

**AFA Subcommittee on Transit Information for Limited English Speakers  
Barriers and Recommendations from the November 30, 2006 Meeting  
Draft  
January 24, 2007**

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- I. What are the continuing barriers limited-English speakers face in using the bus and Metrorail system?
- a) Limited English speakers are unaware of bus and Metrorail services and aren't sure how to use the system because educational materials for how to use transit are neither widely available nor available in a variety of languages. Limited English speakers have no way of knowing that the information they need is available in their language even when it IS available.
  - b) Bus stops and rail stations do not feel safe to many limited English speakers because of the lack of lighting, the parking lot facilities, and the lack of information or customer- friendly help at the station.
  - c) Metro and local transit agencies do not provide enough information in useful formats (i.e. bus schedules, fare card machines, phone number to call for information, how to file a complaint). Information needs to be more visually based (pictures and symbols)
  - d) Educational materials for how to use Metrorail and Metrobus are not widely available nor are the materials available in a variety of languages. LEP individuals have no way of knowing that the information they need is available in their language even when it IS available.
  - e) Front-line transit employees many times lack customer service skills and cultural sensitivity (station managers, bus drivers, Metro transit police)
  - f) Metro lacks effective communication and coordination between its different departments and lacks an emphasis on Limited English Proficiency (LEP) needs (for example, Metro does not have a language access plan yet and no one department or person is charged with responding to LEP needs).
  - g) WMATA's fare structure and transfer policy is confusing and the information is not easily understandable.
  - h) Metrorail stations have very little information outside the stations, such as where the train goes and when the next train is coming.



## II. General Recommendations

### Short-Term Recommendations

WMATA and local transit agencies should:

- a) Work with non-governmental organizations (NGO's) to educate the limited English speaking community about access to services. These NGOs can outreach to this community (LEP) and facilitate the meetings in which WMATA can disseminate this information;
- b) Establish a **Hot Spots** program, targeting Limited English information and services at three specific locations:
  - a. Columbia Heights in the District of Columbia;
  - b. Langley Park in Maryland; and
  - c. Bailey's Crossroads in Virginia.
- c) Have one point of contact for LEP services and information for customers, local governments and for community organizations;
- d) Post instructional videos online and widely distribute the video to community- and faith-based organizations;
- e) Ensure that MetroAccess users who don't speak English can get information about the service, apply, and speak with reservationists; and

### Long-Term Recommendations

WMATA and local transit agencies should:

- f) Focus on providing permanent, not periodic, materials and efforts to improve language access. Implementation of LEP recommendations should be timelier;
- g) Install video kiosks at station entrances with rider training in multiple languages; the kiosks could show the instructional videos, provide access to the website, describe nearby bus routes and transfer locations, provide interactive tools for learning all aspects of using the bus and rail systems, etc;
- h) Provide the online trip planner in languages other than English.
- i) Incorporate successful strategies from the **Hot Spots** program system-wide;
- j) Actively recruit bilingual front-line employees (station managers and bus drivers);
- k) Stress customer service and provide cultural sensitivity training to front-line employees;



- l) Bus drivers and station managers should be knowledgeable about how to navigate the bus and rail system (for example, bus drivers should be able to suggest to customers what bus to take to get to a certain location);
- m) Provide a draft of the language access plan to the AFA for review by May 2007.



### III. Hot Spot Recommendations

#### ***1. Bailey's Crossroads in Virginia***

##### **Short-Term Recommendations**

WMATA and Fairfax County should:

- a) Create and provide bus information in languages other than English and distribute it widely in Bailey's Crossroads;
- b) Examine where current transit information is distributed, and expand or change the distribution strategy as needed;
- c) Distribute materials in different languages to community-based and faith-based organizations enabling these organizations to provide training on the bus and rail system. (i.e. Skills source center, Families Resource Center, Boat People SOS, Business Development Assistance Group, Tenants and Workers United, etc...);
- d) Provide a brochure or other information clarifying how bus and rail transfers at the East and West Falls Church Metro stations. Many limited-English speakers pay more than they should because they don't understand transfer policies;
- e) Use language/ethnic media (print, radio, TV) as education/outreach tools to publicize the availability of transit services and translated information;

