

National Capital Region Transportation
Planning Board (TPB)
Access for All Advisory Committee

Improving Language Access to Transit in
the National Capital Region



DRAFT
April 26, 2007

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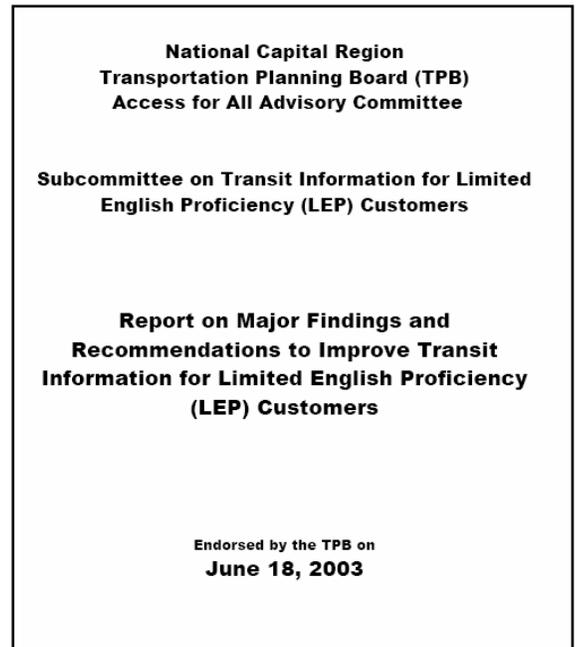
Introduction and Background

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) created the Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee in 2001. The mission of the committee is to identify concerns of low-income individuals, minority communities and persons with disabilities, and to determine whether and how these issues might be addressed within the TPB process. The AFA Committee is comprised of over 25 diverse community leaders.

In 2003, the AFA issued a report “Major Findings and Recommendations to Improve Transit Information for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Customers” which was endorsed by the TPB and transmitted to transit agencies in June 2003.

The report was a product of the AFA Subcommittee on Transit Information for Limited –English Speakers which is chaired by Kim Propeack of CASA of Maryland, Inc.. The Subcommittee was created in October 2002 to create a prioritized list of ways to improve language access for LEP groups in both the short- and long-term. The major findings and recommendations from the 2003 report can be found in Appendix 3.

As a result of the AFA’s language access recommendations in 2003, the Washington Metropolitan Washington Area Transit Authority (WMATA) added a Spanish greeting and an option was added on the customer service line and a video was produced in four languages about how to use the Metro system. On November 30, 2006 the AFA subcommittee was reconvened to identify the continuing barriers for limited English speakers in accessing transit and recommendations for improvement.



Purpose of Report

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the major continuing barriers and the recommendations for improving access to transit for LEP communities in the short- and long-term. The report first provides a short overview of languages spoken in the region and existing transit information for limited English speakers. The recommendations are broken into two categories: recommendations for three language “hot spots” and system-wide recommendations. The three “hot spot” areas are Columbia Heights in D.C., Langley Park in MD and Baileys Crossroads in VA. All the recommendations have a timeframe for implementation associated with them: Short-term (within 6 months), Medium-term (within 1 year), and Long-term (1 to 3 years).

