



# **BEN FRANKLIN TRANSIT**



## **2025 Language Assistance Plan**

Approved by BFT Board of Directors July 14th, 2025

**PREPARED BY:**  
Planning & Service Development

# Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
FIGURE 1 – BFT’S COMMITMENT TO BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS .....	3
<b>FOUR-FACTOR ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
FIGURE 2 – FOUR FACTOR ANALYSIS .....	4
<b>FACTOR 1: NUMBER OR PROPORTION OF LEP PERSONS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
FIGURE 3 – SERVICE AREA LANGUAGE PROFILE .....	5
FIGURE 4 – SERVICE AREA LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY PROFILE .....	5
<b>TABLE 1 – LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME - BENTON &amp; FRANKLIN COUNTY.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>FACTOR 2: THE FREQUENCY AT WHICH LEP INDIVIDUALS’ ACCESS OR USE BFT SERVICES.....</b>	<b>6</b>
MAP 1 – BFT PTBA LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY POPULATION PERCENTAGE BY BLOCK GROUP .....	7
TABLE 2 – 2025 FIXED ROUTE ON-BOARD RIDER SURVEY LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME .....	7
TABLE 3 – 2018 DAR ON-BOARD RIDER SURVEY LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME .....	7
<b>FACTOR 3: THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE SERVICE, PROGRAMS, AND ACTIVITIES TO PEOPLE’S LIVES.....</b>	<b>8</b>
TABLE 4 – MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK .....	8
<b>FACTOR 4: RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO RECIPIENTS AND THE COST.....</b>	<b>8</b>
TABLE 5 –STAFF FLUENT IN SPANISH & OTHER LANGUAGES .....	8
TABLE 6 – PRISMA STATISTIC FOR 2025 .....	9
TABLE 7 – PRISMA STATISTIC FOR 2024 .....	9
TABLE 8 – PRISMA STATISTIC FOR 2023 .....	9
<b>LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>TASK #1: IMPROVE AND MAINTAIN LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES &amp; OUTREACH EFFORTS.....</b>	<b>11</b>
TABLE 9 – LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES .....	11
<b>TASK #2: PROVIDING NOTICE ABOUT LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE TO LEP PERSONS.....</b>	<b>13</b>
FIGURE 5 – SUMMARY OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE TO LEP PERSONS.....	13
.....	14
FIGURE 6 – PRISMA TRANSLATION SERVICES FLYER .....	14
<b>TASK #3: PROVIDING NOTICE OF AVAILABLE LANGUAGE SERVICES .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>TASK #4: EMPLOYEE TRAINING.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>TASK #5: MONITORING AND UPDATING THE LEP PLAN .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>TASK #6: TARGETED OUTREACH TO LEP POPULATIONS.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>16</b>

**\*Spanish version available upon request**

**\*Versión en español disponible a solicitud**

## Introduction

Ben Franklin Transit (BFT) provides fixed-route, paratransit, and rideshare services within the Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA), established under Chapter 36.57A of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW). The PTBA spans 617 square miles across Benton and Franklin counties in southeastern Washington, serving cities including Kennewick, Pasco, Richland, West Richland, Benton City, Prosser, and parts of surrounding unincorporated areas.

The PTBA encompasses a diverse population, including a significant number of individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)—those who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand it. This includes individuals who reported to the U.S. Census that they speak English "less than very well," "not well," or "not at all."

To address language barriers and ensure equitable access, BFT is committed to implementing consistent language assistance practices across all its services. With guidance from its governing board, BFT proactively works to make transit services accessible to all community members, particularly LEP individuals.

*Figure 1 – BFT’s Commitment to Breaking Down Barriers*



This two-part document outlines BFT’s efforts to support LEP populations and its compliance with **Executive Order 13166**, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency.” This executive order requires federally funded organizations to take reasonable steps to ensure LEP individuals have meaningful access to services.

- **Part 1** presents BFT’s **Four-Factor Analysis**, conducted in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and FTA Circular 4702.1B.

