



Language Assistance Plan
CAPITAL AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA
July 2021

Table of Contents

Contents

I. Introduction	3
A. Plan Summary.....	3
B. Four-Factor Analysis	4
C. Language Assistance Program.....	7
Language Assistance	8
Safe Harbor Stipulation	8
Staff Training	9
Information distributed to all CATS' staff.....	9
Translation of Documents.....	10
Formal Interpreters.....	10
Informal Interpreters.....	10
Monitoring	11
Dissemination of the CATS Language Assistance Program	11

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Spanish LEP Block Groups.....	5
Figure 2: Asian LEP Block Groups.....	6

I. Introduction

This Language Assistance Plan (LAP) has been prepared to address the Capital Area Transit System's (CATS) responsibilities as a recipient of Federal financial assistance as they relate to the needs of individuals with limited English language skills. The plan has been prepared in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance. Specifically, Title VI provides that "no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

CATS is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of its transit services based on race, color, or national origin. This plan was developed to guide CATS in its administration and management of Title VI related activities.

A. Plan Summary

CATS has developed this LAP to help identify reasonable steps for providing language assistance to persons with limited English proficiency [LEP] who wish to access services provided. As defined in Executive Order 13166, LEP persons do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English. This plan outlines how to identify a person who may need language assistance, the ways in which assistance may be provided, staff training that may be required, and how to notify LEP persons that assistance is available. To prepare this plan, CATS undertook the U.S. Department of Transportation's four-factor LEP analysis which considers the following factors:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons in the service area who may be served or are likely to encounter a CATS program, activity, or service.
2. The frequency with which LEP persons encounter CATS programs, activities, or services.
3. The nature and importance of programs, activities, or services provided by CATS to the LEP population.
4. The resources available to CATS and the overall cost to provide LEP assistance.

A summary of the results of the four-factor analysis is in the following section.

B. Four-Factor Analysis

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons in the service area who may be served or are likely to encounter a CATS program, activity, or service.

CATS reviewed 2019 5-year American Community Survey block group data. Those 239 block groups intersecting the corporate limits of Baton Rouge and Baker were considered the CATS service area. The review indicated that the total service area has a total of 120,184 households. Of those households (2.58%) speak English “not well” or “not at all.” Spanish speaking households are 1.42% of overall households, and Asian speaking households are 0.86%, and others are 0.84%, as shown in Table 1 below. Figure 1 depicts the block groups with 5%, or more Spanish LEP households, and Figure 2 depicts block groups with 5% or more Asian LEP households.

Table 1: LEP Households by Language Spoken at Home

	Total	% of Total
Total Households:	120,184	100.00%
Speaks Spanish:	1,711	1.42%
Speaks Other Indo-European Languages:	252	0.21%
Speaks Asian and Pacific Island Languages:	1030	0.86%
Speaks Other Languages:	106	0.63%
Total LEP	3,099	2.58%

