

## **06 LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN**

### ***INTRODUCTION***

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) develops and maintains a Language Assistance Plan (LAP) to identify language needs across the Commonwealth and to enumerate the methods the agency employs to fulfill language access obligations under US DOT policy and guidance on federal Executive Order 13166 and FTA's Title VI Circular (4702.1B) on ensuring meaningful access to federally funded programs, services, and activities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals.

### ***LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN AND FOUR-FACTOR ANALYSIS***

A key piece of MassDOT's Language Assistance Plan is the "Four-Factor Analysis." This analysis identifies language needs in the geographic area served by MassDOT with FTA funded programs, services, and activities. It also determines the frequency with which MassDOT encounters or is likely to encounter this populations and the degree of importance of MassDOT vital and other documents to limited English proficient populations. Lastly, an analysis of available resources to provide language services to the LEP population is articulated. These four factors inform the agency's approach to providing languages services. This analysis was updated in September 2013 (including an updated implementation schedule) and received concurrence from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in October 2013. The September 2013 analysis is available for review in Appendix 06-A. The analysis update includes the elements of a Language Access Plan and describes the steps MassDOT takes to fulfill language access obligations and provides an implementation timeline for specific deliverables and/or tasks such as training, described below.

### ***TRAINING***

In June 2014, MassDOT's Office of Diversity and Civil Rights (ODCR) developed a training program on civil rights considerations in public engagement, with special

emphasis on language access. The training supports the agency-wide rollout of MassDOT's revised Public Participation Plan (PPP or Plan) and Language Access Plan. The current PPP, revised in May 2014, focuses in large part on procedures to follow to ensure public engagement that is compliant with civil rights obligations. All of these procedures are accompanied by resources, and instructions in their use, to successfully achieve the goals and obligations identified in the document.

The types of engagement between MassDOT staff and members of the public are divided into four categories – (1) formalized large group meetings, like public meetings and hearings, (2) outreach to smaller targeted audiences, such as public advisory committees, (3) one-on-one interactions, like a walk-in customer or meeting with property owners abutting a project site, and (4) informal open house sessions that can precede the other three types of engagement. In each of these four categories, the PPP identifies language access obligations, the impact that encountering a language barrier may have on the parties involved, and strategies to overcome these potential barriers preemptively and/or in the moment. For instance, in preparing for a public hearing, the PPP instructs Project Managers to identify limited-English-proficient (LEP) populations in the area of the project at issue and/or the hearing location. The Project Manager is then provided with the resources necessary to identify these populations, such as the MassDOT Language Access Plan, statewide LEP maps contained in the Language Access Plan, and MassDOT's online Title VI mapping and outreach tool, among many others. In addition, Project Managers are instructed to seek input from other Project Managers that have conveyed such meetings in the same area and may have awareness of LEP needs. With this knowledge, the Project Manager is able to determine the need for language assistance, even in the absence of any specific requests from the public. The text of the PPP is included in Appendix 05-A.

Staff from across the agency (including the Rail and Transit Division and the Office of Transportation Planning) were involved in reviewing the PPP and these protocols, and as such have a great deal of awareness of the obligations and resources the PPP identifies. The ODCR public engagement and language access training program, available for review in Appendix 06-B, is designed to provide detailed instruction on these obligations to *all* staff, from front-line to management.

The ODCR public engagement and language access training program will be conducted in cycles. MassDOT Project Managers are the first group of staff scheduled to receive this training, since they engage the public early and most often in the project development process. Planning staff, Rail and Transit Division staff, and front-line personnel are to be trained immediately thereafter. Training will continue with other groups at MassDOT based on the amount and frequency of contact they have with the public. The training is designed to be adaptable to external audiences which will also be reached. This includes subrecipients and consultants responsible for engaging the public on behalf of MassDOT. A number of training opportunities have already been identified, such as recurring all-staff meetings across MassDOT departments, contractor conferences, and subrecipient coordinating events. Additional training events will be coordinated, as needed.