

2024
2027

TITLE VI PROGRAM



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

**Plan for Providing
Meaningful Access
for Persons with
Limited English Proficiency**

PLAN FOR PROVIDING MEANINGFUL ACCESS FOR PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

On August 11, 2000, President William J. Clinton signed an executive order, **Executive Order 13166: Improving Access to Service for Persons with Limited English Proficiency**, to clarify Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Its purpose was to ensure accessibility to programs and services to eligible persons who are not proficient in the English language.

This executive order states that individuals who do not speak English well and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English are entitled to language assistance under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with respect to a particular type of service, benefit, or encounter. It reads in part:

Each Federal agency shall prepare a plan to improve access to its federally conducted programs and activities by eligible LEP persons. Each plan shall be consistent with the standards set forth in the LEP Guidance and shall include the steps the agency will take to ensure that eligible LEP persons can meaningfully access the agency's programs and activities.

Not only do all federal agencies have to develop Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plans, but as a condition of receiving federal financial assistance, recipients must also comply with Title VI and LEP guidelines of the federal agency from which funds are provided. Federal financial assistance includes grants, training, use of equipment, donations of surplus property, and other assistance. Recipients of federal funds range from state and local agencies to nonprofits and other organizations. Title VI covers a recipient's entire program or activity. This means all components of a recipient's operations are covered. Simply put, any organization that receives federal financial assistance is required to follow this Executive Order.

Who is an LEP Individual?

According to the United States Census Bureau, an LEP individual is any individual who speaks a language at home other than English as their primary language, and who speaks or understands English less than "very well." In compliance with guidance and rules issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, RIPTA will take reasonable steps to ensure that all persons have meaningful access to its programs, services, and information at no additional cost.

The LEP Plan starts with an assessment to identify LEP individuals who need assistance. Implementation includes the development of language assistance measures, staff training, notification measures to LEP individuals, and monitoring of the plan.

Determination of Need – Four-Factor LEP Analysis

In order to develop this policy, RIPTA has followed the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) four-factor LEP analysis which considers the following factors:

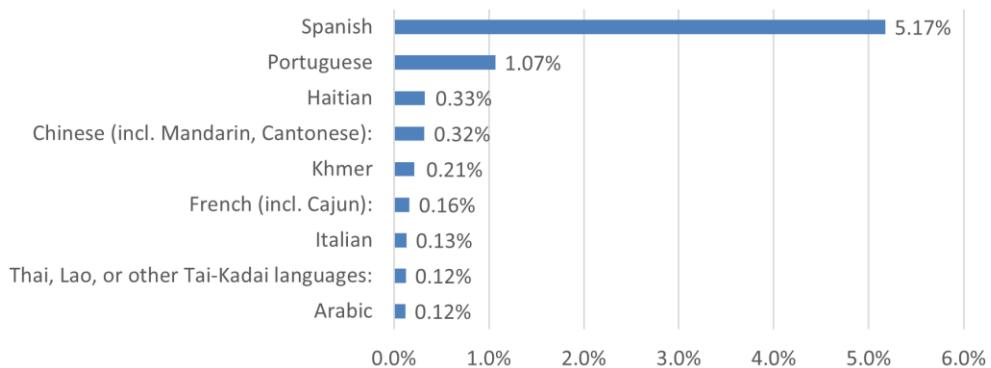
1. The number or proportion of LEP persons in the service area who may be served or are likely to encounter a RIPTA program, activity or service;
2. The frequency with which LEP persons come in contact with RIPTA programs, activities or services;
3. The nature and importance of programs, activities or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

Factor 1:

The number and proportion of LEP persons served or encountered in RIPTA’s service area.

RIPTA’s service area is the entire State of Rhode Island, which has an estimated total population of 1,003,110, excluding children under age five according to the 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. RIPTA has determined the percentage of the State’s LEP population by consulting the 2020 American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau. The survey shows that 8.4%, or 83,804 individuals five years and older in Rhode Island have limited English proficiency because they speak English less than “very well.”

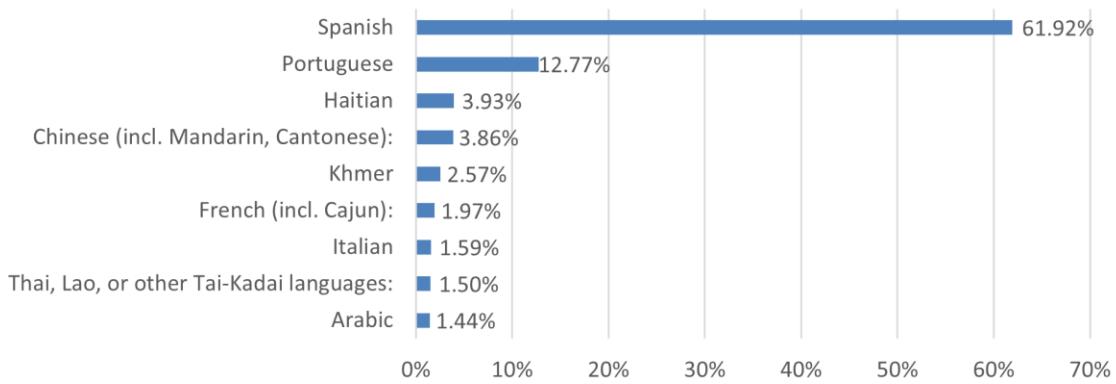
Percent of RI population that belong to LEP population by language group



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
 LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME BY ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH FOR THE POPULATION 5 YEARS AND OVER
 Table: B16001

According to the 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year estimates of Rhode Island's population five years and older, Spanish and Portuguese speaking LEP Persons (5.17%, and 1.07% of the state's population, respectively) are the two groups that represent more than 1% of Rhode Island's total population. The next highest language groups were Haitian (0.33%), Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese) (0.32%), Khmer (0.21%), French (0.16%), Italian (0.13%), Thai, Lao, or other Tai-Kadai languages (0.12%), and Arabic (0.12%). No other language group accounts for more than .10% of Rhode Island's total population.