Source: Census 5-year American Community Survey 2019

Figure 1: Spanish LEP Block Groups

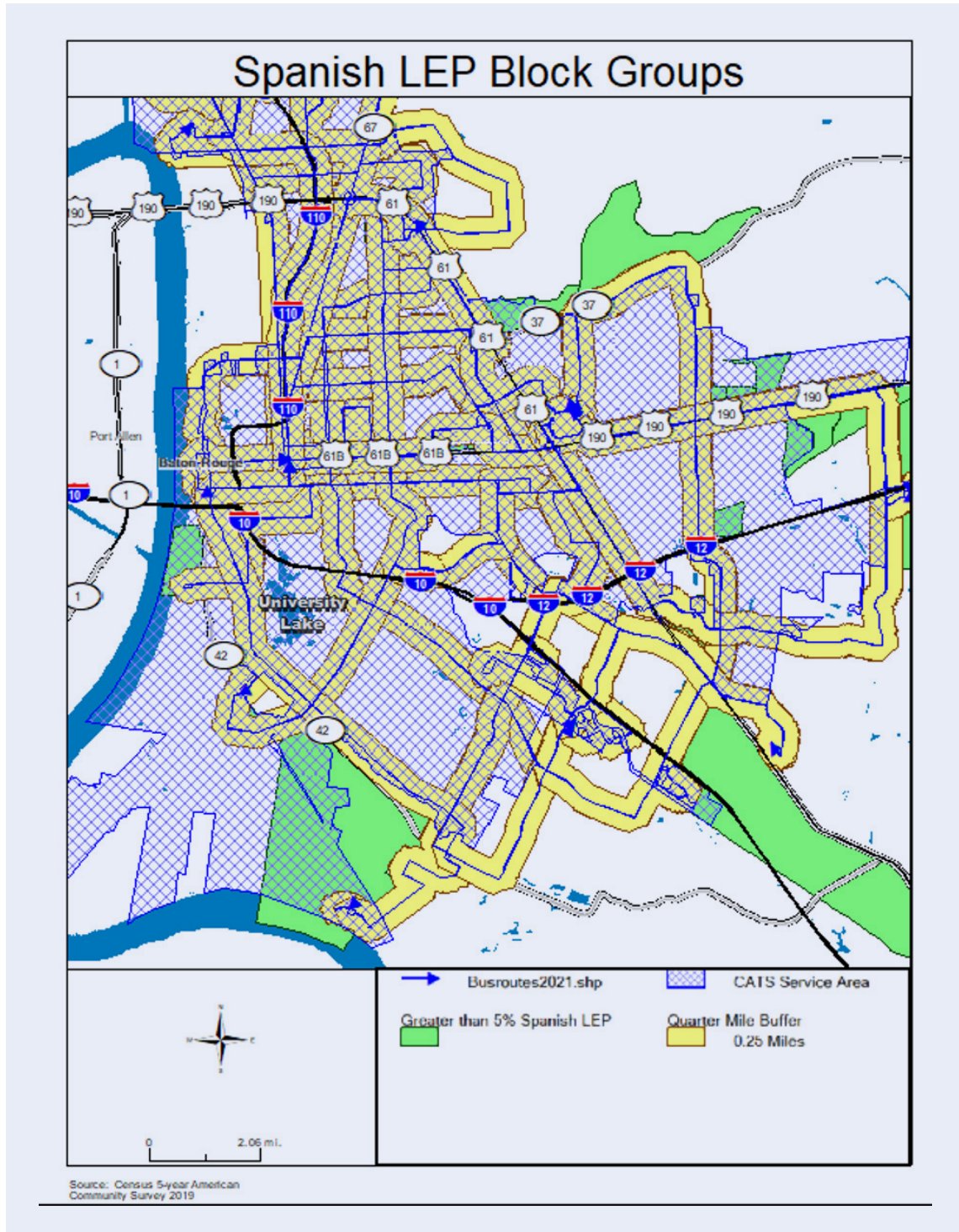
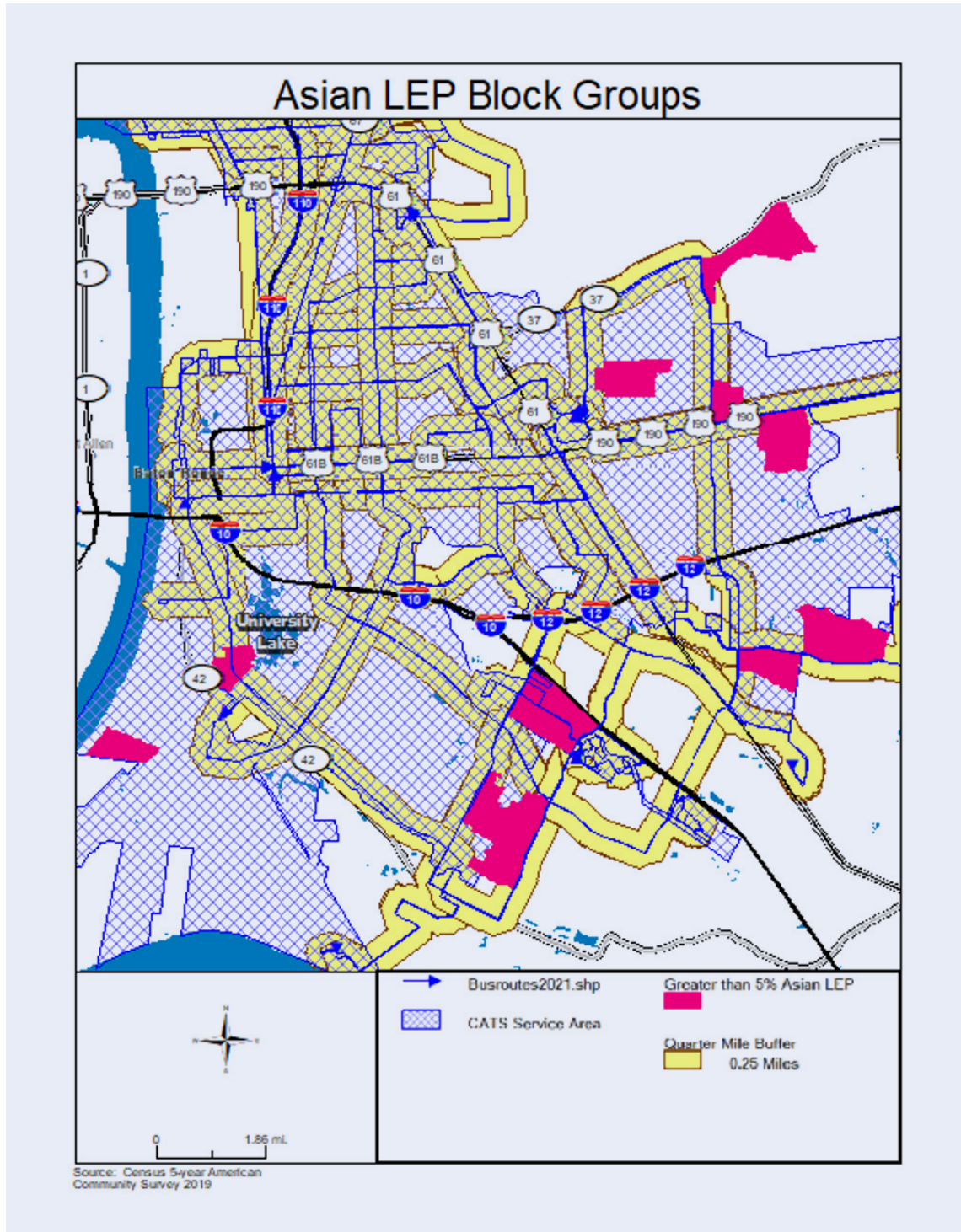