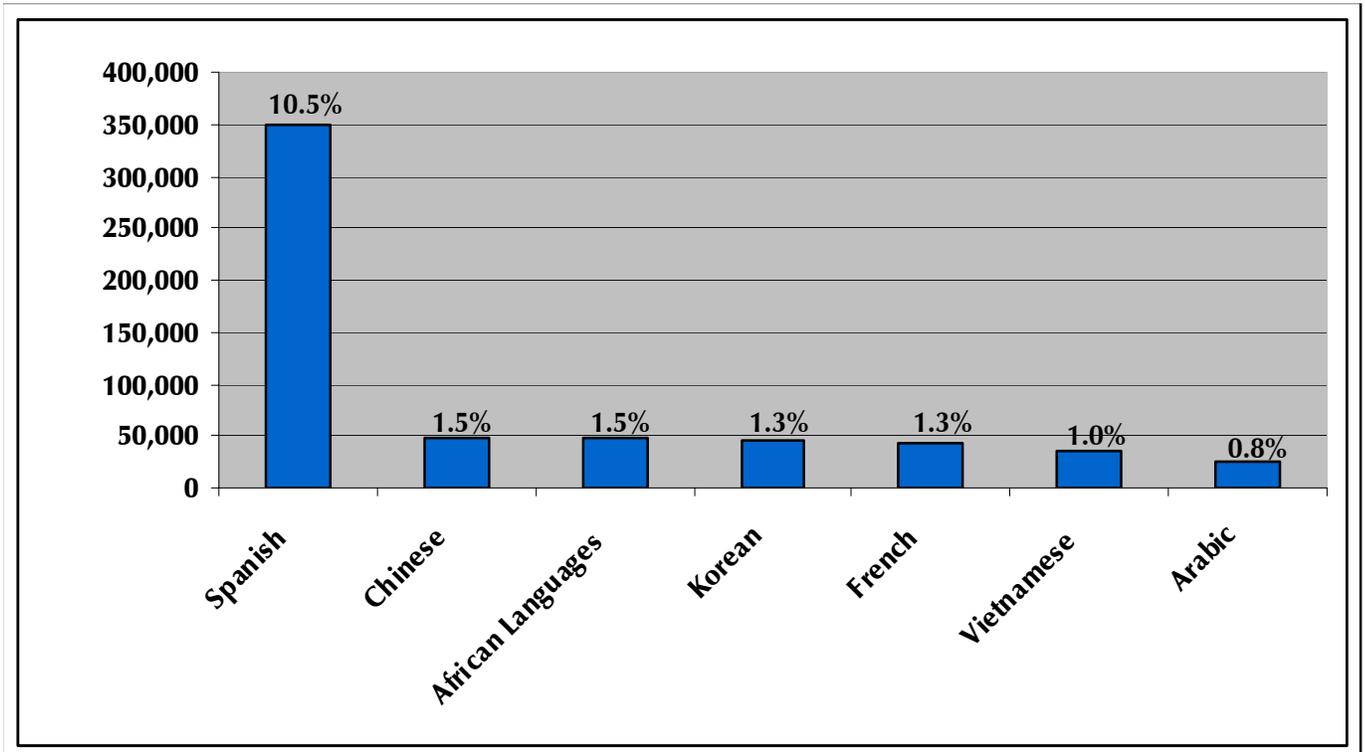
A Complex Region

The difficulty of providing transit information for LEP customers in a complex and diverse region needs to be recognized. Several different types of transit service are owned and operated by numerous transit agencies within the region. Regional transit service is provided by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), which operates Metrorail and Metrobus in the District of Columbia, Suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia. Many jurisdictions operate local bus services in addition to the Metrobus system. These include Montgomery County's Ride-On, the Fairfax County Connection, Prince George's The Bus, Arlington Transit (ART), Alexandria's DASH and the City of Fairfax CUE systems. In addition, Virginia Rail Express (VRE) and Maryland Area Transit Authority (MARC) provide commuter rail services. Commuter bus services are also provided by several counties, such as OmniRide in Prince William County. Moreover, a diverse set of languages are spoken in the region, as the next section describes, further complicating the task of providing language access to transit.

Languages Spoken in the Region

The 2000 U.S. Census shows that the Washington region includes more than 800,000 people who are foreign born. The 2000 Census also indicates that twenty-three percent of the region's population speaks a language other than English at home, ten percent of which speak English less than "very well". The languages other than English most often spoken at home are Spanish, Chinese, African languages (including Amharic, the language spoken in Ethiopia), Korean, French, Vietnamese and Arabic, as shown in Figure 1 below. Non-English speaking groups in the region are not only diverse; they are also geographically dispersed throughout the region, as shown in Figure 2. Therefore, regional information about LEP language access may not be as useful as information from a smaller geographic area.

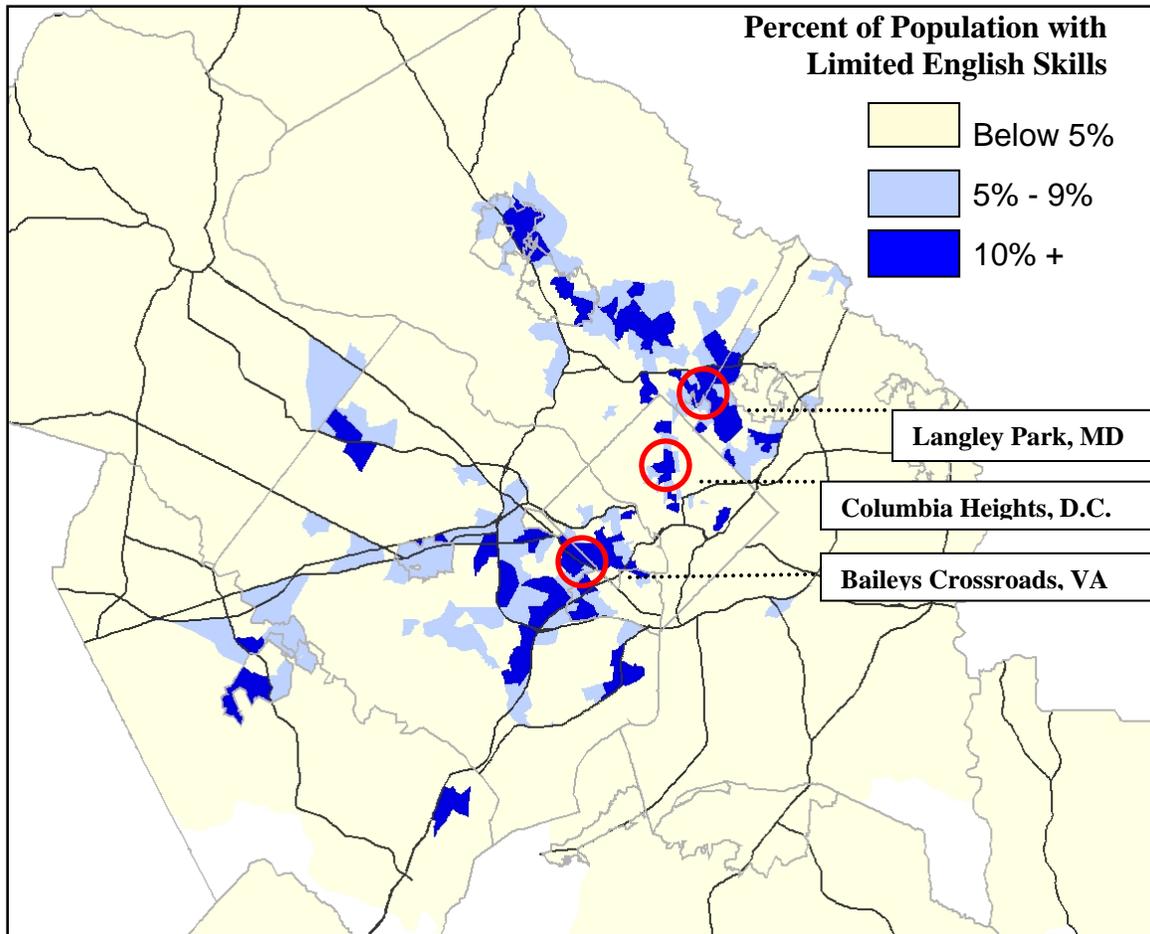
Figure 1: Languages Other Than English Most Often Spoken at Home in Jurisdictions Currently Served by Metrorail