- **Part 2** outlines BFT’s **Language Assistance Plan**, detailing how the findings of the analysis will be implemented to improve service accessibility through both written and verbal support.
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## Four-Factor Analysis

As recommended by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Four-Factor Analysis helps transit agencies assess the need for language services. The four factors are:

1. **Demographics** – The number or proportion of LEP individuals likely to use BFT services.
2. **Frequency of Contact** – How often BFT interacts with LEP individuals.
3. **Importance of Services** – The significance of BFT’s services in the daily lives of LEP individuals.
4. **Resources Available** – The financial and staff resources available to provide language support, and the cost of doing so.

BFT conducted this analysis to better understand the needs of LEP populations and to determine which language groups should receive translated vital documents, as guided by the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Safe Harbor Provision.

*Figure 2 – Four Factor Analysis*



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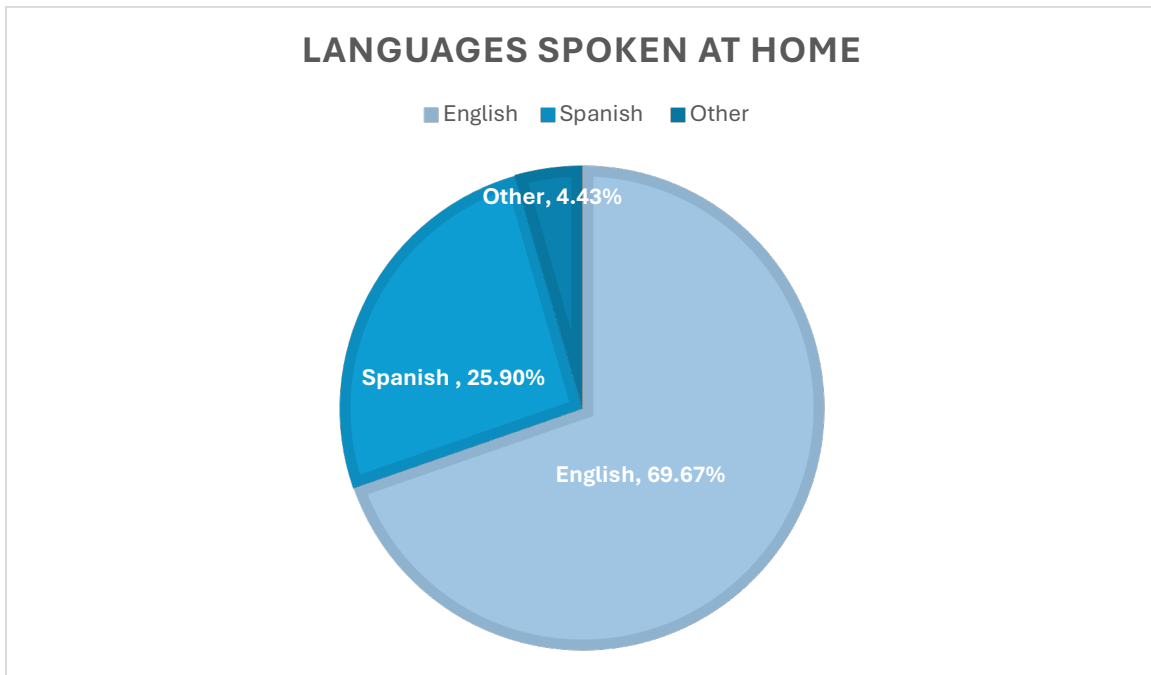
### **Factor 1: Number or Proportion of LEP Persons**

BFT used 2019-2023 American Community Survey (ACS) data to evaluate LEP demographics within the PTBA and nearby areas. The service area includes major population centers in Benton and Franklin counties such as Pasco, Kennewick, Richland, and more.

Key findings:

