

Language Assistance Plan for Rolling Hills Transit Semcac

Effective: July, 2017

Purpose

The purpose of this Language Assistance Plan (hereinafter "plan") is to meet Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) requirements to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. As a subrecipient of FTA funds, this transit system is pledged to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to its transit services for persons who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. The FTA refers to these persons as Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons.

The completion of this plan for persons with Limited English Proficiency conforms to the requirements of the FTA Circular 4702.1B Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients.

The U.S. DOT's FTA Office of Civil Rights' publication "Implementing the Department of Transportation's Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient Persons – A Handbook for Public Transportation Providers," dated April 13, 2007, was used in the preparation of this plan.

The plan for Rolling Hills Transit contains:

- A. A needs assessment based on the four-factor analysis
- B. Language assistance measures
- C. A staff training plan
- D. Methods for notifying LEP persons about available language assistance
- E. Methods for monitoring, evaluating and updating the plan

A. LEP Needs Assessment – the Four-Factor Analysis

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

We assessed the following information (as checked) about LEP persons to determine the number or proportion of LEP persons who might use or want to use our transit services:

- ✓ 2015 US Census data/American Community Survey data (*factfinder.census.gov*)
- ✓ Information from local organizations (religious, legal, social service, etc.) about LEP persons in our service area
- ✓ Survey results from the agency's Community Needs Assessment
- ✓ Reports from drivers, dispatchers and others about contact with LEP persons

- 1) The total number of LEP persons in our service area is 2,806
- 2) The total eligible population in our service area is 79,370
- 3) The proportion of LEP persons to the total eligible service population is 3.5%.

In Semcac's 2014 Community Needs Assessment & Community Action Plan results from the survey concluded that 2.4% of the respondents (13 out of 530 people) did not identify English as their primary language (page 21). Additionally, the results showed that, within a household, those who *would* use (or already use) a public transportation system (in their area) included 28.5% child/teen under age 18 years, 36.3% adults age 18 – 59 years, 36.3% seniors age 60+ years; 15.9% responded "Nobody". Therefore, 15.9% of the households who took the survey would not utilize public transportation for a variety of reasons. The majority (60.8%) identified the reason being, "I/we use a personal/family vehicle" (page 31). This information is pulled from the most-recent community needs assessment conducted by the agency, which is completed every three years. Semcac is currently in the process of conducting a new survey of the southeastern region and it will be published in 2018.

Semcac Transportation provides public transit services in Houston County, Fillmore County, Dodge County, rural Olmsted County and rural Winona County. In coordination with local organizations and through Semcac's other programs in these counties (such as food shelves, Head Start Centers, and Semcac Contact Centers where people come for crisis assistance or information and referrals to other community programs and resources), Semcac is mindful of LEP persons in the St. Charles and Lewiston area in Winona County and the Kasson and Mantorville area in Dodge County.

Factor 2. The frequency with which LEP persons come in contact with our transit programs, activities, or services.

Semcac Transportation drivers and dispatchers have reported very little interaction with or requests for service from LEP persons. The system currently provides rides for people of diverse races, ethnicities and national origins. The employees relay that there have been few language barriers. The only non-English language spoken that drivers or dispatchers have come in contact with has been Spanish.

At this time, Semcac Transportation is not aware of LEP persons in our service area that need our transportation services but have been unable to access our system due to their need for language assistance.

Semcac has had a Limited English Proficiency Plan in place since 2006 and has procedures in place for LEP persons to access our programs and services.

Factor 3 . The nature and importance of programs, activities, or services provided to the LEP population.

Our transit system considers transit to be an important and essential service for many people living in our service area. Semcac's Rolling Hills Transit bus services provided 57,392 rides in fiscal year 2016. Key destinations include childcare, preschool, work and senior congregate dining sites. The number of rides for children to get to and

from their preschools and their childcare providers has especially increased in recent years. The preschool/childcare rides have included rides for children of diverse races, ethnicities and national origins. These rides are coordinated through the preschools in our service area counties; therefore, the preschools are completing most of the communication with the families that sign-up for this service.