Source: 2000 Census. SF3. Jurisdictions include Arlington County, the City of Alexandria, the District of Columbia, the City of Fairfax, the City of Falls Church, Fairfax County, Montgomery County and Prince George's County.

Furthermore, the Washington region experiences a constant stream of international tourists who may not speak English proficiently. The Washington region has become one of the top immigrant destinations in the country. Illiteracy, even among English speakers, is a barrier to transit information and needs to be considered when transit materials are developed.

Figure 2: Locations of Limited English Speakers and the Three “Hot Spot” Areas



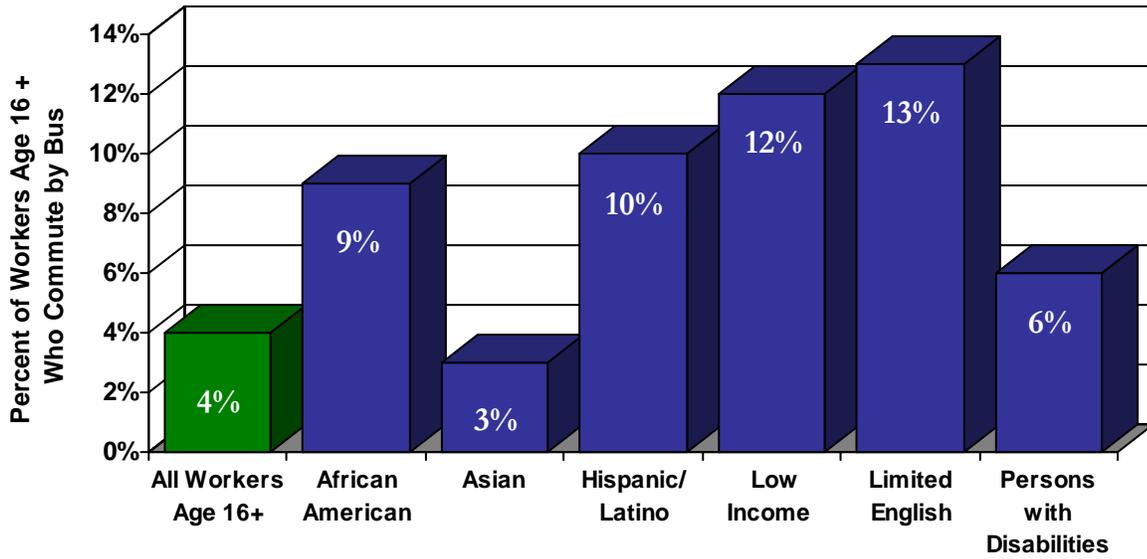
Source: 2000 Census. SF3. Limited English Speakers includes individuals who speak English “not well” or “not at all”

Travel Characteristics

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, limited English speakers are over *three times as likely* to commute to work by bus as the general population. Workers with limited English skills are also twice as likely to walk and bicycle to work and almost three times as likely to carpool or vanpool¹. Limited English speakers are *half as likely* to commute by subway (3% versus 7% for the general population).