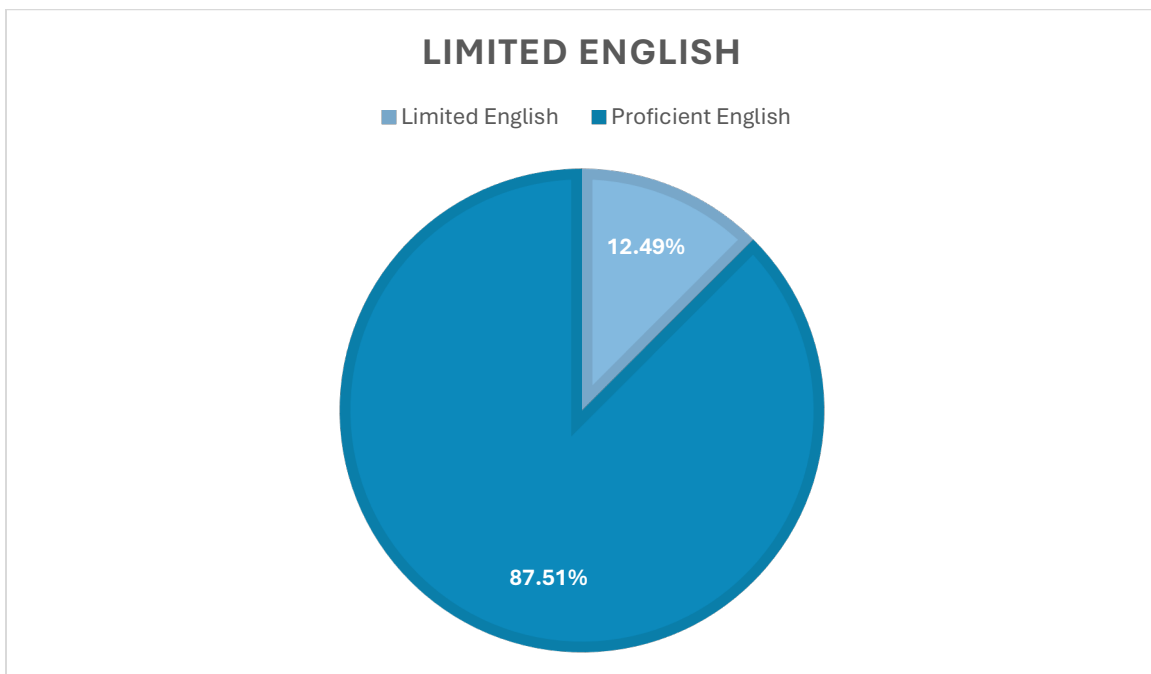
- **69.67%** of residents speak English at home.
- **30.33%** speak a language other than English, with **Spanish** being the most prevalent.
- **Spanish speakers** represent **25.90%** of the total population.
- An estimated **12.49%** of the service area population is considered LEP.
- **Spanish-speaking LEP individuals** make up **10.91%** of the total population.

Figure 3 – Service Area Language Profile



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 4 – Service Area Limited English Proficiency Profile



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

This exceeds the DOJ's Safe Harbor threshold, which requires translated materials for any LEP group that makes up at least 5% or 1,000 individuals of the population. Currently, Spanish is the only language in BFT's service area that meets this threshold.

For more detailed data on LEP populations and their proximity to BFT facilities and services, refer to **Table 1** and **Map 1**.