Figure 2: Asian LEP Block Groups



2. The frequency with which LEP persons encounter CATS programs, activities, or services. CATS reviewed the frequency with which staff has contact with LEP persons. This includes reviewing phone inquiries. Historically, LEP contacts have been relatively rare. In the review of phone inquiries in the CATS Customer Care Department, there have been approximately 575 calls received by the Customer Care Department between May and October 2019. Customer Care representatives maintain a record of callers that request language assistance or have difficulty communicating in English. In the last six months, there were four documented requests for language assistance. Also, a review of the CATS website analytics for language assistance requests indicated that 0.05% of website visitors requested language assistance since 2017.
3. The nature and importance of programs, activities, or services provided by CATS to the LEP population. Active participation of all community groups is vital for the success of public transportation. CATS provides a range of essential transportation options to the community through its fixed-route and paratransit services. Riders use CATS services for their multiple travel needs within the community, including trips to work, school, job interviews, grocery stores, and retail shops, medical offices, community service agencies, and more. An example of how CATS facilitates this is that all public schedules are available in Spanish and Vietnamese.
4. The resources available to CATS and overall cost to provide LEP assistance. CATS reviewed its available resources that could be used for providing LEP assistance, which of its documents would be the most valuable to be translated if the need should arise and evaluated resources that could be used for outreach and translation efforts. Based on the four-factor analysis, CATS developed its LAP as outlined in the following sections.

C. Language Assistance Program

A person who does not speak English as their primary language and has a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English may be an LEP person and may be entitled to language assistance with respect to CATS' programs and activities. Language assistance can include interpretation, which means an oral or spoken transfer of a message from one language into another language, and/or translation, which means the written transfer of a message from one language into another language. CATS will determine when interpretation and/or translation are needed and are reasonable.