¹ These statistics are for workers 16 years and older and are provided in the report “Travel Characteristics and Accessibility Impacts of the 2004 Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan on Minority, Low-Income and Disabled Populations”. March 2005. National Capital Transportation Planning Board.

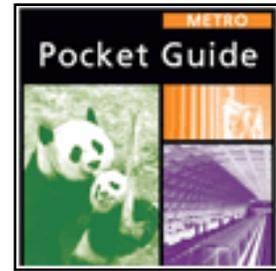
Figure 3: Commuting By Bus is Most Common for Limited English Speakers



Source: 2000 Census. PUMS data.

Existing Transit Information for Limited English Speakers

A short description of existing transit language information services is provided here as context for recommendations to improve those services. WMATA has a recorded message in both English and Spanish on the general information line. Recently, WMATA began broadcasting some Metrorail system announcements in Spanish. In addition, WMATA has a live translation service capable of translating 85 languages. The Metro Pocket Guide is available in ten languages at Metro offices, from station managers, and on the WMATA web site. A WMATA video on **how to use the Metrorail system is available in Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese and English (is there a 5th language?)**. WMATA’s website translation service makes information available in Spanish, _____ (list all languages). X number of Metrobus schedules provide information in Spanish and bus maps at X number of bus shelters include information in Spanish. **Three Metrobus** schedules are printed in Spanish-only. The Metro system map instructions are provided in English and Spanish. WMATA has **12 bilingual customer** service employees. Local bus systems, such as Ride-On in Montgomery County, Fairfax Connector, and Arlington Transit, all have some bilingual customer service agents, and a few have recorded bilingual messages; Ride-On provides some translated written materials.





WMATA's website can be translated into **x** different languages using Systran, a machine translator.

Major Continuing Barriers to Language Access

Since the AFA's 2003 report on transit information for limited English speakers, some improvements have been made to improve language access. However, a number of barriers for limited English speakers to access the public transit continue. At the November 30, 2006 Transit Information Subcommittee meeting, the participants identified many reasons why many Limited English speakers continue to be unaware of bus and rail services in the region. These barriers have been summarized into five major ones and the full list of barriers is provided in Appendix 1.

1. **Existing transit materials are not well-distributed.** The availability of translated transit information is not widely known among LEP communities. Written materials, such as schedules and guides, are not broadly distributed by transit agencies. Awareness of phone translation services, such as WMATA's language assistance line, is low. Few people are aware that WMATA's language assistance line can also provide translated information on local bus systems, such as Ride-On and Fairfax Connector.



- 2. There is inadequate transit information in customer-friendly formats targeted to Limited English speakers.** Quite simply, there is not enough information on using the bus or rail system in formats that are customer-friendly. Information at bus stops is especially lacking. In 2003 the AFA found that social networks and word of mouth are the primary sources of information used by LEP groups. The Internet was not felt to be as helpful as other verbal or written sources of information. Effective written materials use simple language and lots of visuals, and rely more on universal symbols and images rather than words.

