



Limited English Proficiency Plan

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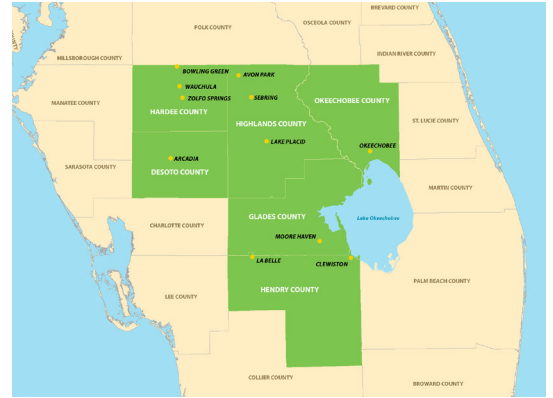
HRTPO Full and Fair Participation

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion or family status. Persons requiring accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or language translation, free of charge should contact Marybeth Soderstrom, HRTPO Title VI Liaison, 863-534-7130 (voice), or via Florida Relay Service 711, or by emailing msoderstrom@cfRPC.org at least three days prior to the event. The HRTPO strives to ensure full and fair participation by all potentially affected individuals, groups and communities in the transportation decision-making process.

Introduction

Designated on November 17, 2014 by Governor Rick Scott of Florida as the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), the federally mandated transportation policy-making organization includes the six counties of DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee and the urbanized area of Highlands County including the cities of Sebring and Avon Park.

The linkage of these counties is economic, environmental, cultural and collaborative. Through a history in agriculture and mining, with ranching and small business centered on the abundant natural resources including lakes and health care as a major employer, the Heartland counties have worked together in changing times. As the region looks to the future through its Heartland 2060 partnerships it prepares for increasing urbanization and infrastructure investment, it is key that a multimodal transportation system to serve citizens and move goods is built.



Public participation is a key component of transportation planning and one of the core functions of the HRTPO. Using data from the American Community Survey and the Census Bureau the HRTPO estimated that 7.5 percent of the households are limited English speaking in the Heartland Region. Meaningful and effective public involvement brings a diverse set of views into the discussion and improves decision making by generating ideas for how the transportation system may be improved. This Limited English Proficiency Plan was developed to identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them.

Legal Basis for Language Assistance Requirements

On August 11, 2000, President Bill Clinton signed Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency". The Executive Order requires Federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. It is expected that agency plans will provide for such meaningful access consistent with, and without unduly burdening, the fundamental mission of the agency. The Executive Order also requires that the Federal agencies work to ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Title VI, 42 USC Sections 2000d-2000d-1, prohibits federally assisted programs from discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. Since public funds are comprised of contributions from taxpayers of all races, colors, and national origins, fairness requires that federal activities receiving such funds be conducted in a manner that discourages racial discrimination.

DOT Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons

DOT's Guidance was issued in 2001 and updated in 2005. It discusses strategies for providing services to LEP persons and outlines a framework for providing an effective language assistance program. A link to this document can be found at FTA's Title VI web page, http://www.fta.dot.gov/civilrights/civil_rights_5088.html.

Designated Staff

The Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization designates Marybeth Soderstrom, community engagement manager, as the individual responsible for oversight and implementation of the Limited English Proficiency Plan. Responsibilities include coordinating and facilitating delivery of related services, staff training on the plan's policies and procedures, and ongoing monitoring and assessment of the plan's effectiveness. Marybeth Soderstrom can be reached at (863) 534-7130 ext.134 or msoderstrom@heartlandregionaltpo.org.

Definitions

Limited English Proficient (LEP) Individual

Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, write, speak, and/or understand English. LEP individuals may be competent in English for certain types of communication (e.g., speaking or understanding), but still be LEP for other purposes (e.g., reading or writing).

Effective Communication

Communication sufficient to provide the LEP individual with substantially the same level of access to services, programs, and benefits received by individuals who are not LEP. For example, staff must take reasonable steps to ensure that communication with an LEP individual is as effective as communication with others when providing similar programs, benefits, and services.