Rhode Island Limited English Proficient population language group percentiles



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
 LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME BY ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH FOR THE POPULATION 5 YEARS AND OVER
 Table: B16001

Factor 2:

Frequency of contacts of LEP individuals with RIPTA's programs, activities, and services.

RIPTA has three data points for assessing how often and in what ways LEP populations interact with the RIPTA system: (1) the use of RIPTA's translation services; (2) the results of an internal RIPTA survey; and (3) the results of an external survey.

Interpreting Services

Since December of 2021, RIPTA has contracted with Pinpoint Translation Services to provide 24/7 interpreting service in over 200 languages. From December 2021 to December 2023, RIPTA made a total of 1,528 calls to Pinpoint. This equates to an average of 764 calls per year or roughly 14 calls per week requesting interpreting services into twelve different languages.

Spanish was overwhelmingly the most requested language. During the two-year period, Spanish made up 97.4%, Portuguese 1.1%, Arabic 0.8% and Russian 0.6%.

Internal RIPTA Survey

In December 2023, an LEP survey was developed and distributed to RIPTA administrative and customer service staff, and RIPTA drivers (fixed-route and paratransit) in order to obtain information about frequency of contact with LEP individuals. These RIPTA employees are the most likely to come into contact with the LEP population on a daily basis. The surveys were divided among four groups (1) Customer Service staff (11 surveys completed); (2) Administrative staff (42 surveys completed); 3) Fixed-Route Drivers (51 surveys completed); and (4) Paratransit Drivers (80 surveys completed). The following are the highlights of the customer service and administrative staff survey results:

- On average, customer service staff assists LEP customers 5.4 times per week, with a range of zero to 15 times per week.
- On average, administrative staff assists LEP customers 1.7 times per week, with a range of zero to 20 times per week.
- Spanish was reported as being by far the most frequent language encountered by customer service and administrative staff. Portuguese, though less often, is also encountered regularly. Other languages, including Haitian Kreyol, Cape Verdean Crioulo, French, Chinese, Cambodian (Khmer), Nigerian, Russian, Arabic, Italian, and Vietnamese were encountered on an irregular basis.

- 45% of customer service and 14% administrative respondents reported that they are able and qualified to translate English into another language. The reported languages include Spanish, Portuguese, Cape Verdean Crioulo, French, and Hindi.
- 73% of customer service respondents and 36% of administrative respondents reported that they have used translation assistance on the job. Of those respondents who provided answers to this question, they reported using the following translation methods:

	Customer Service	Administrative
Co-Worker	25%	71%
Pinpoint Translation Services	75%	7%
Internet	38%	36%

Surveys were also distributed to fixed-route drivers and paratransit drivers. They were asked how often they assisted LEP customers, and to identify which languages they most encountered. Below are the results of the surveys:

- Fixed-route drivers assist LEP customers an average of 17.1 times per week, with a range of zero to a hundred times per week. Paratransit operators assist LEP customers an average of 2.6 times per week, with a range from zero to ten times a week.
- Fixed-route and paratransit drivers most frequently encounter Spanish, Portuguese, Cape Verdean Crioulo, Haitian Kreyol, and Chinese (including Mandarin or Cantonese).
- Other languages mentioned by fixed-route and paratransit drivers as being encountered, with lesser frequency, were Arabic, French, Russian, Lebanese, Polish, Swahili, Cambodian, and sign language.

These survey results are consistent with data provided by the U.S. Census with Spanish and Portuguese being the most commonly encountered languages in RIPTA's service area. At an average of 17.1 times per week, fixed-route drivers had the most encounters with LEP individuals.

External LEP Survey

RIPTA provided sixty-four community organizations¹ who work with LEP populations with a survey in order to obtain information on specific languages spoken by the LEP population; population trends of LEP groups; LEP persons' awareness of the various programs and service offered by RIPTA; transit needs of LEP individuals that are not being met; and barriers to the use of transit. Sixty-four surveys were sent out and twenty-three were completed for a response rate of 36%. Following are the highlights of the questionnaire responses:

- The survey evaluated the importance of different RIPTA Programs and Services. The following shows those programs and services ranked from most important (#1) to least important (#11) to the organizations' clients:
 1. Low/no fare pass programs for qualifying seniors and persons with disabilities
 2. RIPTA's Wave smart card and app for easier payment, boarding, and fare capping
 3. The availability of translation services through RIPTA's customer service
 4. The availability of schedules and maps on RIPTA.com
 5. The availability of a trip planner tool RIPTA.com
 6. RIPTA's regular fixed bus route service
 7. RIde Paratransit service
 8. Flex Service
 9. Express service to Quonset Business Park
 10. Transportation resources listed by community on RIPTA.com
 11. Downtown Transit Connector (DTC)

