



Language Access Plan

November 2015 (superseding January 2009)

A. Background

In July 2008, Mayor Michael Bloomberg promulgated Executive Order No. 120: “Citywide Policy on Language Access to Ensure the Effective Delivery of City Services.” Among other things, the Executive Order mandated that each agency develop and implement a language access policy and implementation plan by January 1, 2009.

The New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) issued its initial Language Access Plan in January 2009 and that Plan has continued to provide the framework by which DOT provides meaningful access for New York City’s Limited English Proficiency (LEP) customers. DOT has periodically reviewed its Plan and, when necessary, has considered modifications.

Mayor Bill de Blasio has, since the start of his Administration in 2014, emphasized the importance of serving all communities in the City and has called upon all agencies to review their Language Access Plans and policies to ensure that they living up to this mandate. As a result of this review, DOT promulgates this Plan, which reflects information current as of November 2015.

B. Agency Mission

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/about.shtml>

C. Vision Zero

Additionally, DOT is a lead agency in Mayor Bill de Blasio's Vision Zero initiative, the City's foundation for ending traffic deaths and injuries on our streets. As part of this initiative, DOT has been charged with, among other things, the delivery of a critical message to all New Yorkers, whether English-speaking or the LEP community.

D. Agency Language Access Goals

DOT's language access goal is to provide meaningful access for our LEP customers to DOT services, information and materials.

We will continue to judge the effectiveness of our efforts by tracking, as best as possible, such metrics as (i) the number of documents translated through the efforts of DOT's Language Access Unit (LAU), (ii) DOT literature distributed in languages other than English, (iii) interpretations requested, (iv) the number of staff trained or re-trained in language access resources, and (v) visits to DOT's website to information provided in languages other than English. Additionally, we will track instances, if any, where any customer believes we have not lived up to this commitment. Lastly, we will take it as a measure of success if DOT continues to do well in periodic governmental reviews which audit our compliance with language access rules and regulations, such as the Federal Transit Administration's Triennial Review and the yearly "Language Access Secret Shopper" survey conducted by the Mayor's Office of Operations, in conjunction with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA).

DOT will continue to consider whether other metrics can be added to those already measured in order to capture additional valuable information.

DOT will continue to review this overall Plan, at least annually, and consider whether this overall Plan should be modified to reflect new realities (for example, a change in most popular languages of our customers, or new "best practices", technologies, or new mandates).

E. Limited English Population Needs Assessment

1. Languages covered

The LAU will continue to endeavor to translate all documents deemed “essential” (see, Section F.2) into the Top Six languages, as required by Executive Order No. 120 (Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Haitian Creole, Korean and Italian) Further, based on current statistics generated by the U.S Census Bureau, LAU will also strive to translate essential documents into Bengali, Polish and Arabic, as well.

DOT will provide interpretation services in all available languages, including (but not limited to) Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean and Italian, through the interpretation and translation vendor with whom DOT has contracted, Language Line.

2. DOJ 4-Factor Analysis

To properly assess LEP language access needs and to satisfy all compliance standards set forth in Executive Order 120, the Department is guided by the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) 4-Factor Analysis.

a. Factor 1 – LEP population served or encountered

The most common languages spoken and read by approximately 1.8 million LEP persons in New York City are:

Language	Percent
Spanish	49.3
Chinese	17.1
Russian	6.4
French Creole	3.0
Bengali	2.5
Korean	2.5
Italian	1.5
Polish	1.4
Arabic	1.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey – Public Use Microdata Sample; Population Division – New York City Department of Planning.

b. Factor 2 – Frequency of contact with LEP customers

In addition to raw population data provided by the census, DOT's LAU will be guided in its decisions with respect to language access services by its measurable contact with both the community-at-large and the LEP community when providing services in previous years.

Critical metrics include:

In Calendar Year 2014 (CY14), DOT's Public Service Centers and Permit Office (identified in Section F.1.c) were visited in person by nearly 30,000 individuals.

In CY14, DOT staff made over 1,000 phone calls on behalf of its LEP customers for interpretation in 23 different languages, primarily Spanish, Russian, and Chinese (see Section F.1).