Interpretation

The act of listening to a communication in one language (source language) and orally converting it to another language (target language) while retaining the same meaning.

Language Assistance Services

Oral and written language services needed to assist LEP individuals to communicate effectively with staff, and to provide LEP individuals with meaningful access to, and an equal opportunity to participate fully in, the services, benefits, activities, or other programs administered by the HRTPO.

Meaningful Access

Language assistance that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the LEP individual. For LEP individuals, meaningful access denotes access that is not significantly restricted, delayed, or inferior as compared to programs or activities provided to English proficient individuals.

Program, Service, Benefit, or Activity

The term "program," "service," "benefit," or "activity" applies to the primary functions of all of the operations of the HRTPO.

Translation

The replacement of a word, phrase, or text in one language (source language) with an equivalent-meaning word, phrase, or text in another language (target language).

Vital Document

Paper or electronic written material that contains information that is critical for accessing a component's programs, services, benefits, or activities; directly and substantially related to public safety; or required by law.



Complaint Procedure

The HRTPO has established a discrimination complaint procedure and will take prompt and reasonable action to investigate and eliminate discrimination when found. Any person who believes that he or she has been subjected to discrimination based upon race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, family or income status in any of HRTPO's programs, services or activities may file a complaint with the HRTPO Title VI/Nondiscrimination Coordinator:

Marybeth Soderstrom, Nondiscrimination Coordinator
HRTPO
555 East Church Street | Bartow, FL 33830
Email: msoderstrom@heartlandregionaltpo.org
Phone: 863.534.7130 x 134 | Fax: 863.534.7138
Hearing Impaired: Dial 711 for the Florida Relay Service (TTY)

If possible, the complaint should be submitted in writing and contain the identity of the complainant; the basis for the allegations (i.e., race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability or family status); and a description of the alleged discrimination with the date of occurrence. If the complaint cannot be submitted in writing, the complainant should contact the Title VI/Nondiscrimination Coordinator for assistance.

The Title VI/Nondiscrimination Coordinator will respond to the complaint within thirty (30) calendar days and will take reasonable steps to resolve the matter. Should the HRTPO be unable to satisfactorily resolve a complaint, the HRTPO will forward the complaint, along with a record of its disposition to the appropriate District of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

The HRTPO's Title VI Coordinator has 'easy access' to the HRTPO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and is not required to obtain management or other approval to discuss discrimination issues with the CEO. However, should the complainant be unable or unwilling to complain to the HRTPO, the written complaint may be submitted directly to Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). FDOT will serve as a clearing house, forwarding the complaint to the appropriate state or federal agency:

Florida Department of Transportation
Equal Opportunity Office
ATTN: Title VI Complaint Processing
605 Suwannee Street MS 65
Tallahassee, FL 32399



Self-Assessment (4 Factor Analysis)

The DOT guidance outlines four factors recipients should apply to the various kinds of contacts they have with the public to assess language needs and decide what reasonable steps they should take to ensure meaningful access for LEP persons:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by a program, activity, or service of the recipient or grantee.
2. The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program.
3. The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the recipient to people's lives.
4. The resources available to the recipient and costs.

Factor 1: The Number and Proportion of LEP Persons Served or Encountered in the Eligible Service Population.

U.S. Census Language Spoken At Home 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

	DeSoto	Glades	Hardee	Hendry	Highlands	Okeechobee	HRTPO Region	Florida
All Households	11,238	3,920	7,618	11,345	40,397	13,046	87,564	7,300,494
Percent limited English-speaking households	9.5%	3.5%	11.9%	15.4%	4.5%	7.1%	7.5%	6.8%
Population 18+ Speak English less than "very well"	6.6%	2.1%	9.6%	11.0%	4.4%	4.8%	6.0%	7.3%

