



**LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY PLAN
(Part of MTS'S Title VI Program)
Monroe Transit System**

This document serves as the plan for Monroe Transit System (MTS) to provide Services to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166: Improving Access to Service for Persons with Limited English Proficiency. The transit system has developed this Limited English Proficiency Plan to help identify reasonable steps to provide language assistance for LEP persons seeking access to MTS services. This plan details procedures on how to identify a person who may need language assistance, the ways in which language assistance may be provided, training staff, providing notice to the LEP person, and information for future updates.

FOUR FACTOR ANALYSES

In developing the LEP plan, MTS undertook the U.S. Department of Transportation policy guidance to utilize the four factors LEP analysis for assessing language needs and determining what steps should be taken to ensure access for LEP persons. The four factors include: 1) number of LEP individuals in the service area, 2) frequency of contact with LEP individuals, 3) importance of the program, and 4) resources available and costs.

- 1) *The number of proportion of LEP persons eligible in the service area who may be served or likely to encounter a transit program, activity, or service:* According to Census 2020 data, approximately 1,691 or 3.57% of Monroe's population speaks a language other than English at home. Of that population, no individuals have been identified as speaks English 'not at all'. The MTS service area is 1.15% Hispanic and has a total minority population of 61.44%. The following tables provide racial makeup and language spoken at home for the MTS area.

Race and Hispanic or Latino

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Total Population	47,702	100
White	14,398	30.18
Black or African American	30,166	62.24
American Indian and Alaska Native	84	0.18
Asian	835	1.75
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	10	0.02
Some other races	1,224	2.56
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	988	2.07

Source: U.S. census Bureau, Census 2020

Language Spoken at Home

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Population 5 years and over	44,791	92.2
English Only	43,095	96.9
Language other than English	1,696	3.1
Speak English less than "very well."	555	1.2
Spanish	859	1.9
Speak English less than "very well	216	25.1
Asian and Pacific Island languages	312	0.5
Speak English less than "very well."	108	34.6
Other Indo-European languages	282	0.6
Speak English less than "very well	52	18.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2020

- 2) The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with an MTS program, activity, or service: MTS assesses the frequency at which staff and operators have or could possibly have contact with LEP persons. This includes documenting phone inquiries, requests for translated documents, and surveying drivers. To date, there has not been any request for assistance from LEP individuals or requests for translated documents. Staff and drivers have had very little to no contact with LEP individuals. Currently, the frequency of contact with LEP persons associated with local public transportation services has not transpired at this juncture. There is no large geographic concentration of any one type of LEP individuals in the transit service area either. MTS has identified one social, service, professional, or leadership organization that focuses on outreach or membership of LEP individuals. This is a new contact that will be continued.

- 3) *The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the transit system to the community:* Public transportation can be vital to many people's lives, especially those with no other means of transportation. MTS provides that role in Monroe with ten fixed routes of buses and 4 ADA paratransit vans. ADA services are operated throughout the City of Monroe on a demand-response basis. MTS bus service is available six days a week with no Sunday service. Hours of operation are from 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Although the transit system does provide service to area hospitals, delay of access would not have life-threatening implications on LEP individuals, especially compared to the services provided by fire, police, and other emergency services.

It is also believed that any delay in access to information provided by MTS would not have severe implications for an LEP individual.

- 4) The resources available to MTS and the overall cost: Funds available for MTS for LEP services would be derived entirely from existing operating budgets and compete with other operational requirements annually. It is anticipated that the cost of providing transit services will continue to grow, with the significant potential for cost increases in the foreseeable future due to national trends, such as insurance and fuel costs. No bilingual staff has been identified; however, oral interpreter and translation services have been established as needed. MTS has also taken inventory of organizations the transit system could partner with for outreach and translation efforts.

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE MEASURES

MTS's LEP program was established after a review of the four factors in the DOT LEP Guidance. As a result of this analysis, the transit systems LEP process was based on the limited frequency of contact with different types of languages and the low percentage of identified LEP populations. As a public transportation agency serving very few LEP persons, the transit system does not maintain an extensive LEP plan. However, it has taken reasonable steps to provide access to programs and activities for LEP persons. Considering the relatively small scale of the MTS area, the small number of LEP individuals in the service area, and the limited financial resources, it is necessary to limit language aid to the most basic and cost-effective services. Language assistance measures currently available to MTS customers include:

- 1) Use of "I Speak Cards" by transit operators and staff to identify LEP individuals who need language assistance.
- 2) Several local resources are available and maintained on file to assist individuals with limited English proficiency. These include the Monroe Police Department, colleges, and universities that provide foreign language curriculums that will provide translation services with advanced notice. The University of Louisiana at Monroe is a major

university that has a Spanish language program. Its faculty is available for help in communication with Spanish speakers.

- 3) However, local services can be a valuable resource; a reasonable time delay can be expected in contacting the appropriate translator. For immediate assistance, Monroe Transit has downloaded “Speak & Translate”; the smartphone and tablet app designed to translate between languages. In addition, if there is an immediate need for more in-depth translation services, MTS has a relationship with Language Line Services to provide 24/7 telephone support. All pertinent transit employees will be trained to proficiency.

Spoken language interpreters will be provided at no cost to transit riders who are “disabled in communication” when requested or the need becomes apparent.

STAFF TRAINING

It is essential that staff members, especially those having contact with the public, know their obligation to provide meaningful access to information and services for LEP persons. Transit staff will be provided with the LEP Plan and trained on procedures and protocols to follow. This information will also be part of the staff orientation process for new hires. Training topics include:

- 1) Understanding Title VI and LEP responsibilities
- 2) Use of the “Speak & Translate” app and “I Speak Cards”
- 3) How to access and use the oral interpretation services
- 4) Documentation of language assistance requests.

PROVIDING NOTICE TO LEP PERSONS

To advise the public on their rights under Title VI and to provide notice to LEP persons that language assistance measures are available, the following options are available and will be incorporated, as appropriate:

- 1) Notices indicating that language assistance is available are posted at the Administration Facility and the Downtown Terminal.
- 2) Stating in documents and outreach materials that language services are available.
- 3) Working with community-based organizations and other Stakeholders to inform LEP individuals of available services.
- 4) Providing statements in public notices that services are available for persons requiring special accommodations for disabilities or language assistance.

MONITORING AND UPDATING THE LEP PLAN

This plan is designed to be flexible and can be easily updated. At a minimum, MTS will follow the Title VI Program update schedule to review the LEP process. Each update should examine all plan components, including:

- 1) How many LEP persons have been encountered?
- 2) What is the current LEP population in the service area?
- 3) Are the existing language assistance measures meeting the current needs?
- 4) Have available resources, such as technology, changed?
- 5) Were any complaints received?

DISSEMINATION OF THE LEP PLAN

MTS will post the LEP Plan on the transit page www.mtsbus.org. Copies of the plan will be provided to any person or agency requesting a copy, and LEP persons may obtain copies/translations of the plan upon request. Any questions or comments regarding this plan should be directed to MTS staff at 318-329-2506 or Monroe Transit System's Title VI Coordinator at 318-329-3230.