##### **Long-Term Recommendations**

WMATA and Fairfax County should:

- f) Make an effort to hire and schedule bi-lingual employees on bus routes in Bailey's Crossroads and at the East Falls Church station, recruiting from the communities to be served;
- g) Develop a pilot map that uses symbols and/or landmarks to distinguish stations and destinations for several bus stops in the Bailey's Crossroads area. The large maps provided in bus shelters in downtown D.C. provide a good example;
- h) Install multi-media kiosks with transit information in public locations, at Fairfax County Government buildings and the Woodrow Wilson Library;
- i) Install better signage on pedestrian safety; and
- j) Add signage or announcements in Spanish and Vietnamese at bus shelters and on buses reminding riders to get a transfer and cross the street safely.



## ***2. Columbia Heights in the District of Columbia***

### **Short-Term Recommendations**

WMATA and the District of Columbia should:

- a) Provide targeted educational transit information to community based organizations, retail stores and restaurants in Columbia Heights. The information should use visual guides and symbols rather than text;
- b) Use language/ethnic media (print, radio, TV) as education/outreach tools to publicize the availability of transit services and translated information;
- c) Ensure that every bus shelter has a full time schedule for every bus line;
- d) At the Columbia Heights Metro station, all Metro-related brochures translated in Spanish should be provided and kept well-stocked. Spanish speaking station managers should be utilized whenever possible.

### **Long-Term Recommendations**

WMATA and the District of Columbia should:

- e) Hire Spanish-speaking bus drivers for routes that traverse Columbia Heights, including the 42, 50s, 70s, S-lines and H-lines;
- f) Add signage or announcements in Spanish at bus shelters and on buses in the Columbia Heights area reminding riders to get a transfer and that Spanish translators are available through the Metro information number; and
- g) Enhance southward (inbound) bus service from Columbia Heights during their afternoon rush hour around 5 PM, and service back around 10 PM.
- h) At the Columbia Heights Metro station, WMATA should:
  - a. Develop easy-to-understand instructions for at least one fare card machine. The instructions need to be easier to use for non-English speakers and include the four steps in symbols or in Spanish;
  - b. Provide more comprehensive information closer to the entrance of the station or outside of the station;
  - c. Use Spanish speaking station managers;
  - d. Install a multi-media kiosk with Metrorail and Metrobus information;
  - e. Provide information in Spanish on how to apply for senior discount fare cards without having to make a trip to the Metro Center sales office;
  - f. Better signs indicating from inside the station which exit to use to take what bus in which direction;



- g. Install welcome and thank you signage at the entrance/exit of the station in Spanish, and perhaps all major languages in DC (Amharic, Vietnamese, Korean, Traditional Chinese);
- h. Provide better visual-based information at the fare gates as to how to insert the fare cards; and
- i. Provide mirrors (to see around corners) and better lighting in the station.

### ***3. Langley Park in Maryland***

#### **Short-Term Recommendations**

WMATA and Montgomery County should:

- a) Provide better information about bus routes and transfers in multiple languages on board. The Metro information line should be advertised as having translation services;
- b) Distribute the videos on how to use the transit system to local non-profits in the Langley Park area;
- c) Try a pilot of assigning a bilingual customer service representative to ride highly-used routes and be available at high-traffic crossroads;
- d) Ensure bus drivers traversing the Langley Park area have a minimum command of the Spanish, French and Vietnamese languages. Bilingual bus drivers should be given bonuses or compensated fairly;