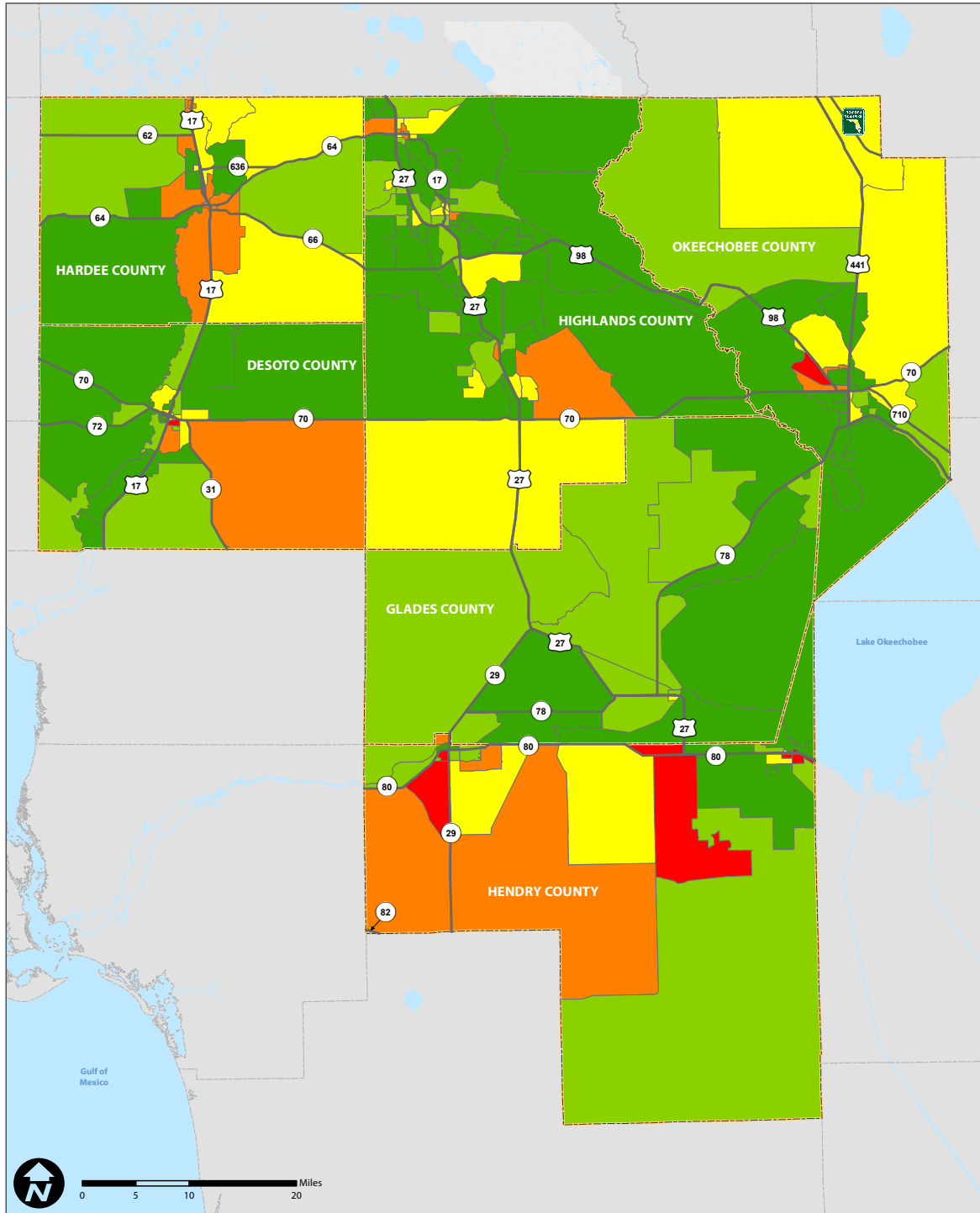
Languages Spoken by limited English-speaking households (Percentage of total households)

A "limited English speaking household" is one in which no member 14 years old and over speaks only English or speaks a non-English language and speaks English "very well." In other words, all members 14 years old and over have at least some difficulty with English.