Factor 4. The resources available to our transit system and the overall cost to provide language assistance.

Our current budget for marketing to or communicating with LEP persons in their language about transit services that are available to them is about \$1,000.00. This may include funding for staff training, interpretation or translation services, brochures or posters.

Semcac employs a Cultural Diversity Specialist that provides staff training across the agency. She also provides translation services so that brochures and other documents can be accessible for LEP persons.

If none of Semcac's bilingual employees are available, Semcac has other resources for interpreters. For example, the agency is a member of the Language Line, and any employee can establish a 3-way call to immediately get an interpreter on the phone. Also, the agency has contracted with Project FINE out of Winona and private individuals who have been found to be knowledgeable and competent interpreters.

Semcac Transportation has had a feature article in a Spanish language newspaper. This article, as well as all future press releases to this newspaper, have been printed at no cost to the system.

Additionally, Semcac's website includes a feature powered by Google Translate which allows the website to be instantly translated into 52 languages at the click of a button; this also, has been at no cost to the system.

B. Language Assistance Measures

There are several language assistance measures that are available to Rolling Hills Transit. These include: Check off any items below that are relevant and provide a short narrative to explain your future efforts.

- ✓ Translation of key documents in the Spanish language
- ✓ Arranging for availability of oral translators
- ✓ Communication with LEP persons' groups about transit services
- ✓ Posting notices in appropriate languages informing LEP persons of available services

Rolling Hills Transit has translated informational brochures into Spanish. The transit system already has interpreters available via the Language Line. The system has had publicity in a Spanish-language newspaper and will continue to use this venue to advertise its services. Also, Semcac Transportation will continue to use its website, which can be translated into 52 languages, to promote transportation services. The transportation staff

will also identify key locations to post notices in appropriate languages informing LEP persons on the services available.

C. Staff Training

To ensure effective implementation of this plan, the transit system will schedule training at orientations for new staff and for all relevant employees on an annual basis to review:

- the transit system's Language Assistance Plan
- demographic data about local LEP population
- printed LEP persons' materials
- how to handle verbal requests for transit service in a foreign language
- responsibility to notify transit manager about any LEP persons' unmet needs

D. Notice to LEP Persons about Available Language Assistance

Our transit system plans to notify LEP persons in their own language about the language assistance available to them without cost by using the following methods:

- ✓ signs on buses
- ✓ brochures
- ✓ posters
- ✓ sending information to local organizations that work with LEP persons
- ✓ website notices
- ✓ information tables at local events

E. Annual Monitoring, Evaluating and Updating Plan

The transit system will review this plan during its annual review with its Mn/DOT transit project manager by:

- assessing its effectiveness (e.g., comparing numbers of LEP persons served by year, number of requests for language assistance received during the year),
- assessing the sufficiency of staff training and budget for language assistance,
- reviewing current sources for assistance to ensure continuing availability,
- reviewing any complaints from LEP persons or about their needs that were received during the past year

This plan will be reviewed by our transit system annually. Revisions of this plan will be approved by the Semcac Board of Directors and dated.

F. Dissemination of Plan

This Language Assistance Plan is available on our website at: http://www.semcac.org/wp-content/uploads/Language-Assistance-Plan-for-Rolling-Hills-Transit--Semcac_2017.pdf

This plan is also available at no cost in English upon request by telephone, fax, and mail or in person.

If requested to be provided in another language and it is feasible to have it translated, information will be provided at no cost to the requester.

G. Contact Information

Questions or comments about this plan may be submitted to:

Semcac
Erlene Welshons, Transportation Director
204 S. Elm St., PO Box 549
Rushford, MN 55971
507.864.8238

800.934.3874
TTY/TDD service: 800.627.3529
Fax: 507.864.2440
Erlene.welshons@semcac.org