing LEP persons of available services
- Other:

C. Staff Training

To ensure effective implementation of this plan, Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. will schedule training at orientations for new staff and for all relevant employees on an annual basis during quarterly staff meetings to review:

- the transit system's Language Assistance Plan
- demographic data about local LEP population
- printed LEP persons' materials
- how to handle verbal requests for transit service in a foreign language
- responsibility to notify transit manager about any LEP persons' unmet needs

Tri-Valley Transportation staff has received training on the Cultures of Understanding Poverty. This training will continue to be provided to new employees. Cultural awareness trainings have occurred during quarterly staff trainings. This type of training will continue to be a part of the Transit staff training curriculum.

D. Notice to LEP Persons about Available Language Assistance

Tri-Valley's Transportation Department plans to notify LEP persons in their own language about the language assistance available to them without cost by using the following methods:

- signs on buses or at bus stops
- brochures

- posters
- sending information to local organizations that work with LEP persons
- telephone messages
- local ads (newspaper , radio, TV)
- website notices
- information tables at local events, grocery stores, pharmacies, and churches
- Other: Describe: _____

E. Annual Monitoring, Evaluating and Updating Plan

Tri-Valley’s Transportation Department will review this plan during its annual review with its Mn/DOT transit project manager by:

- assessing its effectiveness (e.g., comparing numbers of LEP persons served by year, number of requests for language assistance received during the year),
- assessing the sufficiency of staff training and budget for language assistance,
- reviewing current sources for assistance to ensure continuing availability, and
- reviewing any complaints from LEP persons or about their needs that were received during the past year.

This plan will be reviewed by the Tri-Valley Transportation Department annually. Revisions of this plan will be approved by Cynthia Pic (Transportation Programs Director) or Jason Carlson (CEO) and dated.

F. Dissemination of Plan

This Language Assistance Plan is available on our website at www.tvoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014-Language-Assistance-PlanTri-Valley-Opportunity-Council.pdf

This plan is also available at no cost in English upon request by telephone, fax, and mail or in person.

If requested to be provided in another language and it is feasible to have it translated, information will be provided at no cost to the requester.

G. Contact Information

Questions or comments about this plan may be submitted to:

Cynthia Pic	1-800-584-7020
Transportation Programs Director	1-218-281-7020
102 North Broadway, Box 607 Crookston,	cpic@tvoc.org
MN 56716	