	DeSoto	Glades	Hardee	Hendry	Highlands	Okeechobee
Spanish	8.9%	3%	11.2%	14.5%	4.1%	6.8%
Other Indo-European languages	0.6%	0.3%	0.8%	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%
Asian and Pacific Island languages	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.1%	0.1%
Other Languages	0%	0.3%	0%	0.6%	0%	.06%

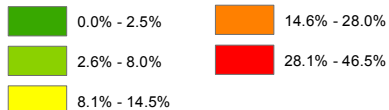
Heartland Regional TPO

Limited English Proficiency Population Map



Legend

Limited English Speaking Households (Block Group Level)



Heartland Regional TPO
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 heartlandregionaltpo.org

Data Source: US Census, 2015 ACS 5-year estimates

Document Path: O:\Projects\Heartland_TPO\Map\2015\HRTPO_Images\bg_121816.mxd

Additional Data

CareerSource Heartland

CareerSource Heartland (CSH) Centers are part of a community partnership providing no-cost recruitment and employment services to job seekers and businesses in DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, and Okeechobee Counties.

According to the CSH 2016 LEP Annual Assessment: CSH utilizes report information from Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM) to determine the number of potential LEP persons served or encountered within the service area. The current unduplicated number of Hispanic Ethnicity individuals registered between 11/30/2014 and 11/29/2015 is 967 or 34.71% of the total EFM number of individuals registered (2,498). Between the dates of 11/30/2014 and 11/29/2015 there were 2,997 contact entries for Hispanic Ethnicity individuals and 967 unduplicated individuals registered.

Ridge Area ARC

Ridge Area Arc provides transportation to a total of 93 individuals with disabilities, many of which are also seniors within Highlands County. According to their Language Assistance Plan (2016), over the past three years, Ridge Area Arc has served an average of 11 individuals of Spanish descent. Only one (1) of these individuals needed assistance with translating documents.

Hendry County

In the six-county region, Hendry county has both the largest concentration and highest percentage of LEP persons. According to Hendry County's Limited English Proficiency Guidance (2016) the County contacted County departments, local law enforcement, social service agencies and schools and determined that an estimated six percent of calls for service for these agencies were by Spanish speaking LEP persons.

Factor 2: The Frequency with Which LEP Individuals Come into Contact with your programs, activities, and services



In 2015-2016, the HRTPO has held 24 meetings that were open to the public including two public workshops. Although translation services were offered free of charge for all meetings and the flyers for the two public workshops were distributed in English and Spanish, no request for translation services were requested. Identified bilingual volunteers were available at both public workshops and were not approached by any citizens.

The HRTPO website and email newsletters offers a feature that will translate the content into over 100 languages. Based on data from website usage, 98.4 percent of website visitors in Florida view the website in English, while 1.6 percent viewed the site in Spanish.

Though the HRTPO has regular board and committee meetings throughout the year, the HRTPO recognizes community outreach is the main source of potential contact between the organization and persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The organization's Public Involvement Plan notes the special emphasis on community outreach opportunities that engage traditionally underserved populations. As a result, the frequency of contact is difficult to anticipate.



Factor 3: The Importance to LEP Persons of Your Program, Activities and Services

Transportation planning organizations were created by law to review and administer all policies and procedures applicable for state and federal transportation funding. The responsibility of the HRTPO is to manage a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process that results in the development of transportation plans and programs. The HRTPO provides a forum for cooperative decision making by officials of the affected governmental entities with input from citizens and constituency groups.

The planning process does not include any direct services or programs that offer immediate or emergency assistance. Classification of a document as "vital," depends upon the importance of the program, information, encounter, or service involved, and/or the consequence to the LEP community if the information in question is not provided in an accurate or timely manner.

The HRTPO initially prioritized the following classes of "vital" documents for translation:

- Cost Feasible Plan from the Long Range Transportation Plan
- Forms or written material related to individual rights, such as notices of rights.
- Notices regarding the availability of language assistance services at no cost to LEP persons.
- Notices of public community meetings or other outreach.
- Description of the Plans and Programs of the HRTPO.