¹ Those organizations are African Alliance of Rhode Island, AKA Sorority, Andean Cultural Center of RI, Amos House, ARISE, Blackstone Valley Community Action Program, Cape Verdean Community Development Corporation (CACD), Cape Verdean Heritage Committee, Cape Verdean Progressive Center, Center for Southeast Asians, Central Falls City Hall, Central Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce, Children's Friend, Colombian Association, Community Action Partnership of Providence, Community Care Alliance, Comprehensive Community Action Program, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Direct Action For Rights and Equality, Dorcas International, East Bay Community Action Program, East Providence Chamber, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Genesis Center, Ghana Association, Guatemalan Center of New England, Haitian Community Center, Hispanic Business Association, Hope and Change for Haiti, Jamaican Association, Jewish Collaborative Services, John Hope Settlement House, The King's Cathedral Church, The King's Tabernacle Church, Latino Policy Institute, League of Women Voters of RI, Liberian Association, Muslim Dawah Center, NAACP Newport County Branch, NAACP Providence Branch, Narragansett Indian Tribe, New Bridges for Haitian Success, Nigerian Community of RI, Oasis International, Progreso Latino, Peru Association, Prince Hall Masons, Providence Chamber of Commerce, Quisqueya in Action, Refugee Dream Center, Rotary Club of Providence, Rhode Island Black Business Association, RI Family Literacy Initiative, Rhode Island Indian Council, Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence, Rhode Island Latino Arts, Rhode Island Mexican Association, South Providence Neighborhood Association, Southside Cultural Center, Tri County Community Action Agency, Warwick Rotary, West Bay Community Action, West End Tabernacle Church, and Zeta Sorority.

- The survey asked which destination requests are most frequently sought by the organizations' clients. The following table shows the percentage of respondents that selected the listed destinations. In addition to these, write-in responses included libraries, basic services, and access to food and medical care.

Percent of responses that chose the following destinations as frequently sought by LEP clients	
Commuting to work	91%
School	57%
Shopping	52%
Family or community	43%
Daycare	43%
Religious events	35%
ESL classes	30%
Recreation	17%

- The most commonly cited barriers to the LEP population's use of transit included affordability, language barriers and transit reliability and frequency.
- Some organizations mentioned specific transit needs of their LEP clients. Comments included:
 - More frequent, fast, and reliable service;
 - More affordable fares;
 - Extended evening and morning hours;
 - Addressing language barriers and fear of not being able to communicate or ask questions;
 - Translated transit materials and schedules;
 - Distribution of paper route maps and schedules;
 - More direct routes and routes that go around the city rather than through downtown;
 - Bus passes for low-income individuals;
 - Service connection to shelters for unhoused people;
 - Increased ease of learning and understanding how to navigate system for LEPs;
 - Assistance to seniors for handling bags and carts;
 - Access to computer and internet for service information;
 - Transportation to medical care.

Factor 3:**Assess the importance of RIPTA's programs, activities, and services to the LEP population.**

As stated in the U.S. Department of Transportation's *Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons*, RIPTA operates in full agreement that an LEP person's inability to effectively utilize public transportation may adversely affect his or her ability to obtain health care, or education, or access to employment. While public transit is not considered an essential service, as are police, fire and medical emergency services, public transit is a key means of achieving mobility for many LEP persons.

According to the 2020 Census, 9.6% of LEP individuals aged 16 years and over reported use of public transit as their primary means of transportation to work. Recent immigrants to the United States (including those persons who may not be LEP) use public transit at higher rates than native-born adults. However, public transit use among recent immigrants decreases with length of residence in the United States.

Most of RIPTA's services run through its central hub in Providence, which is an urban core and, therefore, contains a higher LEP population relative to more suburban and rural areas. As a result, RIPTA is mindful that its services are critical to the LEP population.

Factor 4:**The resources available to RIPTA and the costs.**

RIPTA is committed to employing resources to reduce the barriers that limit access to its information and services by LEP persons. RIPTA prioritizes financial and staff resources to meet compliance goals and fulfill the provisions of the LEP program on an as-needed basis. RIPTA currently employs the following resources to help provide language assistance. These resources are funded with RIPTA's operating funds.

Dedicated Compliance Officer

RIPTA employs a dedicated Compliance Officer who oversees RIPTA's LEP Program. One of the primary functions of this officer is to communicate with the LEP population on a regular basis to determine how RIPTA can provide this population with language assistance so that it can access the RIPTA system. The Compliance Officer does this, primarily, by regular communication with groups who have significant LEP constituents. Communication may be done through internal and

external meetings, phone calls, emails and surveys. The goals of these communications are to identify documents, such as pages of the website or public timetables that would assist LEP persons in accessing RIPTA programs and services.

Marketing & Communications Department

RIPTA's Marketing & Communications Department, working closely with the Compliance Officer to coordinate communication to the LEP population, is responsible for RIPTA's external communications. Communication efforts include the distribution of print materials in RIPTA's transit facilities and vehicles, in-person public outreach; on board digital advertisements and facilitating public hearings and comments on RIPTA's services. This department uses virtual tools and platforms, such as social media and RIPTA.com, to enhance and broaden the reach of public engagement efforts by making participation more convenient and affordable for greater numbers of people. Virtual tools provide increased transparency and access to transportation planning activities and project development and decision-making processes. A variety of social media platforms (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn) are used to share information about meetings, transportation related events and news items, and to respond to followers' questions and comments. These platforms are also used to advertise opportunities for participation in the planning process.