**Table 1 – Language Spoken at Home - Benton & Franklin County**

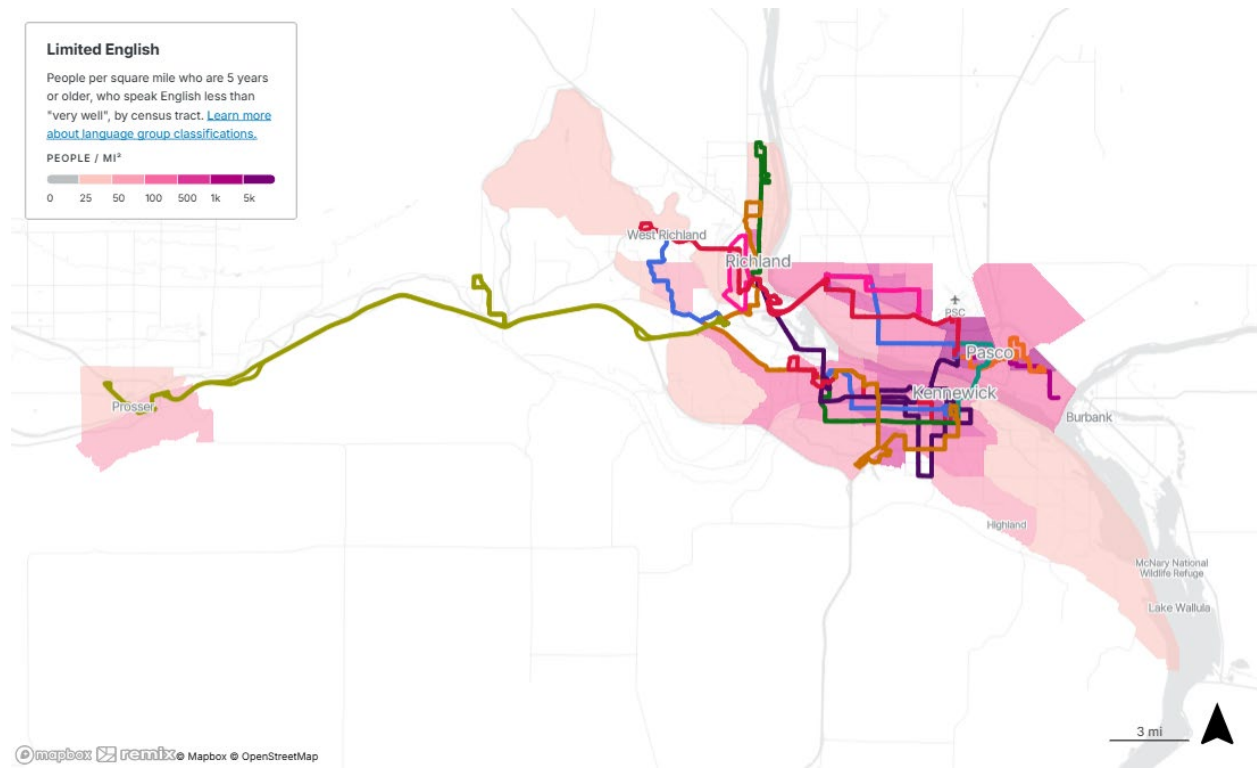
Language	Benton	Franklin	Combined	Population
	County	County		
Population 5 Years and Older	196,594	89,592	286,186	100%
Speak only English	154,683	44,712	199,395	69.67%
Spanish or Spanish Creole	32,866	41,257	74,123	25.90%
French (incl. Patois, Cajun)	199	48	247	0.09%
Russian	1,560	1,839	3,399	1.19%
Vietnamese	629	387	1,016	0.35%
German or West Germanic	475	283	758	0.26%
Chinese	799	124	923	0.32%
Tagalog (Incl. Filipino)	561	144	705	0.25%
Arabic	998	111	1,109	0.39%
Korean	563	83	646	0.23%
Other and unspecified	3,261	604	3,865	1.35%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 Language Spoken at Home for the Population 5 Years and Over [c16001 - Census Bureau Tables](#)

## **Factor 2: The Frequency at which LEP individuals' access or use BFT services**

BFT's Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA) encompasses Benton County—where English is the predominant language—and Franklin County, which has a large Spanish-speaking population. Individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) rely on a range of BFT services, including fixed-route buses, Dial-A-Ride (DAR), General Demand Response, CONNECT, and Vanpool programs. LEP individuals also access information through various channels such as BFT's customer service, fare outlets, Transit app, MyRide app, social media and the official BFT website. Additionally, BFT engages in community outreach to raise awareness about its services and programs, as well as to communicate proposed service changes through public hearings.

Map 1 – BFT PTBA Limited English Proficiency Population Percentage by Block Group



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates 5-year 2019-2023

According to BFT’s 2025 Fixed Route On-Board Rider Survey, approximately 24.7% of the roughly 2,000 respondents reported speaking Spanish, though some also indicated that English is spoken in their homes. In the 2018 Dial-A-Ride (DAR) On-Board Rider Survey, about 7.7% of the 300 respondents said they spoke Spanish, while 1.7% reported speaking a language other than English or Spanish.

Table 2 – 2025 Fixed Route On-Board Rider Survey Languages Spoken at Home

Language	English	Spanish	Russian	Arabic	Vietnamese	Other
Percentage	73.41%	24.73%	0.10%	0.53%	0.20%	1.05%
Total	1,538	518	2	11	4	22

Table 3 – 2018 DAR On-Board Rider Survey Languages Spoken at Home

Language	English	Spanish	Russian	Chinese	Vietnamese	Other
Percentage	98.9%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
Total	290	21	0	0	0	5



### ***Factor 3: The Nature and Importance of the Service, Programs, and Activities to people's lives***

BFT's 2025 On-Board Rider Survey found that 25% of riders were traveling to work, 36% to school, another 18% for recreation, and 21% for medical appointments or other purposes. Spanish-speaking riders reported using BFT services for a range of needs, including personal errands, commuting to work, school or college, medical visits, and shopping.