Factor 4: The Resources Available to the Recipient and Costs

Language Assistance Services Currently Provided

Resource	Associated Cost	Application
Document Translation	\$75.00 per page (Estimate)	Translation of standard HRTPO forms and documents.
Website Translation	Indeterminable	The current language translation feature of the HRTPO website is incorporated in current website maintenance and design management.
Email Translation	Indeterminable	The current language translation feature on the emails sent via www.mailchimp.com is incorporated through the service provider.
Notice	Indeterminable	Notification of the availability of free language services to LEP persons is included within meeting notices. Notice is provided on the organization's website and on appropriate materials developed for meetings, events, and public hearings.
Oral Interpretation	Indeterminable	The HRTPO has utilized volunteers from partner agencies and bilingual staff to provide interpretation services at HRTPO public meetings and workshops.

Additional Services to Be Provided to Ensure Meaningful Access

Resource	Associated Cost	Application
"I Speak" Cards	Printing Costs, variable	"I Speak" language cards will be made available at meetings, hearings and events to identify individuals with limited English proficiency who are unknown to the organization. This identification provides a means to monitor changing demographics to better anticipate future needs.
Phone System	Indeterminable	Update the HRTPO phone recording to include an option for information in Spanish.
"I speak Spanish" Page on HRTPO website	Indeterminable	Add a page to the HRTPO website that includes information on how to access interpretation services or translated documents.

The HRTPO will continue efforts to collaborate with state and local agencies to provide language translation and interpretation services when requested and in consideration of the funding available.

As technology advances, there are many low or no cost tools that staff may use if they need to communicate with an LEP person. Google Translate, iTranslate, WayGo, and SMS Translator are just a few free apps that assist in interpreting and translating both written and oral communications.



Identifying LEP Individuals Who Need Language Assistance

As a new organization, the HRTPO has had limited opportunities to engage with the community at large and with LEP persons, however the HRTPO continues to expand its outreach to citizens throughout the Heartland Region to garner public engagement in the transportation planning process. To help inform this plan, the HRTPO gathered data from other community organizations that serve LEP persons.

The HRTPO will rely primarily on self-identification by the non-English speaker, LEP individual, or companion:

- Inquiring as to the primary language of the individual if they have self-identified as needing language assistance services;
- Asking a multilingual staff person or qualified interpreter to verify an individual’s primary language;
- Using an “I Speak” language identification card or poster (examples can be found at <http://www.justice.gov/crt/lep/resources/ISpeakCards2004.pdf>)

Providing Language Assistance Measures

Organization Website	The HRTPO website includes a feature that translates the content into over 100 languages.
Notification Emails	Notification emails sent via www.mailchimp.com offer a translation feature that translate the message into the desired language of the reader.
Bilingual Employees	Based on the U.S. Census Bureau report and supported by data collected by the organization, the primary language by LEP individuals in the Heartland Region is Spanish. The HRTPO has at least one bilingual staff member who communicates in English and Spanish.
Community Partners	As needed, the organization seeks assistance from local partners to ensure meaningful access is offered to any LEP person.
Outreach Events	When the HRTPO conducts community outreach in an area known for a high proportion of LEP persons staff will ensure that materials are on-hand to provide to Spanish speaking LEP persons and bilingual staff will be in attendance if available.
Other tools as needed	Through training, staff will use tools to help them communicate with any LEP person that wishes to communicate with the HRTPO.
Notice	Written notice of free language translation is provided on all meeting notices.
Contract with Interpreter	The Central Florida Regional Planning Council, which provides staff services to the HRTPO, maintains a contract with an on-call translation service.

Training Staff

It is important that the staff know how and when to use language assistance services. The HRTPO's new and existing staff members will receive annual training on the content of the language access policy; identifying language access needs; and, providing language assistance services.

Monitoring and Updating the Plan

The Public Involvement Report and annual survey will include services requested by and provided to LEP persons to assist the HRTPO in monitoring the demand of additional services to LEP persons. The collection of racial, ethnic, and other similar demographic data on beneficiaries of or those affected by the programs and services of the HRTPO are collected through the use of census data and American Community Survey reports. Demographic information is also collected during the annual Public Engagement Survey of stakeholders. This information assists the HRTPO with improving its outreach and measures of effectiveness.

This plan will be reviewed annually and updated as needed or every three years in alignment with the Public Participation Plan of the HRTPO.