Customer Service Department

RIPTA's Customer Service Department receives questions, requests for information and assistance and complaints. All Customer Service representatives are trained in how to direct callers who need language assistance to Pinpoint Translation Services (Pinpoint), which RIPTA uses to provide interpreting help to all LEP individuals. These services are described in greater detail below.

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN

Based on the four-factor analysis above, RIPTA has determined that the Spanish LEP population needs the most language assistance because it represents 61.92% of Rhode Island's total LEP population. Portuguese is second at 12.77% of the LEP population. All other languages each represent less than 5% of the LEP population.

RIPTA provides language assistance to Rhode Island's LEP populations as described below.

Interpreting Services

As noted above, any LEP individual can obtain interpreting services by calling RIPTA's Customer Service Department, where they are transferred to Pinpoint. Pinpoint provides interpreting

services in over 260 languages with 24/7 availability. (See Appendix, Exhibit D for the procedures used by RIPTA staff to connect LEP callers to Pinpoint.)

Written Translations

RIPTA follows DOT's Safe Harbor Provision with respect to the written translation of documents. This Provision requires written translation of vital documents for language groups that constitute either 5% or 1,000 individuals within RIPTA's service area. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey (ACS), Spanish and Portuguese speaking LEP Persons (5.17%, and 1.07% of the state's population, respectively) are the two groups that represent more than 1% of Rhode Island's total population. The next highest language groups, which have at least 1,000 LEP individuals in RIPTA's service area according to the 2020 ACS, were Haitian (0.33%), Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese, 0.32%), Khmer (0.21%), French (0.16%), Italian (0.13%), Thai, Lao, or other Tai-Kadai languages (0.12%), and Arabic (0.12%). No other language group accounts for more than .10% of Rhode Island's total population.

RIPTA has identified its vital documents as (1) How to Ride Guide, (2) Overview of the RIPTA Bus Pass Program for Seniors and People with Disabilities, (3) Application for RIPTA ADA Paratransit Service Certification, (4) RIde ADA brochure, (5) Public Hearing Notices, (6) Title VI brochure, and (7) Civil Rights - Title VI complaint form. RIPTA provides translations of these documents into the nine safe harbor languages on its website, RIPTA.com. As noted above, translation of non-vital documents is provided, upon request, by Pinpoint Translation Services.

Language Assistance Cards

RIPTA has created Language Assistance Cards that state, in each of the nine safe harbor languages and Vietnamese, how to contact RIPTA for language assistance. The cards are placed in all transit centers and RIPTA vehicles; it may also be viewed on RIPTA's website. (The current language assistance card can be viewed in the Appendix at Exhibit E.)

Google Translate

The RIPTA website (RIPTA.com) was updated in February 2012 to include the Google Translate application directly on the site; the application automatically can translate the entire RIPTA website into each of the safe harbor languages. If Google Translate does not translate to the satisfaction of the customer, the customer can contact RIPTA's Customer Service Department, who may utilize Pinpoint Translation Services for a better translation.

Other Language Assistance

RIPTA has open lines of communication with organizations that work with LEP populations. These organizations are aware of how to contact RIPTA to obtain language assistance. RIPTA also analyzes census data and community profiles to determine whether language assistance might be needed in certain settings, such as having public meeting notices translated in safe harbor languages when meetings occur in areas where data suggests that translations are needed. RIPTA also honors requests for translations at our public meetings, when such requests are made at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN

RIPTA has and will continue to conduct the following to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its Language Assistance Plan and will make improvements where needed.

- Solicit input and feedback from the LEP community and RIPTA frontline staff, including drivers and customer service representatives;
- Measure changes in the number and proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served by examining updates from Pinpoint, the U.S. Census and any available data from the public school districts in the RIPTA service area;
- Assess the demographic profile of public meeting attendees for whether language services are needed;
- Consider measuring actual frequency of contact by LEP persons by collecting information from the Customer Service Department, the RIPTA website, frontline employees, and through surveys of customers who request language assistance services;
- Conducting rider surveys to specifically collect LEP information;
- Assess any and all LEP complaints to improve access.

RIPTA's monitoring efforts are reflected in the Pinpoint data and the results of the External and Internal LEP Surveys described in the Factor 2 section above.

RIPTA will make changes to its Language Assistance Plan as needed, but at a minimum, it will be updated every three years to coincide with RIPTA's Title VI submittal to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

RIPTA also has developed a policy regarding subrecipients notifying them of their responsibility under Title VI to take reasonable steps to insure access to LEP populations. RIPTA will monitor their performance and compliance.

LEP TRAINING

As of December 2023, RIPTA has 525 front line employees identified as the most likely to come in contact with LEP individuals. These employees are found in the following categories:

Department	Count
Fixed-Route Bus Operator	377
RIde Bus Operator	106
Supervisor	22
Customer Service	20

All these employees are trained to be aware and assist LEP individuals during their Diversity Training. They are also instructed to direct LEP individuals to RIPTA Customer Service, which will then connect them to Pinpoint. In addition, all vehicle operators carry Language Assistance cards written in the safe harbor languages, which also provide information on how to contact RIPTA Customer Service. These cards are also available at RIPTA stations and ticket windows.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) is a guide for RIPTA's ongoing public participation endeavors. Its purpose is to ensure that RIPTA utilizes effective means of providing information and receiving public input on transportation decisions from low income, minority and LEP populations.