In CY14, approximately 40 DOT documents in languages other than English were available through "311." In CY14, over 400 callers requested one of these documents. These requests resulted in the distribution of approximately 2,700 DOT documents in a language other than English, primarily in Spanish and Chinese.

Since the promulgation of DOT's first Language Access Plan, DOT's LAU has translated approximately 266 items (often into multiple languages), primarily in Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Korean, Haitian-Creole, Italian, Bengali, and Polish.

In CY14, over 7,000 individuals accessed the Interactive Voice Response system operated by DOT's Parking Permit/Customer Service Unit in a language other than English (see, Section F.4), specifically, Spanish, Russian and Chinese.

c. Factor 3 – The nature and importance of the program, activity or service

DOT provides critical services to the public (as described in Section B: Agency Mission, above). Many of those services result from concerns, questions or inquiries made by members of the public. The public,

including the LEP population, is able to communicate these concerns, comments, and questions through “Contact” links and webforms on the DOT’s webpage. These links and associated drop-down menus appear in English, the top six languages, and Polish and Bengali. Additionally, comments entered onto a webform from the public in a foreign language are translated through the cooperative efforts of DOT’s Commissioner’s Correspondence Unit and LAU.

Based on requests for information and materials, and requests for interpretations, the public-at-large, as well as the LEP community, turn to DOT very often for information about alternate-side-of-the-street parking regulations, the Staten Island Ferry schedule, and information and applications for parking permits for people with disabilities. Consequently, much attention is paid to these programs.

Notwithstanding the frequency with which the public approaches DOT for information and materials, DOT is also keenly aware that its efforts at furthering other critical missions and initiatives – most notably, Mayor de Blasio’s Vision Zero initiative – requires extensive outreach, which, in turn, requires effective communication with communities, including, very often, LEP communities. Consequently, while DOT’s LAU has always worked closely with the Borough Commissioners and planners in their outreach efforts, the LAU is now partnering even more closely with those Borough Commissioners and planners, as well as DOT’s Graphic Unit, in DOT’s efforts to provide information on the Vision Zero initiative, in general, and on specific street improvement projects.

d. Factor 4 – Resources available to your agency

DOT continues to demonstrate its willingness to provide the resources needed to ensure meaningful language access by staffing a robust LAU, as described in Section E, below.

Additionally, as discussed more fully in Section I, below, DOT’s LAU partners with various DOT units – such as External Affairs, Graphics and Legal – to ensure that DOT continues to meet its obligations under Executive Order No. 120.

Lastly, as also discussed more fully in Section I, DOT, LAU has, over the years, developed relationships with language access units at other City agencies, as well as the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, to supplement its own language access efforts.

F. Implementation Logistics

DOT continues to demonstrate its commitment to language access by maintaining a robust LAU, currently staffed by a Director, Deputy Director, Associate Staff Analysts, and a Community Associate. The LAU also currently has a Graphic Artist on staff to prepare materials such as signage, online forms, training tools, fact sheets and desk aids for front-line staff. Additionally, the LAU has historically partnered with Hunter College's Language Translation Program to obtain the services of college interns whose knowledge and skill sets are directly aligned with the functions and responsibilities of DOT's LAU. (The LAU also works closely with DOT's Graphic Unit responsible for many meeting notice flyers that are translated and widely distributed as part of DOT's community outreach efforts.)

DOT's Director of Language Access, who oversees the daily operation of the LAU, is Eleanor DiPalma, Ph.D. (212-839-7108). DOT's Language Access Coordinator is Senior Advisor Mitchell J. Paluszek (212-839-6414); this position reports to DOT's First Deputy Commissioner.

Soon after the promulgation of Executive Order No. 120, LAU proposed the design and implementation of a user-friendly online agency-wide translation-request portal for easy access by key operational units preparing materials for LEP communities. Based on LAU's proposal, DOT IT and Telecom created, designed, and launched the online database - the Language Access Database (or LAD) in 2009. Key DOT Divisions and Units, such as Executive, Traffic Planning, DOT Outreach, DOT Graphics, Commercial Bicycle Unit, Parking and Permits, have been trained in how to use LAD to make and track translation requests. Importantly, LAD provides a repository for all materials (emails, drafts, graphics) generated during the course of a translation, as well as having the ability to generate a variety of reports to track completed translations and translations in-progress.