In addition, about 8% of the working LEP population in Benton and Franklin counties depend on public transit for their daily commutes, underscoring the vital role BFT services play in supporting this community.

*Table 4 – Means of Transportation to Work*

<b>Means of Transportation to Work</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>LEP Pop.</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Spanish LEP Pop.</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>Workers 16 and over</b>	136,426	16,902	13%	14,355	11%
<b><i>Car, truck, or van - drove alone</i></b>	102,979	12,739	12%	11,041	10%
<b><i>Car, truck, or van - carpooled</i></b>	15,503	4,176	27%	3,549	24%
<b><i>Public transportation</i></b>	1,139	89	10%	63	8%

### ***Factor 4: Resources Available to Recipients and the Cost***

Currently, 10% of BFT's staff are bilingual in Spanish and English. These employees play a key role in assisting LEP individuals by providing interpretation and helping them access BFT's programs, services, and activities as needed.

Ben Franklin Transit is dedicated to communicating effectively with the community through a wide range of channels. Information is shared via the BFT website, transfer centers, community centers, staff interactions, and various media outlets, including: *Tri-City Herald*, *KNDU*, *KVEW*, *KEPR*, *Univision*, *KONA/KZHR*, *KFLD (Townsquare Media)*, *NWPR*, *SMG Northwest*, *Tri-Cities Area Journal of Business/Senior Times*, *Tú Decides*, *Bustos Media*, and *Eagle Media*.

*Table 5 –Staff Fluent in Spanish & Other Languages*

<b>Department</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Spanish-speaking</b>	<b>Other Languages</b>	<b>Percentage of Staff</b>
Rideshare				
Fixed Route				
Demand Response				
Customer Service	6	4	0	67%
Planning Staff	10	1	0	10%
Total			0	



BFT understands the importance of providing language assistance beyond Spanish and has offered over-the-phone interpretation services through Prisma International Corporation®'s since April 2024. While this service has been a valuable tool, BFT is currently evaluating alternative providers as the existing contract approaches its end.

As part of its outreach efforts, BFT is looking to hire a bilingual (Spanish/English) Travel Trainer to help customers navigate the bus system through group workshops and one-on-one support. Additional community outreach events are planned for Summer and Fall 2025, allowing time to expand bilingual staffing.

To ensure accessibility, BFT publishes informational materials in both English and Spanish. These resources are available in both print and digital formats.

Prisma usage statistics from January 2023 to April 2025 are presented in Tables 6 through 8.

*Table 6 – Prisma Statistic for 2025*

<b>2025</b>	<b>Other Language Calls</b>	<b>Spanish Language Calls</b>	<b># of times we used Prisma?</b>	<b>Lang. Line Percentage</b>
January	1	95	96	9.52%
February	4	90	94	16.67%
March	3	97	100	23.68%
April	1	85	86	30.23%
	<b>9</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>30.26%</b>

*Table 7 – Prisma Statistic for 2024*

<b>2024</b>	<b>Other Language Calls</b>	<b>Spanish Language Calls</b>	<b># of times we used Prisma?</b>	<b>Lang. Line Percentage</b>
January	1	43	44	9.52%
February	2	58	60	16.67%
March	1	44	45	23.68%
April	1	48	49	30.23%
May	1	52	53	30.00%
June	0	54	54	32.50%
July	5	57	62	
August	1	45	46	24.49%
September	3	69	72	35.29%
October	2	78	80	46.43%
November	0	65	65	36.11%
December	0	49	49	22.50%
	<b>17</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>30.26%</b>

Table 8 – Prisma Statistic for 2023

2023	Other Language Calls	Spanish Language Calls	Number of times we used Prisma?
January	2	49	51
February	3	32	35
March	5	30	35
April	1	33	34
May	3	32	35
June	2	48	50
July	2	54	56
August	1	44	45
September	0	72	72
October	2	73	75
November	2	39	41
December	2	30	32
	<b>25</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>561</b>