Under federal regulations, transit operators must take reasonable steps to ensure that LEP persons have meaningful access to their programs and activities. This means that public participation opportunities, normally provided in English, should be accessible to persons who have a limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand English.

RIPTA's public involvement process aims to give the public ample opportunities for early and continuing participation in critical transportation projects, plans and decisions, and to provide full public access to key decisions. Engaging the public early and often in the decision-making process is critical to the success of any transportation plan or program and is required by numerous state and federal laws.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA)

RIPTA is a quasi-public, independent authority. Established in 1966, RIPTA is authorized to operate public transit services throughout the State of Rhode Island. The agency is governed by a governor-appointed nine member Board of Directors. RIPTA operates 3,159 daily trips on 57 statewide fixed bus routes. RIPTA provides discounted fares for seniors and persons with

disabilities. Children ages 5 and under ride free when accompanied by an adult. RIPTA provides a variety of written and oral language assistance services.

B. Purpose of the Public Participation Plan (PPP)

RIPTA developed the PPP to guide public involvement efforts and enhance access to RIPTA's transportation decision-making process by low income, minority and LEP populations. The PPP describes the overall goals, guiding principles and appropriate outreach methods that RIPTA could use to reach out to low income, minority and LEP populations.

Pursuant to FTA Title VI regulatory guidance, federal funding recipients and subrecipients should seek out and consider the viewpoints of minority, low income and LEP populations in the course of conducting public outreach and involvement activities.

To meet these requirements, RIPTA developed the PPP, a document intended as a guide for how RIPTA will deepen and sustain its efforts to engage diverse community members throughout its service area. The PPP aims to offer early, continuous and meaningful opportunities for the public to be involved in the identification of social, economic and environmental impacts of proposed transportation decisions at RIPTA. These examples have proven successful for RIPTA in doing outreach to these populations.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION METHODS

A. Introduction

RIPTA will be successful in reaching out to low income, minority and LEP populations by utilizing a variety of methods to provide information, invite participation and seek input. Regardless of the method, RIPTA will select the most appropriate and feasible methods to support each public participation activity. Care should be taken to ensure that the selected methods are implemented in a manner that specifically targets the participation of low income, minority and LEP populations as well as the general public.

B. Methods and Considerations for Enhancing Participation

I. Methods and Considerations for Enhancing Participation from Low Income Populations

1a. Meeting Considerations

Meeting organizers will carefully consider meeting locations and times in order to enhance participation from low-income communities. RIPTA will coordinate meeting times with transit schedules ensuring that evening meetings occur while return transit trips are readily available. Meetings will be held in accessible meeting locations, near or on a RIPTA bus line.

1b. Methods for Publicizing Participation Opportunities

Publicity at RIPTA stations and/bus stops would be one of the more effective methods for publicizing participation opportunities to low-income populations. RIPTA will publicize opportunities at Kennedy Plaza and the transit hubs in Pawtucket and Newport. On occasion, RIPTA posts at local bus stops in English and Spanish when publicizing a change along a particular section of a route—such as a detour.

II. Methods and Considerations for Enhancing Participation from LEP Populations

The availability of interpreters at meetings and translated outreach materials is crucial to enhancing participation from LEP populations.

2a. Meeting Considerations

Meeting organizers will try to consider meeting location, time and accessibility in order to enhance participation from LEP communities.

2b. Methods for Publicizing Participation Opportunities

Publicize participation opportunities to LEP populations at RIPTA bus stations. RIPTA will also use ethnic media sources and online notices to publicize meetings.

III. Methods and Considerations for Enhancing Participation from Minority Populations

RIPTA will do outreach at community events and through neighborhood notices via email, Facebook posts and Tweets. RIPTA has developed productive working relationships with community organizations that serve people of color.

C. Menu of Public Participation Methods

The following menu of methods includes those used to inform, reach out and invite participation and seek public input.

1. Printed and Electronic Materials Produced by RIPTA

Outreach information can be publicized through materials produced by RIPTA such as newsletters, flyers and posters. RIPTA newsletters include the monthly RIPTA e-newsletter. Vital information in printed materials is currently translated into Spanish. In accordance with the FTA Title VI Circular “safe harbor” guidance, RIPTA provides written translation of vital documents in the nine safe harbor languages identified at the bottom of its website. RIPTA also distributes notices/flyers through community partners.

2. Printed Materials Produced by Other Organizations

Coordinating with community partners can be cost-effective and can help partner organizations provide information that is of interest to the groups they represent. Information can be publicized in local and regional community newsletters, church bulletins, flyers and other publications.

2a. Local Service Providers

Local service providers regularly communicate with community members through their newsletters to provide information about local services and activities of interest. For example, Housing Authorities communicate regularly with the community they serve through rent notices. Other service providers identified by community members included: emergency food and housing centers, daytime drop-in service providers, food banks, travelers' aid groups, veterans' organizations and drop-in service providers.

2b. Local Schools, Community Colleges and Universities

RIPTA may be able to reach parents of school children by coordinating with local schools. Notices and flyers can be provided to the school, with students taking the notices home to their parents. RIPTA may also provide translated materials as recommended by school officials.