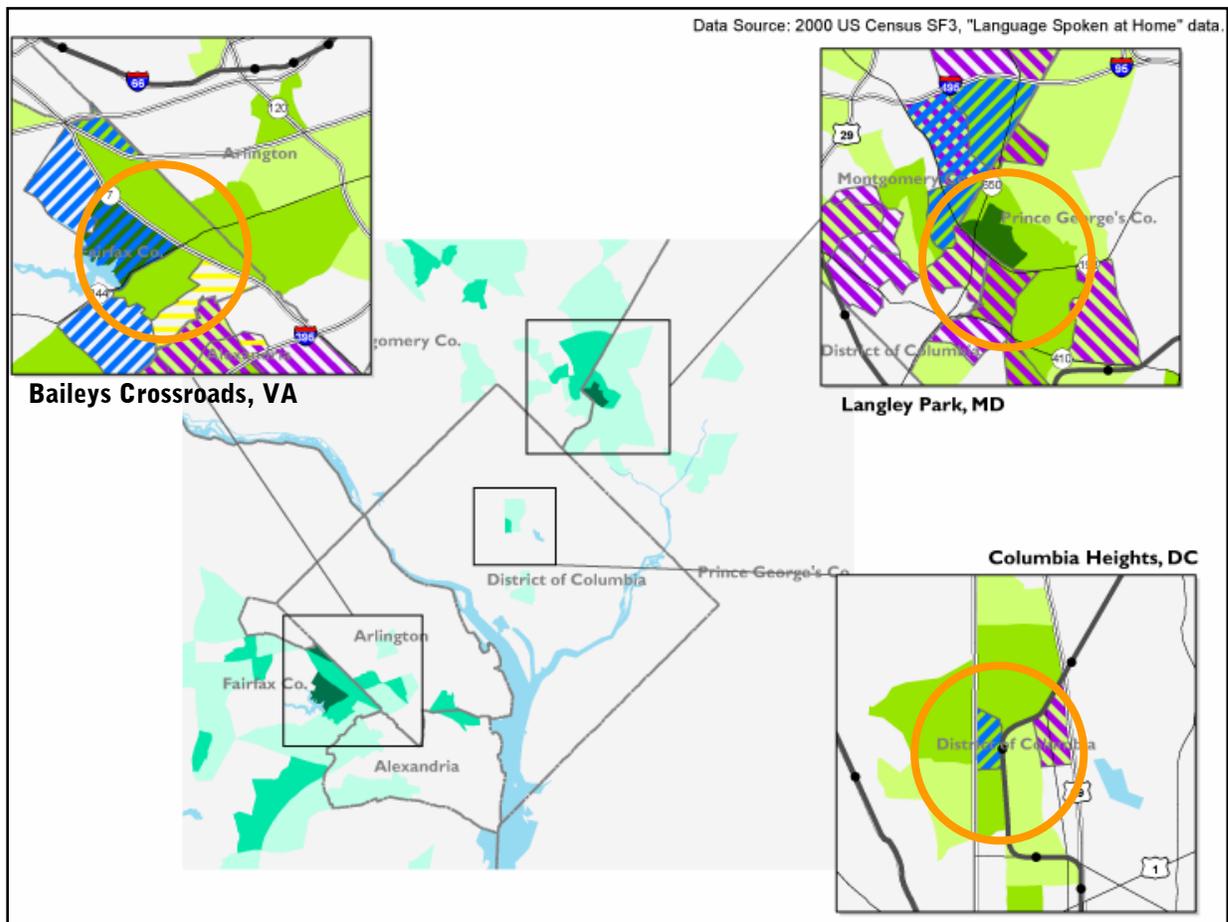


- 3. Front-line transit employees lack consistent customer service skills and cultural sensitivity.** A barrier for limited English speakers is the degree to which front-line transit employees provide good customer service and are sensitive to cultural differences. Many times the first point of contact for anyone using public transit is a bus driver or station manager; this interaction is critical to a rider feeling comfortable on the system. Safety is another barrier mentioned by LEP community leaders. LEP riders fear if something does happen to them on the Metrorail system or on a bus, they would not be to speak to a security or police officer.
- 4. Limited English speakers have not been adequately involved in language access decisions at transit agencies.** Language access is a complex and difficult thing to do which many transit agencies struggle with. The involvement of the LEP community is critical for transit agencies to be aware of what the language access issues and needs are. This involvement can also be helpful in prioritizing projects given limited budgets and partnering with community based organizations to expand efforts.
- 5. The point of contact for language access at WMATA is not widely known and WMATA does not yet have a language access plan.** LEP community leaders have noted that they don't have one point of contact to go to at WMATA for language access. These leaders also noted that WMATA lacks effective communication and coordination between its different departments. WMATA is in the process of developing a language access plan and this provides an opportunity to address this barrier.

Top 10 “Hot Spot” Recommendations

In order to better focus recommendation for improving language access, three locations in the Washington region were identified that have high concentrations of limited English Speakers shown in Figure 4: Columbia Heights in the District of Columbia; Langley Park in Maryland and Baileys Crossroads in Virginia. In no way do these three areas represent all the geographic areas that need language access improvements. The concept here is that a pilot program could be initiated that would offer lessons learned on the most effective ways to improve access to transit for limited English Speakers. WMATA could create an advisory council in each “hot spot” to help guide the pilot and provide feedback. Languages spoken in the “hot spots” include Spanish, African Languages, Vietnamese and Arabic. African Languages include Amharic, ___(to be filled in)_____.

Figure 4: The Three Language “Hot Spots”



(Add legend for map)

Table 1: Languages Characteristics for the “Hot Spots”

“Hot Spot”	Languages Spoken	Percent of Population Who Speak English “Not Well” or Not At All
Columbia Heights, D.C.	Spanish Vietnamese African Languages	(TO BE COMPLETED)
Langley Park, MD	Spanish Vietnamese African Languages	(TO BE COMPLETED)
Baileys Crossroads, VA	Spanish Vietnamese African Languages Arabic	(TO BE COMPLETED)

Short-Term (Within 6 months)

1. WMATA and local transit agencies should ensure that most bus stops have a current schedule for all the bus lines that serve that stop. This is a good standard that benefits all transit users.



2. At the Metrorail stations that serve these three areas, WMATA should ensure that all Metro-related translated brochures are provided and kept well-stocked.
3. WMATA and local transit agencies should examine where current transit information is distributed, and expand or change the distribution strategy as needed.

4. WMATA and local transit agencies should use language and ethnic media (print, radio, TV) as education and outreach tools to publicize the availability of transit services and translated information.