## Language Assistance Plan Implementation

Findings from BFT’s Four-Factor Analysis show that Spanish-speaking LEP individuals make up the largest LEP group within the service area and are the most likely to use BFT programs and services. LEP individuals represent approximately 12.25% of the total population, with 11.6% identifying Spanish as their primary language. No other language group in the area meets or exceeds the Department of Justice’s Safe Harbor Provision threshold of 5% or 1,000 individuals. However, BFT remains committed to supporting all LEP populations and will continue to monitor demographic trends and assess language assistance needs as they evolve.

Because the Spanish-speaking LEP population exceeds the Safe Harbor threshold, BFT is required to provide key documents in both Spanish and English. These vital documents include, but are not limited to ADA paratransit eligibility applications, customer feedback forms, Title VI complaint forms, and public notices. These materials are already available in Spanish to ensure accessibility.

Additionally, BFT is in the process of translating the following ADA-related documents into Spanish:

- DAR Notice of Appeal
- DAR No Show Policy
- DAR Policies
- DAR Appeal Guidelines (currently under development)

BFT recognizes that translating documents is only one part of ensuring meaningful access for LEP individuals. Broader efforts are required to reduce language barriers and support inclusive transit services.

To foster a culture of inclusivity, BFT has identified a series of ongoing actions and strategies that will be regularly reviewed and implemented.

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***Task #1: Improve and Maintain Language Assistance Services & Outreach Efforts***

As outlined in previous sections, BFT has established effective measures to ensure that LEP individuals can access its services. Table 9 provides a summary of BFT's language assistance resources, their locations, recommended actions identified through the Four-Factor Analysis, and the anticipated timeline for implementation.

*Table 9 – Language Assistance Services*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Where Available</b>	<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>Projected Timeline</b>
Prisma/Translation Services	LEP person calls in to Customer Service where a representative contacts Prisma and requests the language needed.	Continue using Prisma/Translation Services and tracking call usage until end of contract. We are actively seeking other available translation service options and will continue to use this type of service.	Ongoing
Translated Media Releases	Ben Franklin Transit has always ensured dissemination of information through multiple media outlets and translations at Tri-City Herald, KNDU, KVEW, KEPR, Univision, KONA/KZHR, KFLD (Townsquare Media), NWPR, SMG Northwest, Tri-Cities Area Journal of Business/Senior Times, Tú Decides, Bustos Media, Eagle Media.	Continue ensuring that media releases are translated and disseminated accordingly to LEP persons.	Ongoing
"Travel Training" Training for LEP persons	Ben Franklin Transit Travel Trainers provide training on a regular basis and have a full-time Spanish-speaking Travel Trainer to ensure that large portion of Spanish speaking LEP persons are being served.	Continue these services and ensure that staff levels allow the travel training program to have a Spanish-speaking employee.	Ongoing- on hiatus but actively looking for a Travel Trainer
Interpreter at Board meetings and public hearings	Ben Franklin Transit provides interpreters at all public hearings to ensure that Spanish-speaking LEP persons can come and engage our staff.	Continue these services.	Ongoing