3. RIPTA Website

RIPTA's website (www.RIPTA.com) is a communications tool that provides substantial information about RIPTA policies, strategies, programs and services. The website is translatable to the nine safe harbor languages: Arabic, simplified Chinese, Khmer, Lao, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Creole and Italian. RIPTA also uses social networking applications such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

If Google Translate does not translate to the satisfaction of the customer, then they may contact RIPTA Customer Service, and utilize Pinpoint, our translation services provider, to obtain a better translation. Pinpoint provides translation and interpreting services in over 260 languages, with 24/7 availability.

4. Station Information Resources

RIPTA bus stations can provide information about RIPTA public participation opportunities, beyond basic fare and schedule information. RIPTA users can stay up to date on RIPTA public participation opportunities while they wait for their bus. Providing this information in multiple languages assists those with limited English proficiency. RIPTA currently provides printed brochures in English and Spanish.

Information resources located in RIPTA stations that are used to communicate schedule and service can also be used to conduct outreach. RIPTA newsletters, bulletin boards, information kiosks and other information stations will also be used to promote participation opportunities.

5. Media Targeted to Ethnic Communities

Participation opportunities can be publicized through radio, television and newspapers that serve both English speaking and language-specific audiences, especially Spanish. Some local news or radio shows and local publications, such as free neighborhood weekly papers, are good sources of information and events in the immediate area. RIPTA will tailor its message to the appropriate audience. RIPTA will continue outreach to numerous media outlets in the area that are targeted or appeal to ethnic communities. RIPTA will continue and expand advertising and outreach to

local and ethnic media sources, including TV public service announcements, radio, print and web-based outlets.

6. Coordination with Community Events

In cooperation with community organizations, RIPTA, mostly through its Commuter Resource RI staff, will continue its current practice of hosting information tables that provide materials about RIPTA service and outreach methods at community events and activities. These events can range in scale from large city-wide events to localized activities. Most community events can help RIPTA reach specific audiences such as seniors, youth, families with children, commuters and others.

7. Coordination with Other Agencies

RIPTA will develop partnerships with agencies that regularly communicate with local residents. RIPTA will identify agencies who serve low income, minority and LEP populations and where they convene. RIPTA will reach out to the following types of agencies: faith-based, geographic-specific such as tenant associations, neighborhood and community, education, social services, recreation, environmental, political, youth- and senior-oriented organizations. RIPTA can work with these partners to provide information about public participation opportunities, included in notices and regular mailings sent by these agencies.

8. Regular Meetings of Civic and Community Organizations

RIPTA will provide updates on its policies, projects, strategies and methods by participating periodically in scheduled meetings of local civic and community organizations. These gatherings provide an opportunity to make a presentation and answer questions. RIPTA does this on a limited basis—usually related to specific issues.

9. Community Meetings

Meeting formats are tailored to help achieve specific public participation goals. Some meetings are designed to share information and answer questions. Others are designed to engage the public in providing input, establishing priorities and helping to achieve consensus on a specific recommendation.

For all meetings, the venue will be a facility that is fully accessible for persons with disabilities and, preferably, is served by public transit. The venue should be a location that is familiar and comfortable for the target audience. If a series of meetings are scheduled on a topic, RIPTA will consider different meeting locations, since no one location is usually convenient to all participants.

9a. Community Meeting Formats

i. Open House

This format provides opportunities for participants to receive information at their own pace by visiting a series of information stations that may include tabletop displays, maps, photographs, visualizations and other tools. Individual questions are responded to by staff and technical

experts. Some open houses include a short educational presentation and comment period at a designated time. Participants are often given comment cards so they can provide written comments. Staff may be assigned to take verbal comments and transcribe them to provide a written record. The open house format can be effective when RIPTA is seeking to introduce a new concept or when a lengthy process has been finalized and RIPTA is sharing the final results.

ii. Large Group Discussion

These meetings are usually focused on a specific topic and feature an informational presentation followed by a comment period. The comment period can be formal or informal depending on the number of participants and the meeting venue. Individual comments are often limited to 2-3 minutes, especially when there are a large number of people wanting to comment. This format can also include some interactive techniques suitable for a large group such as electronic or show of hands polling or short questionnaires or surveys.

9b. Community Meeting Considerations

i. Scheduling

RIPTA staff will coordinate the scheduling of community meetings with community partners to minimize conflicts. However, some scheduling conflicts may be unavoidable when a public participation activity is urgent or linked to a time-sensitive topic.

ii. Meeting Locations

Convenient and comfortable meeting locations are key to soliciting active public participation, particularly in low income, minority and LEP communities. RIPTA can host meetings in venues including the local branch libraries, YMCA, local school or community colleges, churches and many others. It is important that meetings are held in different venues since it is unlikely that no one location is ideal for all community members. Meeting locations can be rotated to ensure access for as many community members as possible. Community partners should be reminded that regardless of the popularity or convenience of a venue, RIPTA is required to conduct all public participation methods in locations that are fully accessible to persons with disabilities and the venues should be served by public transit.

iii. Meeting Times

Public participation methods can be scheduled at varying times of day and on different days of the week, especially weeknights after traditional work hours.

10. Focus Groups /Stakeholder Meetings

RIPTA will continue to host discussion groups with small, targeted groups of participants on an as needed basis. Focus groups can provide in-depth information about projects, plans or issues that may impact a specific group or community. These groups can be both formal and informal and can be conducted in a specific language. RIPTA will proactively include low income, minority and LEP communities.

