

I. Introduction

Lowndes County Transit System operates a transit system within Lowndes County and surrounding area. The Language Assistance Plan (LAP) has been prepared to address Lowndes County Transit System's responsibilities as they relate to the needs of individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Individuals, who have a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English are LEP. In Lowndes County Transit System service area there are 2,304 residents or 2.18% who describe themselves as not able to communicate in English "very well" (Source: US Census). Lowndes County Transit System is federally mandated (Executive Order 13166) to take responsible steps to ensure meaningful access to the benefits, services, information and other important portions of its programs and activities for individuals who are LEP. Lowndes County Transit System has utilized the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) LEP Guidance Handbook and performed a four factor analysis to develop its LAP.

The U.S. Department of Transportation Handbook, titled "Implementing the Department of Transportation's Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons: A Handbook for Public Transportation Providers, (April 13, 2007) " (hereinafter "Handbook"), states that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq., and its implementing regulations provide that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance (Handbook, page 5). The Handbook further adds that Title VI prohibits conduct that has a disproportionate effect on LEP persons because such conduct constitutes national origin discrimination (Handbook, page 5).

Executive Order 13166 of August 16, 2000 states that recipients of Federal financial assistance must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons (Handbook, page 6). Additionally recipients should use the DOT LEP Guidance to determine how best to comply with statutory and regulatory obligations to provide meaningful access to the benefits, services, information and other important portions of their programs and activities for individuals who are LEP (Handbook, page 6). These provisions are included in FTA Circular 4702.1B in Paragraph 9 of Chapter III (pages III-6 to III-9).

For many LEP individuals, public transit is the principal transportation mode available. It is important for Lowndes County Transit System be able to communicate effectively with all of its riders. When Lowndes County Transit System is able to communicate effectively with all of its riders, the service provided is safer, more reliable, convenient, and accessible for all within its service area. Lowndes County Transit System is committed to taking reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access for LEP individuals to this agency's services in accordance with Title VI.

This plan will demonstrate the efforts that Lowndes County Transit System undertakes to make its service accessible to all persons without regard to their ability to communicate in English. The plan addresses how services will be provided through general guidelines and procedures including the following:

- Identification: Identifying LEP populations in service areas
- Notification: Providing notice to LEP individuals about their right to language services
- Interpretation: Offering timely interpretation to LEP individuals upon request