

Public Participation Plan

Plan Adopted: 10/18/2022

Purpose:

To integrate consideration of the viewpoints of minority, low-income, and limited English proficiency (LEP) populations into the Transit System's community outreach activities. The public participation strategy offers early and continuous opportunities for the public to be involved in the identification of social, economic, and environmental impacts of proposed transportation decisions.

Strategies

Brainerd and Crow Wing County transit considers the LEP populations and key stakeholders in proactive strategies, procedures, and projected outcomes that align with the public participation activities throughout the year(s). Brainerd and Crow Wing County transit offers adequate notice of public participation activities in the planning stages and throughout the process. When appropriate, notice of free language assistance will be posted in areas that the public and staff have access to during all public activities. All language assistance services provided during public engagement or community outreach will be recorded on the Language Service / Public Participation Log is attached as **Appendix E**.

Strategies to involve minority and LEP populations in effective participation in our decision-making process and to serve on appropriate committees, groups, boards, etc. has been implemented. Brainerd and Crow Wing County transit monitors the involvement and percentage of transit-related, non-elected planning boards, advisory councils or committees, or similar bodies, and their membership of which is selected by the system, and provides annually an updated table with the following areas shown as in the attached **Appendix K**.

Virtual Engagement

Microsoft Teams is a tool that can be used in communication with LEP individuals attending an online public engagement event. Microsoft Teams allows for real-time closed caption translations during a Teams [meeting](#) or [live event](#). Meeting organizers will provide information to attendees at the beginning of the meeting or live event on tools to use translated closed captions. For a Teams live event, the event lead can turn on the ability for attendees to view closed captioning in up to 6 languages. Instructions for this is available [here](#). For Teams meetings, there is no ability to automatically set up closed captioning for attendees. Attendees, can however, turn on closed captioning for their view only. Instructions for this is available [here](#).

Surveys to the public and current ridership

Surveys are an opportunity to gain public input and obtain insight on opinions of and feedback on the usage or lack of use of the public transit system, services, and information. All surveys provided will be accessible to LEP individuals based on the four-factor analysis that identifies the targeted populations. Brainerd and Crow Wing County transit conducts user and non-user surveys. We participated in the 2022 Public Participation Plan Survey by posting the survey link on social media and handing out surveys on all of our routes.

Website and Online Documents

Based on the four-factor analysis the following languages were identified as needing written language translation: Spanish, other unspecified, other Indo European, and Other Asian or Pacific Island languages as the top four LEP groups in the jurisdiction providing service. As appropriate,

Brainerd and Crow Wing County transit provides notice of the availability of free language assistance and written language translation for each of these identified languages. All vital documents will be translated as needed and provided on the website in an easily accessible and identifiable location.

In-Person

All facilities that have interaction with the public in-person will display the Public Notice of Rights Under Title VI in a location that accessible to the public. Non-English versions of the notice will be posted as well if, based on the four-factor analysis that particular language was identified as needed. Notice in English is attached as **Appendix G**. Staff will use language guides, if necessary, will be used if bilingual staff are not available to assist. Language guide resources are available in **Appendix C**.

Phone

Planned resources will be identified and utilized when bilingual staff are not available to assist.

Email or Other Written Communication

Planned resources will be identified and utilized when bilingual staff are not available to assist.

Outreach practices:

The nature of language assistance provided will be based in part on the number and proportion of LEP individuals served, the frequency of contact between Brainerd and Crow Wing County transit and the LEP population, and the importance of the service provided to the LEP population. Brainerd and Crow Wing County transit will assess the needs of the populations frequently encountered or affected by their program or activity to determine whether translation of outreach materials is needed. Every effort will be made to coordinate with community organizations to assist in determining outreach materials that would be helpful to translate, find opportunities to align with other outreach activities in the area, and utilize ethnic media, schools, and religious or community organizations to help spread the message.

The following outlines the practices that Brainerd and Crow Wing County transit takes in community outreach:

Scheduling meetings at times and locations that are convenient and accessible for minority and LEP communities:

Public notices regarding meetings placed at following locations: on transit webpage, on buses, published in local newspaper, posted in City Hall

Efforts made to ensure meeting times and locations are in convenient and accessible locations: Meetings are held in accessible public locations within our transit systems service area

Efforts to involve minority and LEP populations in public involvement activities include:
Providing public notification using multiple resources and providing accessible meeting locations

Adequate notice of public participation activities in the planning stages and throughout the process and early and continuous opportunities for participation:

3 days' notice for quarterly TAC meetings, 30 days service change notice, RFP notice published in paper 3 times during open proposal period, 2 times in Mn State Register and 2 times on City website. Survey notices provided as handouts on buses and link to online surveys on website

Implementing adjustable/innovative meeting strategies, locations, and group sizes to gain viewpoints of minority, low-income, and limited English proficiency participation:

Efforts implemented include: Public notice is provided to multiple outlets using different media (paper posted in City Hall, website, on buses and to the local newspaper). Meetings are recorded and posted online YouTube.

Coordinating with community- and faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and other organizations to implement public engagement strategies that reach out specifically to members of affected minority and/or LEP communities:

Specific organizations, institutions, or other organizations are: Brainerd and Crow Wing County transit works with the community organizations, such as Social and Community Services, W.I.C., Health Services, Rural Minnesota Job Service, Veteran's Services and local warming shelters and food shelves. Local Schools and Colleges and local retail shops. In addition, Brainerd is home to many of the area health clinics and St Joseph's Hospital.

Efforts include: We provide materials like brochures, postcards, business cards, power point presentations and informational meetings & trainings with the above organizations

Targeted radio, television, newspaper, social media ads on stations, outlets, and in publications that serve LEP populations. Outreach to LEP populations could also include audio programming available on podcasts:

Efforts include: Radio advertisement for transit, recorded meetings on YouTube, weekly transit informative postings on social media

Preparing for public engagement activities by determining ways to provide language assistance, when no interpreter is present or may or may not be needed, providing written documents in other languages, if requested, including ethnic media, schools, and religious or community organizations to assist in providing information:

Efforts include: giving advance notice using multiple medias & broadcasting meetings on YouTube

- Providing opportunities for public participation through means other than written communication, such as personal interviews or use of audio or video recording devices to capture oral comments:**

Efforts include: TAC and City Council meetings are recorded and posted on YouTube

- Involvement of minority, low-income and limited English proficiency (LEP) populations as Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) members:**

Special Interest Group(s) serving on TAC: Committee comprised of seven members; three of whom are to be appointed or reappointed every other year, and a City Council Liaison. Two of the seven members may reside outside of the city, but must live in an area served by transit. Active Council members may sit in unfilled positions until filled. The Mayor recommends nominations to be approved by the City Council. This is a volunteer position.

TAC meeting schedule: Quarterly

Role and Purpose of TAC: To monitor and to advise changes to the operations of the City's intra and inter city bus service, to make recommendations to the City Council and/or other decision-making bodies regarding changes to enhance and improve the service to its riders.

- Providing public involvement meeting(s) on a scheduled basis:**

- Type of Meetings: Transportation Advisory Committee

- Meeting schedules: Quarterly

- Meeting formats: Approx. hour long meeting with provided Agenda. Meetings are recorded and posted on Youtube. Call in option available when requested

- Meeting notice method: Public Notice

- Outreach efforts to involve special interest groups: Using all media outlets available to provide public notice