11. Special Events

RIPTA will develop special events to announce, highlight or kick-off its outreach about a policy, program, project or activity. Events can be region-wide or focus on a specific station or area.

12. Walking Tours and On-Site Meetings

RIPTA can host walking tours and on-site meetings specific to locations that interest the public in order to highlight an initiative, project or facility. Walking tours can be primarily educational and RIPTA may ask participants to complete a survey or questionnaire during or after the tour. Walking tours may be helpful in helping RIPTA collect community opinion on issues such as station improvements and proposed extensions. RIPTA can work with community partners to host language specific meetings. For example, meetings can be held for specific populations in Spanish-only and Portuguese-only.

13. Telephone Information and Comment Line

All RIPTA Customer Service Agents have access to Pinpoint Language Services, which is an over-the-phone interpretation (OPI) service. The service allows RIPTA Customer Service Agents to call Pinpoint when a customer has limitations in speaking English. The professionally trained and tested OPI interpreters listen to the customer, analyze the message and accurately convey its original meaning to the RIPTA staff member, then respond to the customer in his/her own language. Pinpoint offers interpretation in over 150 languages.

D. RIPTA's Ongoing Public Participation Methods

RIPTA will continue to promote and enhance the use of its ongoing public participation methods to reach out to low income, minority and LEP populations. RIPTA is committed to reducing the barriers encountered by LEP persons in accessing its services and benefits, to the extent resources are available.

RIPTA will conduct proactive outreach to expand the reach, inclusivity and effectiveness of these ongoing methods. Examples of these existing methods include:

- RIPTA website (RIPTA.com);
- RIPTA social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter));
- Regular newsletters/flyers distributed through RIPTA stations and bus stops;
- Regular communications with media;
- RIPTA Board meetings;
- Focus groups;
- Partnerships with Community Based Organizations;
- Digital boards and televisions;
- Communication with elected officials;
- Press briefings and news releases;
- Regular emails to community members;
- Participation in community fairs and festivals;

- Sponsorship of major community events;
- Passenger bulletins in stations;
- Educational tours and briefings;
- Pinpoint Over the Phone Interpretation (OPI) Service;
- Language interpreters at public meetings; and
- Written language assistance services.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

In its public outreach efforts, RIPTA works to involve customers and the general public, including the minority, low-income, and LEP populations. RIPTA utilizes a variety of approaches to communicate with interested parties and members of the public at large, and the agency is continually working to improve its outreach.

Over the past three years, we have worked on a variety of projects that have involved public outreach and examples are below.

Outreach for Proposed Service Improvements (West Bay and South County)

In May 2021, RIPTA announced proposed service changes to Routes 8X, 13, 14, 21, 22, 29, 30, 62, 66, 203, 210 and 231 as part of a long-range plan to improve service in West Bay and South County communities. Public outreach included the following:

- Media release issued to press
- Passengers notified via social media and e-newsletter
- Onboard digital ads (English and Spanish)
- Dedicated website (RIPTA.com/Fall2021) with Google Translate available in 28 languages
- Notices posted at bus stops and major transit hubs (English and Spanish)
- On May 20, 2021, one virtual public workshop was held

Outreach for Onboard Passenger Survey

In September 2021, RIPTA launched an onboard passenger survey as it worked to gather detailed data to help the transit authority improve current service and plan future routes that best meet the public's needs. Surveyors were on RIPTA buses from Monday, September 27, 2021, through mid-November. Some of the demographic questions – including race, household income, and language proficiency – were asked to help the transit authority comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

Public outreach included the following:

- Media release issued to press
- Passengers notified via social media and e-newsletter
- Onboard digital ads (English and Spanish)

- Information available online at RIPTA.com
- Bilingual staff who speak English and Spanish were available on some routes; when necessary, passengers who speak other languages were given an opportunity to complete the survey later by phone in their native language.

Outreach for Full Transition to Wave

In December 2021, RIPTA announced that it would fully transition to its new smart fare technology system – Wave. Starting January 15, 2022, paper fare products, including transfers, would no longer be accepted onboard and all trips would be exact change only as part of this transition. Public outreach included the following:

- Media release issued to press
- Passengers notified via social media and e-newsletter
- Onboard digital ads (English and Spanish)
- Notices posted at bus stops and major transit hubs (English and Spanish)
- Advertisement in the January 2022 Service Changes Flyer (English and Spanish)
- Information available online at RIPTA.com

Outreach for East Side Tunnel Project

In September 2022, RIPTA announced the East Side Tunnel project, which is intended to create safer pedestrian travel zones, full accessibility at bus stops, and improved passenger amenities while preserving the tunnel's historic architecture. RIPTA shared conceptual designs for the tunnel entrances with the public and hosted a discussion on what community members want to see at the areas around the tunnel entrances. Public outreach included the following:

- Media release issued to press
- Passengers notified via social media and e-newsletter
- Onboard digital ads (English and Spanish)
- Dedicated website (RIPTA.com/tunnel) with Google Translate available in 28 languages
- Notices posted at bus stops and major transit hubs (English and Spanish)
- Communication with various stakeholder groups including municipal officials, RIPTA Riders Alliance, nearby universities, and business leaders
- On September 20, 2022, one virtual public workshop was held

Outreach for Proposed Service Improvements (West Bay, Pawtucket and Newport)

In March 2022, RIPTA announced proposed service changes to Routes 1, 13, 29, 71, 73, 75, 76, 78, 80 and the R-Line, and the addition of three new routes (Routes 16, 23 and 68). These improvements were part of a long-range plan to improve service in West Bay, Pawtucket and South County communities. Public outreach included the following:

- Media release issued to press
- Passengers notified via social media and e-newsletter
- Onboard digital ads (English and Spanish)
- Dedicated website (RIPTA.com/MovingTransitForward) with Google Translate

- available in 28 languages
- Notices posted at bus stops and major transit hubs (English and Spanish)
- Three virtual public workshops were held on March 14, March 15 and March 16, 2022.