LAU and IT and Telecom have collaborated on further enhancements and updates to LAD that incorporate the tracking and storing of other Language Access data such as interpretation services data, language access training data as well as language access tools and resources.

G. Provision of Language Access Services

1. Interpretation Services

DOT provides, and will continue to provide, interpretation services over the phone through a contract with Language Line. Interpretation services are available in the top six languages, as well as in any one of the more than 150 languages supported by Language Line.

Interpretation services are provided at a variety of DOT walk-in offices, and can be accessed by inspectors in the field and at virtually all DOT offices.

DOT traditionally has identified its Public Service Centers as the following Permit Management Offices, Highway Inspection and Quality Assurance (“HIQA”) Offices, and the Parking Permits and Customer Service Office:

- Manhattan Permit Management Office
- Manhattan HIQA Office
- Brooklyn Permit Management Office/HIQA Office
- Bronx Permit Management Office/HIQA Office
- Queens Permit Management Office
- Queens HIQA Office
- Staten Island Permit Management Office
- Staten Island HIQA Office
- Parking Permits and Customer Service

DOT’s Commercial Bicycle Unit (CBU) inspects businesses which provide delivery services – most notably “take-out” food deliveries – by bicycle. Staff in this unit are equipped with tablet devices on which is display, among other things, language identification materials in more than 90 languages.

In addition to staff who deal with the public as part of their unit's core mission (for example, the staff of public service centers), other DOT offices routinely access interpretation services, such as the agency's Office of Equal Employment Opportunity.

In 2014, DOT launched its first electronic sign board at its 55 Water Street Public Service Center, on which is periodically displayed the statement "Free Interpretation Services Available." The LAU will continue to consider other locations where, if resources are available, electronic sign board might prove useful in DOT's efforts to serve the LEP population.

The LAU trains, and will continue to train, DOT employees who have in-person contact with customers on how to become familiar with identifying the top six spoken languages in NYC. For example, if a DOT employee is not familiar with the LEP customer's primary language, he or she is trained to present the Language Identification ("ID") Card, to the LEP customer (so the customer's primary language can be identified). The information on the Card is also presented on a large poster at each Public Service Center, and informs LEP customers that interpretation services are available at no cost to the customer. If the LEP customer's language is not indicated on the Language ID Card, DOT employees have been trained to seek assistance from a representative of Language Line.

DOT continues to provide in-person interpretation services when requested by Borough Commissioners, other senior staff, and Community Outreach staff for critical community events.

2. Translation Services

DOT's LAU provides, and will continue to provide, translation services through Language Line. Additionally, DOT will, for quality assurance purposes, continue to use a secondary translation service on important translation projects. DOT will also, when appropriate, continue to use the services of "Language Bank Volunteers." (LAU, in collaboration with DOT's Office of Equal Employment Opportunity, utilizes, recruits and acknowledges, and reports on the status of the language services provided by the Citywide Language Volunteer Bank.)

DOT will continue to analyze its language access metrics to ensure that it meets the mandate of Executive Order No. 120 to translate essential documents; that is, “those documents most commonly distributed to the public that contain or elicit important and necessary information regarding the provision of basic City service.”

At present, DOT has identified 32 documents as “essential documents.” The LAU, however, continually analyzes important metrics with respect to literature distribution to provide on-going guidance as to what additional documents might meet the definition of “essential documents.” Conversely, the LAU remains mindful that documents currently identified as “essential” may no longer meet the criteria of “essential” as defined in Executive Order No. 120. (It bears noting, however, that, regardless of whether a document meets the definition of “essential,” the LAU will continue to provide translations in response to virtually any reasonable request by a DOT division. As of the close of 2014, DOT’s LAU had, since the inception of the Language Access Program, translated over 250 documents into multiple languages, resulting in over 700 translations.)

Additionally, LAU continues to translate content for documents, flyers (for example, “What’s Happening Here”), signage, outreach materials and desk aides for customer service frontline staff as well as for building security guards who assist and orient LEP visitors to DOT public service centers.