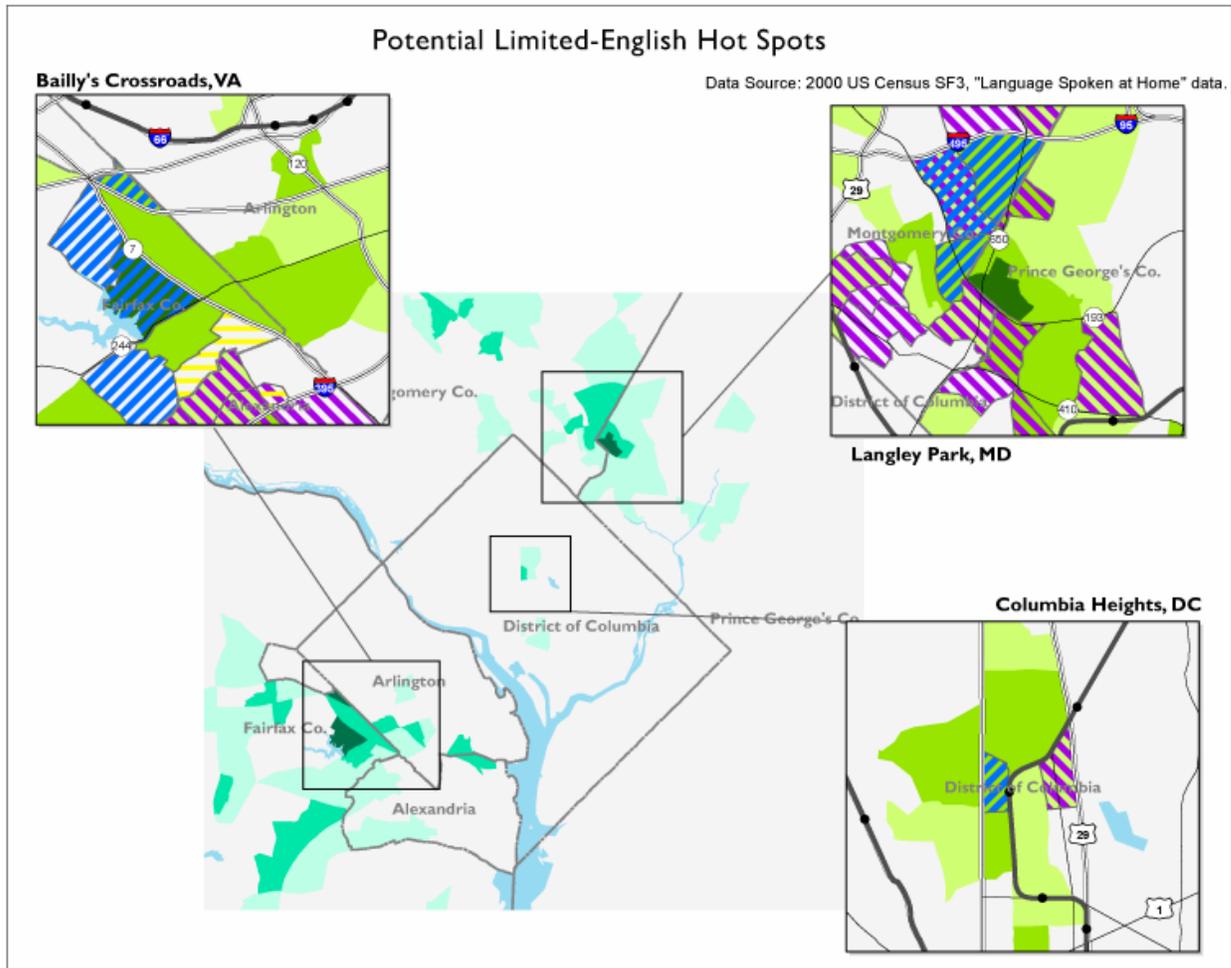
#### **Long-Term Recommendations**

WMATA and Montgomery County should:

- e) Improve bus stop signage with better information about routes, pricing, and transfers, such as the spinning poles used at bus stops in Columbia Pike;
- f) Provide focused customer service and diversity training for bus drivers on routes in the Langley Park area;
- g) Make use of local non-profits for translation services and ensuring translation accuracy. Perhaps WMATA could pay non-profits for translation services by providing fare cards;
- h) Install transportation information kiosks in 10 locations in the neighborhood, use private parking inc., gas stations, grocery stores, small immigrant businesses;
- i) Install pedestrian safety signage in symbols and multiple languages at high accident areas around Langley Park;



- j) Simplify the fare structure, transfer policy and unify communications among the different bus systems; and
- k) Ensure bus drivers announce stops on-board.