Outreach for Dorrance St. Transit Center

In light of the City of Providence's proposed changes to reimagine Kennedy Plaza, RIPTA – along with RIDOT - began focusing on the development of a new transit center on Dorrance Street in February 2022. RIPTA held virtual and in-person public meetings for the public to submit their input. Public outreach included the following:

- Media release issued to press
- Passengers notified via social media and e-newsletter
- Onboard digital ads (English and Spanish)
- Dedicated website (RIPTA.com/TransitCenter) with Google Translate available in 28 languages
- Three virtual public meetings with ASL Interpreters were held; one on February 24, 2022 and two on March 8, 2022.
- At the request of riders, an in-person meeting was held on Monday, March 21, 2022.
- Discussion with RIPTA's Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) in February and March 2023
- Communication with various stakeholder groups including municipal officials, RIPTA Riders Alliance, Grow Smart RI, and business leaders

Outreach for R-Line Free Fare Pilot Program

On September 1, 2022, RIPTA launched a free fare pilot program on the R-Line, RIPTA's most frequent and highest-ridership route, connecting Providence and Pawtucket. The pilot program, which ended on September 30, 2023, presented a unique opportunity to study the benefits and potential drawbacks of fare free transit service in Rhode Island. Public outreach included the following:

- Media release issued to press
- Passengers notified via social media and e-newsletter
- Onboard digital ads (English and Spanish)
- Digital social media campaign (English and Spanish)
- Notices posted at bus stops and major transit hubs (English and Spanish)
- Advertisement in the January 2022 Service Changes Flyer (English and Spanish)
- RIPTA conducted two rounds of community engagement, first in Fall 2022 and again in Spring 2023. This extensive outreach consisted of:
 - 2 rider surveys conducted on-board and online (English and Spanish); the survey included questions about travel behavior, RIPTA usage, and demographics
 - 2 rider focus groups – October 2022 (English and Spanish)

- 8 interviews with elected officials, RIPTA Board members, and other state leaders
- 11 social service organizations surveyed
- 29 local organizations visited along the R-Line including Gustoso Market, Washington Public Library, La Broa Pizzeria and Oak Street Health Clinic
- 2 advisory discussions held (Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee and Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council)
- 10 hours of pop-up events held at five high-ridership bus stops with bilingual staff and materials along the corridor

Outreach for Pawtucket-Central Falls Transit Center

On Monday, January 23, 2023, RIPTA's Pawtucket Transit Center moved from Roosevelt Avenue to Pine Street and Goff Avenue. Routes 1, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 78, 80, QX and the R-Line were adjusted to service the new Pawtucket-Central Falls Transit Center, connecting passengers with MBTA Commuter Rail service to Boston and Providence. Route 78 and the R-Line will continue to serve Roosevelt Avenue. Public outreach included:

- Media release issued to press
- Passengers notified via social media and e-newsletter
- Onboard digital ads (English and Spanish)
- Notices posted at Pawtucket transit hub (English and Spanish)
- Targeted social media ad campaign (English, Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian Creole)
- Targeted digital advertisements (English, Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian Creole)
- Bus shelter advertisements in Pawtucket and Central Falls (English and Spanish)

Outreach for Customer Satisfaction Survey

In 2021, 2022, and 2023, RIPTA invited customers to take the annual American Bus Benchmarking Group (ABBG) Customer Satisfaction Survey, available online in English and Spanish. The survey dates were from Monday, April 12, 2021 through Sunday May 9, 2021; Monday, March 28, 2022, through Sunday, May 1, 2022; and again Monday, March 27 through Sunday, April 30, 2023. Surveys like these help RIPTA better understand its customers' opinions of existing service and priorities areas that need improvement. Public outreach included the following:

- Onboard digital ads (English and Spanish)
- Targeted social media ad campaign (English and Spanish)
- The NAACP Providence Branch, Progreso Latino, Southeast Asian Community Center, African Alliance of Rhode Island, Dorcas International, Genesis Center, and East Bay Community Action Program were contacted for help in reaching diverse populations
- RIPTA.com was updated with the survey information
- Media release issued to press
- Passengers and community partners notified via social media and e-newsletter
- Posted on Transit app

Outreach for Service Changes (2021 – 2023)

RIPTA makes regular service adjustments three times a year in response to seasonal changes and/or passenger use. Public outreach included the following:

- Media release issued to press
- Passengers notified via social media and e-newsletter
- Onboard digital ads (English and Spanish)
- Dedicated website (RIPTA.com/ServiceChanges) with Google Translate available in 28 languages
- Notices posted at bus stops and major transit hubs (English and Spanish)
- Service Changes Flyer distributed in-person to passengers at major transit hubs (English and Spanish)
- Schedules distributed in-person to passengers at major transit hubs (English and Spanish)