Transit System Trifold	Ben Franklin Transit has available trifold that contain a map, schedules, and all services available in Spanish. The detailed <a href="#">guide</a> is available in digital format through BFT's website.	BFT continues to print and update these trifolds to ensure that information is readily available to the public.	Ongoing
Passenger Surveys in Spanish	Ben Franklin Transit conducts ridership surveys as needed and makes surveys available in Spanish.	Continue conducting surveys with Spanish-translated questions.	Ongoing
Comment/Complaint Cards	<a href="#">Comment/complaint cards</a> are located on all Ben Franklin Transit buses and at transit centers, including in Spanish.	Ben Franklin Transit makes customer comment/complaint cards available in Spanish at any location the English version is available.	Ongoing
Translated Agency Website	<a href="#">Ben Franklin Transit's website</a> can be translated to over 100 different languages via Google Translate.	Continue utilizing Google Translate on updated versions of website.	Ongoing
Prisma Flyer	Ben Franklin Transit fixed route buses.	Distribute flyers that give LEP individuals information about BFT's translation services.	Ongoing
Facebook & Instagram	Ben Franklin Transit has established Instagram and <a href="#">Facebook</a> accounts and monitors public comments and messages regularly. Staff use embedded translation services in these platforms, or other tools, to communicate with Spanish-speaking customers.	Continue to monitor and respond to customer comments via social media. Make efforts to communicate with LEP persons via social media.	Ongoing
Voicemail/ Message Machine – Spanish Option	Spanish translation request can be made when customers call in.	Establish an agency phone menu with a Spanish information option for after-hours calls.	Ongoing
Spanish ADA announcements	Fixed-route vehicles	Continue making announcements in both English and Spanish.	Ongoing
Optional Handheld Translation Device for forward-facing staff	Forward-facing Customer Service staff at Three Rivers Transit Center	Continue the utilization of translation devices.	Ongoing
Spanish Mobile Ticketing	Mobile devices with data capabilities	Implement mobile ticketing with translation feature.	Spring 2026
Targeted Outreach to LEP Populations	BFT seeks out and actively engages in community outreach activities	Continue to proactively identify a variety of outreach	Ongoing

	tailored to the Spanish-speaking public.	opportunities that allow BFT staff to provide information about services to the Spanish-speaking community.	
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### ***Task #2: Providing Notice about Language Assistance to LEP Persons***

Ben Franklin Transit uses a range of communication methods to reach customers and the public. These include signage on vehicles, at transit centers, and park-and-ride locations, as well as customer service outlets, headquarters reception, the BFT website, and social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Information is also shared through news releases, advertisements, community meetings, presentations, and flyers distributed via various media channels.

In 2016, BFT introduced Translation Services flyers on all fixed-route buses. These flyers feature simple, recognizable symbols along with the phone number for BFT's Prisma translation service. They are designed to help coach operators assist individuals who appear to need help but face a language barrier.

*Figure 5 – Summary of Language Assistance to LEP Persons*

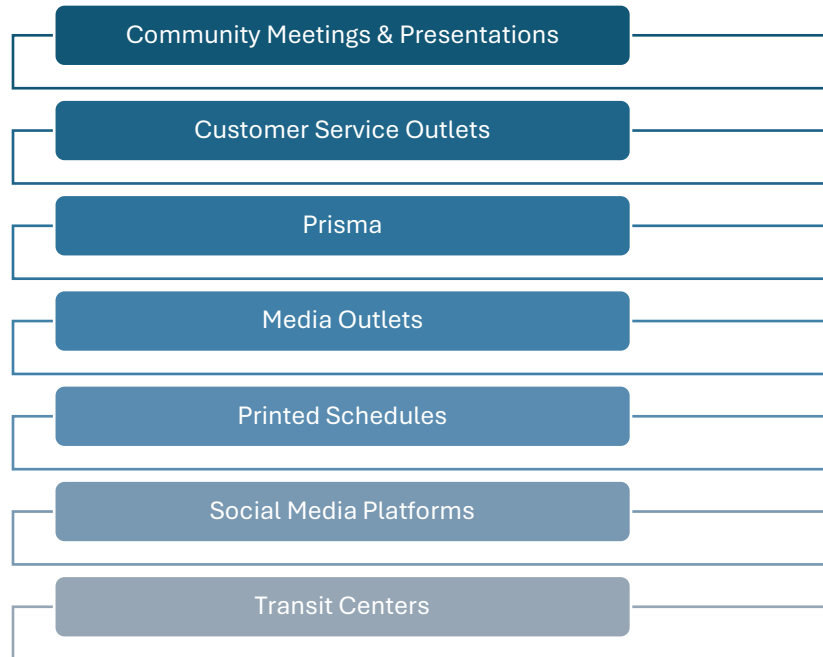


Figure 6 – Prisma Translation Services Flyer



Prisma flyers offer a quick and efficient way for customers and operators to overcome language barriers and access translation services.