How the CATS staff may identify an LEP person who needs language assistance is outlined below:

- Examine records to see if requests for language assistance have been received in the past, either at meetings or over the phone, to determine whether language assistance might be needed at future events.
- When CATS sponsors an event, staff will personally greet participants as they arrive. By informally engaging participants in a conversation, it is possible to gauge each attendee's ability to speak and understand English.
- Have Census Bureau Language Identification Flashcards ("I Speak Cards") available at CATS events near the registration table. Individuals self-identifying as persons not proficient in English may not be accommodated with translation assistance at the event, but it will assist the sponsoring agency in identifying language assistance needs for future events.

- Have Census Bureau Language Identification Flashcards (“I Speak Cards”) available for bus operators and customer service desk staff to assist them with identifying language assistance needs.
- Network with local community service centers that provide services to LEP individuals and seek opportunities to provide information on transit services.
- Vehicle operators and other front-line staff, including bus operators, supervisors, customer service representatives, clerical staff, and dispatchers, will be informally surveyed periodically on their experience concerning any contacts with LEP persons during the previous year.

Language Assistance

CATS strives to offer the following language assistance measures to LEP individuals, that is, persons who speak English “not well” or “not at all:”

- All CATS public schedules are translated and available upon request in both Spanish and Vietnamese.
- The CATS Title VI Policy and CATS staff will take reasonable steps to provide the opportunity for meaningful access to LEP clients who have difficulty communicating in English.
- If a client asks for language assistance and CATS determines that a client is an LEP person and that language assistance is necessary to provide meaningful access, reasonable efforts will be made to provide free language assistance. If reasonably possible, CATS will provide language assistance in the LEP client’s preferred language. CATS has the discretion to determine whether language assistance is needed and the type of language assistance necessary to provide meaningful access.
- CATS will periodically assess client needs for language assistance based on requests for interpreters and/or translation and the literacy skills of the clients.
- When an interpreter is needed, in person or on the telephone, staff will attempt to determine what language is required and then attempt to access language assistance at one or more of the available resources identified under the section “Formal Interpreters” below.
- Consider the use of a computerized translation tool that can help translate the CATS website into any language in which LEP persons are fluent.
- Translation of any CATS policies is available upon request.

Safe Harbor Stipulation

Federal law provides a “Safe Harbor” stipulation so that recipients can ensure with greater certainty that they comply with their obligations to provide written translations in languages other than English. A “safe harbor” means that if a recipient provides written translations under certain circumstances, such action will be considered strong evidence of compliance with the recipient’s written-translation obligations under Title VI.

The failure to provide written translations under the circumstances does not mean there is noncompliance, but rather provides a guide for recipients that would like greater certainty of compliance than can be provided by a fact-

intensive, four-factor analysis. For example, even if a safe harbor is not used, if the written translation of a particular document(s) would be so burdensome as to defeat the legitimate objectives of its program, it is not necessary. Other ways of providing meaningful access, such as practical oral interpretation of certain vital documents, might be acceptable under such circumstances.

Strong evidence of compliance with the recipient's written-translation obligations under 'safe harbor' includes providing written translations of vital documents for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes 5% or 1,000, whichever is less, of the population of persons qualified to be served or likely to be affected or encountered. CATS' translation of other documents, if needed, can be provided orally.

This safe harbor provision applies to the translation of written documents only. It does not affect the requirement to provide meaningful access to LEP individuals through competent oral interpreters where oral language services are needed and are reasonable.

In the CATS' service area, the Spanish and Vietnamese language groups constitute the 5% or 1,000 persons of population threshold for which written translations of vital documents should be provided under the safe harbor standard.

CATS has determined that while the demographics of the CATS service area include some groups of limited English proficient individuals, there has been no report by CATS bus operators of language difficulty or requests from riders for alternative language translation.

Thus, CATS will translate vital documents such as public route schedules, the Title VI Complaint Forms, the Title VI reporting process, the LAP, and public notices of changes to transit service into Spanish and Vietnamese. CATS staff will utilize features such as Google Translate and multilingual staff from CATS to translate vital documents for eligible LEP language groups upon request. CATS will also proceed with oral interpretation options for compliance with LEP regulations.