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Organizations in the “Hot Spot” Pilot Areas

Baileys Crossroads	Langley Park	Columbia Heights
<p><b>Woodrow Wilson Library</b> 6101 Knollwood Dr. Falls Church, VA 22041-1798 703-820-8774 linda.schlekaufairfaxcounty.gov http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/</p> <p><b>Boat People SOS</b> 6066 Leesburg Pike, Suite 100 Falls Church, VA 22041-2334 info@bpsos.org (703)538-2190 rcarrillo@mcsdc.org http://www.mcsdc.org/</p> <p><b>Business Development Assistance Group</b> P.O. Box 100204 Arlington, VA 22210 http://www.bdag.org/</p> <p><b>Tenants and Workers United</b> P.O. Box 2327 Alexandria, VA 22305 (703)684-5697 info@twsc.org</p>	<p><b>Prince George’s County Library Hyattsville Branch</b> 6530 Adelphi Rd. Hyattsville, MD 20782</p> <p><b>Beyond These Walls</b> membership@beyondthesewalls.org http://www.beyondthesewalls.org/</p> <p><b>CASA of Maryland</b> 734 University Blvd. E. Silver Spring, MD 20903 Tel: (301) 431-4185 info@casamd.org http://www.casademaryland.org/</p> <p><b>Catholic Community Services</b> Immigration Legal Services 7949 15th Avenue. Ste 100 Langley Park, MD 20783 (202) 772-4352 (Maria Fleitas)</p> <p><b>Catholic Community Services</b> Social Services 7949 - 15th Ave., Suite 100 Hyattsville, MD 20783 (301) 434-6453 (Sister Amaya Duralde)</p> <p><b>African Immigrant and Refugee Foundation</b> 11350 Baroque Road Silver Spring, Maryland 20901 301.593.0241 info@airfound.org</p> <p><b>Youth Empowerment and Success</b> Langley Park, MD 7411 Riggs Road, Suite 418 Hyattsville, Maryland 20783 Phone: (301) 431-3121 melba@layc-dc.org</p> <p><b>Takoma/Langley Crossroads Development Authority</b> http://www.mdhousing.org/Crossroads/</p> <p><b>Langley Park Community Center</b> 1500 Merrimac Drive Hyattsville, MD 20783 301-445-4508</p>	<p><b>DC Public Library</b> Mt. Pleasant Branch 3160 16th Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20010 202.671.0200</p> <p><b>DC Learns</b> 612 K Street, NW Suite 300 Washington, DC 20006 (202) 331-0141 info@dclearns.org</p> <p><b>Columbia Heights Shaw Family Support Collaborative</b> Thurgood Marshall Center 1816 12th Street, NW Washington, DC. 20009 202.518.6737 Email Name jalvarez@chsfsc.org http://www.chsfsc.org/</p> <p><b>Consejo</b> 2437 15<sup>th</sup> St NW Washington DC 20009 202.328.9451 earene@consejo.org http://www.consejo.org</p> <p><b>Multicultural Community Service</b> Josephine Butler Parks Center 2437 15th St. NW Washington, DC 20009 (202) 238-9355 info@mcsdc.org</p> <p><b>Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center</b> 1600 K Street, NW, Mezzanine Level Washington, D.C. 20006 (202) 393-3572 hotline@apalrc.org http://www.apalrc.org/</p> <p><b>CentroNía</b> 1420 Columbia Road, NW Washington DC, 20009 (202) 332 4200 info@centronia.org</p>



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Allow 7 working days for preparation of the material.

		<p><a href="http://www.centronia.org/">http://www.centronia.org/</a></p> <p><b>African Immigrant and Refugee Foundation</b>  1525 Newton Street NW  Washington, DC 20010  202.234.2473  <a href="mailto:info@airfound.org">info@airfound.org</a>  <a href="http://www.airfound.org/">http://www.airfound.org/</a></p> <p><b>Latin American Youth Center</b>  1419 Columbia Road, NW  Washington, DC 20009  (202) 319.2225  <a href="mailto:info@layc-dc.org">info@layc-dc.org</a>  <a href="http://www.layc-dc.org/">http://www.layc-dc.org/</a></p> <p><b>African Resource Center</b>  (202) 545-1789  <a href="mailto:Azizkamus@aol.com">Azizkamus@aol.com</a></p>
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