The increased frequency with which the LAU is asked to provide translations for short term projects – for example, “What’s Happening Here” posters and posters for community meetings at which DOT will be presenting materials and information – has given rise to a longer term initiative to develop a style guide and glossary and to partner even more closely with other DOT units (such as DOT Press Office, Traffic Planning Project Managers, Safety Education, Graphics and various community outreach units) to speed the process to produce visually attractive informational material to provide consistent messaging in the most popular languages in a community.

3. Signage

After the promulgation of Executive Order No. 120 and the implementation of DOT's Language Access Plan, DOT embarked on a program to ensure that signage and information regarding the availability of translation services were placed at all public service centers (see, Section F.1, above) and the Staten Island Ferry terminals. Those signs and that information remain in place. DOT will continue to ensure that all proper signage is in place and remains in good condition.

Moreover, the LAU will continue to periodically review technological developments in message delivery, such as advances in electronic message boards and will share any interesting new developments with our Division of Human Resources and Facilities Management, public service centers and Staten Island Ferry division.

4. Other Services

DOT has implemented an "Interactive Voice Response (IVR)" system for callers to its Permits and Customer Service Unit, the DOT unit responsible for processing parking permits for persons with disabilities. The IVR is available in Spanish, Russian and Chinese, in addition to English. (See, Section D.2.b, above.)

5. Outreach and public awareness

In addition to prominently featuring the Language Access Plan on the "About DOT" page at nyc.gov/dot, DOT's website contains numerous links to information in languages other than English. These links bring website visitors to a variety of documents, forms, applications, and information in languages other than English. Moreover, the website's "Contact" pages – for example, Contact the Commissioner, the Borough Commissioners, and the Accessibility Coordinator pages – provide user-friendly drop-down options in the top six languages, as well as in Arabic and Polish. DOT will continue to analyze our language access metrics to determine whether new translations should be provided.

DOT's six Borough Commissioners (Manhattan has a Lower Manhattan BC and Manhattan BC) are aware that LAU can provide in-person translation services for community meetings where a large LEP population is expected to attend.

H. Training

DOT's LAU will continue to ensure that periodic training – both initial and refresher training – is provided to DOT staff who routinely interface with members of the public on accessing interpretation services. This training will include information on how to identify an LEP customer's language, how to access Language Line's interpretation services, and how to use such interpretation equipment, such as dual hand- set phones.

Additionally, LAU will continue to provide training to DOT staff on the availability of translation and transcription services for content in a variety of forms including flyers, booklets, postcards, maps, resource guides, video, audio electronic signs, informational posters, flyers and brochures. This training contains, and will continue to contain, a strong emphasis on writing documents in "plain English."

I. Record-keeping and Evaluation

DOT understands that a key component to providing meaningful language access is gathering and analyzing information upon which informed decisions can be made. Executive Order No. 120's very definition of "essential document" provides that such documents are "those documents most commonly distributed to the public that contain or elicit important and necessary information regarding the provision of basic City service." Consequently, DOT will continue to gather information and will, moreover, continually consider new metrics to gather and analyze.

J. Resource Analysis and Planning

DOT's LAU staff oversees all of the agency's efforts to provide meaningful language access; however, these efforts are supported agency-wide.

The LAU, for example, works very closely with DOT's Executive Division: (Borough Commissioners, Press and Graphics) as well as Outreach teams in DOT's Traffic Planning Divisions to alert targeted communities that include LEP populations about meetings and projects in their neighborhoods.

The LAU works closely with the Commissioner's Correspondence Unit and Borough Commissioners to ensure that correspondence – whether letters, emails or completed “webforms” – which is received in a language other than English is given as swift attention as reasonably possible and that a response in the native language of the submitter is provided promptly.

The LAU works closely with DOT's Legal Division to ensure compliance to Executive Order 120 and on matters pertaining to FTA regulations with respect to Title VI requirements and agency services for LEPs.

In addition to working closely with other DOT divisions, DOT's LAU will continue to partner with language access units in other City agencies to learn and share valuable information regarding such things as “best practices.”

The LAU will continue to tap into the resources of the Citywide Volunteer Language Bank and will work in any way requested by the DOT Office of Equal Employment Opportunity to make the program work even better for DOT and our sister City agencies.

Similarly, DOT's LAU will continue to take advantage of the resources and training provided by the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.