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### ***Task #3: Providing Notice of Available Language Services***

BFT staff recognize the importance of supporting the community and are trained in guiding individuals to language assistance resources, such as Prisma, bilingual staff, or the BFT website, which offers content in

over 100 languages. Additionally, whenever public input is needed, BFT ensures timely communication about significant service or fare changes. To reach the public effectively, BFT uses a variety of methods, including: media releases in both English and Spanish to the Tri-City Herald and local TV and radio stations, direct letters to vanpool drivers, updates on the BFT website and social media platforms, flyers on all fixed-route buses, emails to human service providers, mailers sent to schools and agencies like DSHS and Meals on Wheels, flyers on Dial-A-Ride buses, posted flyers at Transit Center shelters, and notifications at public hearings. To ensure LEP populations are informed, BFT also collaborates with local Spanish-language media outlets such as *Tú Decides*, and *Bustos Media* to share information about language services and service or fare changes.

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#### ***Task #4: Employee Training***

BFT provides staff training to help reduce barriers when assisting individuals with Limited English Proficiency. The training includes role-playing various scenarios and techniques to help drivers better understand how to support LEP customers. Periodic training refreshers are also offered to ensure staff members are equipped with the knowledge to effectively interact with individuals who have limited English skills. Additionally, BFT is developing a Spanish-language handbook to assist staff in their daily interactions with the public. This handbook will include:

- Language assistance options available through BFT
- Procedures for handling customer complaints

**The following excerpts below were taken from BFT's Operator Training Manual:**

#### **3.3.4 LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY CUSTOMERS**

- As BFT operators, it is important to be mindful that not all customers speak English. Situations may arise where non-English speakers may need assistance in understanding how to utilize our various modes of transportation services. In a case where you come in to contact with a customer that needs assistance, but a language barrier exists, please direct them to BFT Customer Service. Customer service staff will either translate information to the customer directly or connect them to a translation service via BFT's Prisma. "Prisma" handouts are located within reach of operators and are meant to be handed to customers when language barriers exist. This handout includes easily recognizable symbols that will be able to direct customers to Customer Service and our Prisma service.
  - Providing assistance to non-English speakers is crucial in a service area such as BFT's, because there is a large Spanish-speaking community that utilizes our transit services on a daily basis. Operators are given a Spanish handbook that has simple phrases to help staff interact Spanish-speaking customers. If possible, please use this book to try and communicate with the customer in question. Also, BFT has several Spanish-speaking Customer Service representatives in each department that are valuable resources.
  - Please remember to be respectful and patient with all customers, especially those who do not speak English.
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### ***Task #5: Monitoring and Updating the LEP Plan***

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) LEP Guidance recommends that agencies regularly monitor their systems to evaluate the effectiveness of language assistance measures and staff training programs. BFT actively collaborates with multilingual staff, community members, and LEP individuals to assess whether staff are appropriately responding to language assistance needs. To support this effort, BFT may utilize available resources such as bilingual staff and rider surveys to implement the guidance effectively.

BFT updates its Four-Factor Analysis and Language Assistance Plan every three years. This update includes:

- Assessing how the needs of LEP individuals have been addressed
- Evaluating whether the demand for services has changed
- Determining if current language services are effective and adequate
- Identifying any changes in the LEP population or service areas
- Recording annual usage of interpretation services
- Reviewing any complaints related to unmet language assistance needs
- Tracking the number of documented LEP interactions annually when feasible

This ongoing evaluation helps ensure that BFT's language access efforts remain responsive and effective.

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### ***Task #6: Targeted Outreach to LEP Populations***

The first step in effectively reaching LEP populations is understanding where these communities are geographically concentrated within BFT's service area. BFT has identified locations with significant LEP populations and is committed to ensuring that clear, accessible information is provided, especially when service changes are proposed in those areas.

## **Conclusion**

BFT remains proactive and responsive in ensuring that LEP and non-English-speaking individuals have meaningful opportunities to be heard and engaged. The agency is committed to promptly identifying and addressing any issues that may arise and will continue expanding its outreach efforts to keep the community informed about upcoming programs and services. BFT also seeks out educational opportunities to enhance staff training and improve support for LEP individuals.

The **Language Assistance Plan** was made available for public review on **June 9th**, with opportunities for public input provided through two public meetings. Only one member of the public attended and recommended that BFT coordinate with local school districts for its Title VI and Language Assistance survey efforts. No additional comments have been received to date; however, BFT will continue accepting public feedback until **July 9**. A final public hearing is scheduled during the **BFT Board of Directors meeting on July 10**.