Medium Term (Within 1 Year)

5. WMATA and local transit agencies should create additional transit information in languages other than English.
6. WMATA and local transit agencies should partner with local businesses, community-based and faith-based organizations to distribute materials, sell passes and 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...). This type of partnering is done with the “Metro is Accessible” outreach and training program for persons with disabilities.
7. WMATA and local transit agencies should recruit front-line employees from the communities to be served and ensure that bilingual employees are compensated fairly; and

Long-term (Within 1 to 3 Years)

8. WMATA should ensure that bus drivers and station managers have a minimum command of languages spoken in the pilot areas on bus routes and in Metrorail stations that serve the three pilot areas.
9. WMATA should develop a pilot map that uses symbols and/or landmarks to distinguish stations and destinations for several bus stops;
10. WMATA and local transit agencies should try a pilot of assigning a bilingual customer service representative to ride highly-used routes and be available at high-traffic crossroads. Local community volunteers could be trained to provide this type of assistance.



Top 10 System-Wide Recommendations

Short-Term (Within 6 months)

1. WMATA should have one point of contact for language access services and make sure that information is widely known among customers, local governments and for community organizations.
2. WMATA should post instructional videos online and widely distribute the video to community- and faith-based organizations.
3. WMATA should ensure that MetroAccess users who don't speak English can get information about the service, apply, and speak with reservationists.
4. WMATA should provide a draft of the language access plan to the AFA for review by July 2007. The language access plan should identify the major languages spoken by potential riders in the region, determine which documents should be translated and develop a plan to market and promote available language services. The language access plan should also recommend a methodology for obtaining feedback from LEP communities about the effectiveness of the plan.



Medium Term (Within 1 Year)

5. WMATA and local transit agencies should actively recruit bilingual front-line employees (station managers and bus drivers).
6. WMATA and local transit agencies should stress customer service and provide cultural sensitivity training to front-line employees. LEP-related training could be part of new employee orientation and on-going recertification training.
7. WMATA and local transit agencies should partner with local businesses, community-based and faith-based organizations to distribute materials, sell passes and provide training on the bus and rail system.

Long-term (Within 1 to 3 Years)

8. WMATA and local transit agencies should incorporate successful strategies from the “Hot Spots” program system-wide;
9. WMATA should 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; and
10. WMATA should provide the online trip planner in languages other than English.



Conclusion

Language access in a region as large and diverse region as the National Capital Region is a real challenge for transit agencies. The intent of this report is to raise awareness about language access needs and offer prioritized recommendation for improvement from community leaders representing limited English speakers. WMATA’s General Manger, John Catoe put it well when he said that that language access “is not just a legal requirement” but “good common sense” and “good business sense tells you [that] you want everyone to use your service” at the March 30 AFA roundtable discussion with the Access for All Advisory Committee.

The AFA Committee will continue to offer its support and expertise on this difficult subject and monitor progress made towards implementing these recommendations.

Language access “is not just a legal requirement” but “good common sense”.

John Catoe
General Manager, WMATA

Appendix 1: Barriers and Recommendations for Language Access from the November 30, 2006 AFA Subcommittee Meeting
AFA Subcommittee on Transit Information for Limited English Speakers

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. Baileys 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; and
- e) Ensure that MetroAccess users who don't speak English can get information about the service, apply, and speak with reservationists.

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. Baileys 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 Baileys 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;
- f) 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.

Long-Term Recommendations

WMATA and Fairfax County should:

- g) Make an effort to hire and schedule bi-lingual employees on bus routes in Baileys Crossroads and at the East Falls Church station, recruiting from the communities to be served;

- h) Develop a pilot map that uses symbols and/or landmarks to distinguish stations and destinations for several bus stops in the Baileys Crossroads area. The large maps provided in bus shelters in downtown D.C. provide a good example;
- i) Install multi-media kiosks with transit information in public locations, at Fairfax County Government buildings and the Woodrow Wilson Library; and
- j) Install better signage on pedestrian safety.

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:

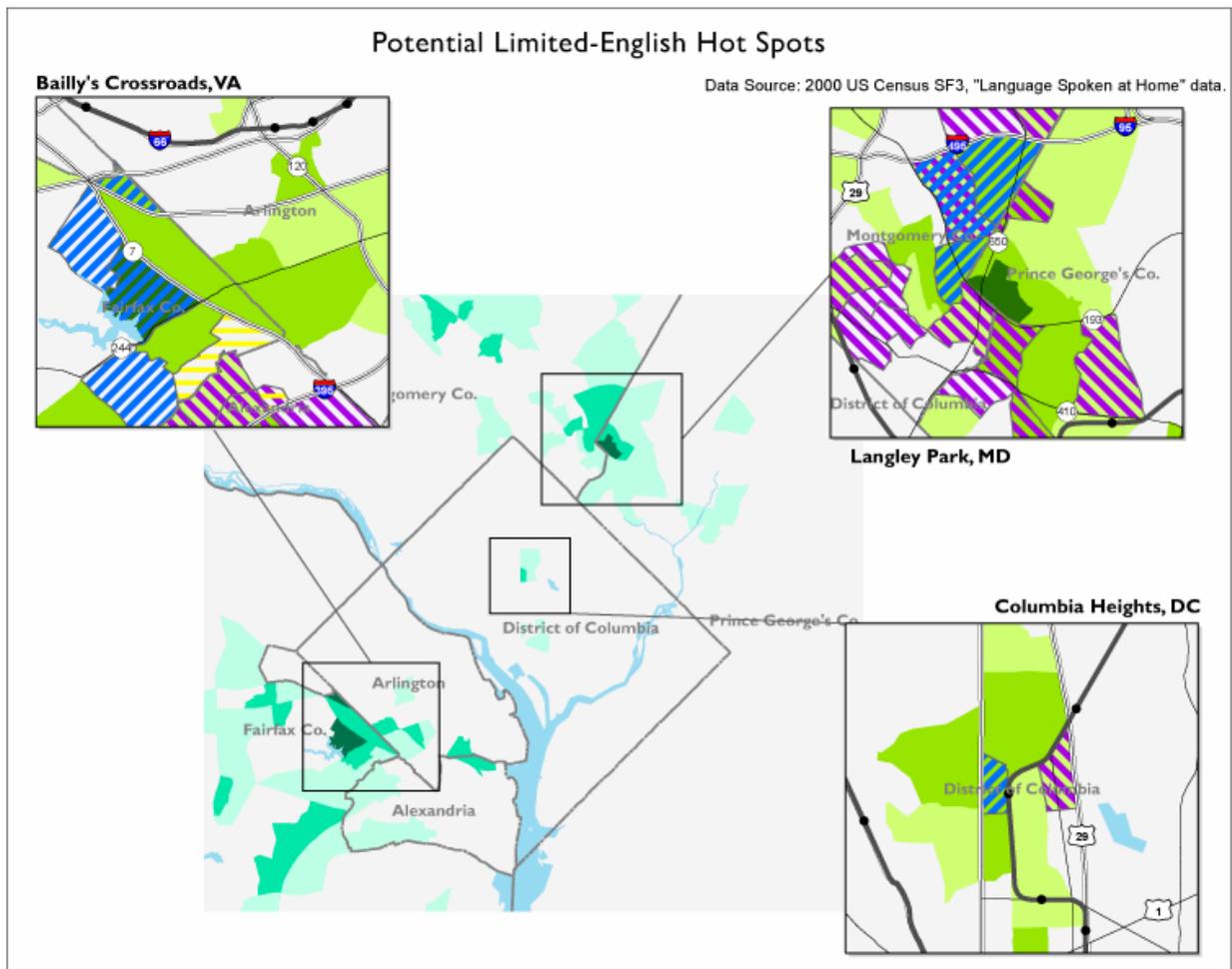
- a) Provide better information about bus routes and transfers in multiple languages on board. The Metro information line should be advertised as having translation services;
- b) Distribute the videos on how to use the transit system to local non-profits in the Langley Park area;
- c) Try a pilot of 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.



Organizations in the “Hot Spot” Pilot Areas

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

		<p> info@centronia.org http://www.centronia.org/ </p> <p> African Immigrant and Refugee Foundation 1525 Newton Street NW Washington, DC 20010 202.234.2473 info@airfound.org http://www.airfound.org/ </p> <p> Latin American Youth Center 1419 Columbia Road, NW Washington, DC 20009 (202) 319.2225 info@layc-dc.org http://www.layc-dc.org/ </p> <p> African Resource Center (202) 545-1789 Azizkamus@aol.com </p>
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Appendix 2: List of Participants from the November 30, 2007 Subcommittee Meeting

TPB Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee Subcommittee on Transit Information for Limited English Speakers

Meeting Participants

Thursday, November 30, 2006

Delia Aguilar	CASA of Maryland
Rosa Carrillo	Multicultural Community Service
Nancy Cooper	Jewish Council for the Aging
Bobby Coward	DC ADAPT
Jay Guy	Fairfax County Department of Transportation
Penelope Guzman	Prince George's County County Executive Jack Johnson
Russ Hultgren	Association of Latin Americans of Anne Arundel
Carolyn Jones	Montgomery County Ride-On
Abdul Kamus	African Resource Center
Steve Lee	Circle Point
Regina Lee	TAG/Independence NOW
Leonard Lewis	VDOT
Lillian Nazario	DC WIC
Kim Propeak	CASA of Maryland
Aryan Rodriguez	D.C. Office of Human Rights
Alicia Ruiz	Tenants & Workers United
Julie Ruszczyk	VDOT
Rhonda Stewart	DC Committee on Persons with Disabilities
Gloria Swieringa	ACORN
Martin Taylor	Fairfax County, Office of Supervisor Cathy Hudgins
Nguyen Dinh Thang	Boat People SOS
Cesar Watts	DC Learns
Beth Wong	Office of Community Relations Prince George's County

Appendix 3: Major Findings and Recommendations from the 2003 AFA Report

“Report on Major Findings and Recommendations to Improve Transit Information for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Customers” Endorsed by the TPB on June 18, 2003

Major Findings and Recommendations

Promote and Improve Existing Language Assistance Services

The focus group identified several barriers for LEP populations in using transit in the region. One barrier is a lack of awareness of the existing language assistance services provided by transit agencies. Ineffectiveness of the existing language assistance services was also reported as a barrier. Given the suburban location of many LEP groups, the lack of frequent or convenient transit service also is a barrier. The first two barriers are addressed in this set of recommendations.