Staff Training

The following training will be provided to CATS staff:

- Information on the Title VI policy and LEP responsibilities.
- Description of language assistance services offered to the public.
- Use of the Language Identification Flashcards.
- Documentation of language assistance requests.
- How to handle a potential Title VI/LEP complaint.
- Bus operators are trained to seek translation assistance from other passengers on board the bus when they are either unable to understand or communicate with an LEP person.

Information distributed to all CATS' staff.

CATS will incorporate the training video developed by the FTA on Title VI requirements into the Bus Operator Training Program as well as training of customer service staff. The video explains the language access requirement of Title VI and teaches our employees how to handle requests from LEP persons appropriately.

Additionally, CATS' Safety and Training Department will provide related LEP training to CATS employees, including information from quarterly Civil Rights workshops, training sessions for conducting complaint investigations according to federal guidelines, and streamlining the complaint investigative process. Employees will also receive training from the Safety and Training Department after any modifications to the LAP document or guidelines.

Translation of Documents

- In those cases where the need arises for LEP outreach, CATS will consider the following options:
- When CATS' staff prepares a document or schedules a meeting, the target audience is expected to include LEP individuals; documents, meeting notices, flyers, and agendas will be printed in an alternative language based on the known LEP population.
- Bus schedules, maps, fare/service change announcements, and other transit publications are available in an alternative language for the known LEP population.

Formal Interpreters

- When necessary and reasonable to provide meaningful access for LEP clients, CATS will provide qualified interpreters, if available. At essential stages requiring one-on-one contact, written translation and verbal interpretation services will be provided, consistent with languages identified as predominant for our CATS ridership.
- CATS may require a formal interpreter to certify to the following:
 - The interpreter understood the matter communicated and rendered a competent interpretation.
 - The interpreter will maintain private information. Non-public data will not be disclosed without written authorization from the client.
- Bilingual CATS employees, when available, can provide limited assistance to LEP clients as part of their regular job duties.

Informal Interpreters

- CATS staff will determine whether it is appropriate to rely on informal interpreters, depending upon the circumstances and subject matter of the communication. Informal interpreters may include family members, friends, legal guardians, service representatives, or advocates of the LEP client. However, informal interpreters, especially children, are not competent to provide quality and accurate interpretations in many circumstances. There may be issues of confidentiality, competency, or conflict of interest.
- An LEP person may use an informal interpreter of his or her choosing at their expense, either of or as a supplement to the free language assistance offered by CATS. If possible, CATS should accommodate an LEP client's request to use an informal interpreter in place of a formal interpreter.
- If an LEP client prefers an informal interpreter, the informal interpreter may interpret after CATS has offered free interpreter services.
- If an LEP client wants to use his or her informal interpreter, CATS reserves the right to have a formal interpreter present.

Monitoring

Monitoring and Updating the LAP - CATS will update the LAP as required by FTA. At a minimum, the plan will be reviewed and updated every three years, or if demographic information indicates that higher concentrations of LEP individuals are present in the CATS service area. Updates will include the following:

- The estimated number of documented LEP person contacts encountered annually
- How the needs of LEP persons have been addressed
- Determination of the current LEP population in the service area
- The determination as to whether the need for translation services has changed
- Determine whether local language assistance programs have been sufficient to meet the need
- Determine whether the transit system's financial resources are sufficient to fund language assistance resources needed
- Determine whether CATS fully complies with the goals of this LAP
- Determine whether complaints have been received concerning the agency's failure to meet the needs of LEP individuals

Dissemination of the CATS Language Assistance Program

- A link to the CATS LAP and the Title VI Plan will be included on the CATS website www.brcats.com/title-vi
- Any person or agency with internet access will access and download the plan from the CATS website. Alternatively, any person or agency may request a copy of the plan via telephone, fax, mail, or in-person and shall be provided a copy of the plan at no cost. LEP individuals may request copies of the plan in translation, which CATS will provide, if feasible.
- Questions or comments regarding the LAP may be submitted to the Title VI Compliance Manager, Capital Area Transit System, 2250 Florida Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, phone number (225) 346-5548.