Transit information can be difficult for people who speak English to understand, and for those with limited English skills comprehending the materials is all the more challenging. Improving transit information with clear, concise language and the use of symbols helps not only those with limited English skills, but people who are illiterate and the general public as well.

Furthermore, the availability of translated transit information is not widely known among LEP communities. Written materials, such as schedules and guides, are not broadly distributed. Awareness of phone translation services, such as WMATA’s language assistance line, is low. Few people were aware that WMATA’s language assistance line can also provide information on local bus systems, such as Ride-On and Fairfax Connector. Participants reported that their clients have been frustrated with using transit information translation services. For instance, some clients have had difficulty trying to obtain translated information with an agency representative who spoke only English. Sometimes people had to wait long periods to obtain translated information which made transit trip planning hard to do on the same day.

Recommendations

- ✓ Improve the existing phone transit information services for LEP populations by making the service more attentive to customer demand.

- ✓ Advertise phone information services more widely.
 - Advertise the services available from the WMATA transit information line, such as translation services and information on local transit systems, in English and other languages.
 - It would be beneficial if both WMATA and the local transit systems advertised the phone services provided by WMATA.
- ✓ Add multilingual greetings and options on WMATA's general information line.
- ✓ Improve existing transit information provided in English by using clear, concise language with pictures, graphics and symbols.
- ✓ Provide written translated materials in Metro stations and bus stops in heavily LEP-populated transit areas.
- ✓ Establish a community or citizen advisory group to help transit agencies reach language access goals.
- ✓ Ensure that LEP individuals can understand and follow instructions and procedures within a transit system in the event of an emergency.

Provide Additional Language Assistance Services and Materials

The focus group discussed the best methods of communicating with people who have limited English skills. Verbal communications were found to be much more effective than written communications. Social networks and word of mouth are the primary sources of information used by LEP groups. The Internet was not felt to be as helpful as other sources of information, such as verbal information provided via the phone assistance services or written information using simple and clear language provided in transit areas, social service agencies and community organizations. Effective written materials use simple language and lots of visuals, and rely more on universal symbols and images rather than words. Grants and other resources to augment transit agency funding could be explored to assist in implementing the following recommendations.

Recommendations

- ✓ Provide education, training, and tools for social service providers, churches and other organizations that work with LEP and English as Second Language (ESL) communities.

- ✓ Produce a video on how to use transit, which should be distributed widely to community organizations, social service agencies and employment centers. Produce the video in English and Spanish first, and then translate to other languages when more resources are available.
- ✓ Improve multilingual information at bus stops incrementally. Experiment with adding information in Spanish at a few bus stops in a heavily Hispanic area, for example. Post large maps at bus stops displaying routes, Metro stations and instructions on how to use the bus system in a language other than English in one specific language community. Use landmarks and universally understood symbols on the map. If these services are successful, provide them in more transit areas.
- ✓ Transit agencies should use a survey of riders to determine which language translations need to be provided, and the Census data should be used until surveys can be completed.
 - The regional 2000 Census data indicates that Spanish, African languages, Chinese, Korean, French and Vietnamese are most often spoken at home in the region. However, local surveys, local 2000 Census data and other sources should be used to determine appropriate languages for a smaller geographic area, like for certain Metro stations and bus routes.
- ✓ Given the complex set of languages spoken, the frequent international visitors in the metropolitan Washington region, and to assist illiterate individuals, universal symbols and pictures should be used to communicate with transit customers more often than written language.
 - A standard set of symbols could be developed to communicate emergency procedures, how to use rail and bus systems, and for navigation within a transit system.

Long-Range Recommendations for Expanding Language Assistance Services

Recognizing that limited resources are available for language assistance services, the preceding recommendations were short-range and relatively low-cost priorities that could greatly improve language access to vital transit services in the region. Below are recommendations for expanding services available to ensure greater access and more meaningful transit information to LEP customers.

Recommendations

- ✓ Recruit bilingual transit agency employees for positions with frequent customer contact with the public. Ensure that they are compensated fairly for their skills and job responsibilities.
- ✓ Provide cultural sensitivity training for bus drivers, transit police and other transit agency employees who have customer contact.
- ✓ Implement “Try Transit Week” focusing on LEP with language-appropriate tours.
- ✓ Improve language assistance for people with physical and cognitive disabilities. People that do not speak English and have a visual or hearing impairment, face an even more difficult challenge in understanding and using transit services.