2025-2028 RTD Language Access Plan

Submitted in fulfillment of Title VI of the
Civil Rights Act of 1964 and FTA Circular 4702.1B
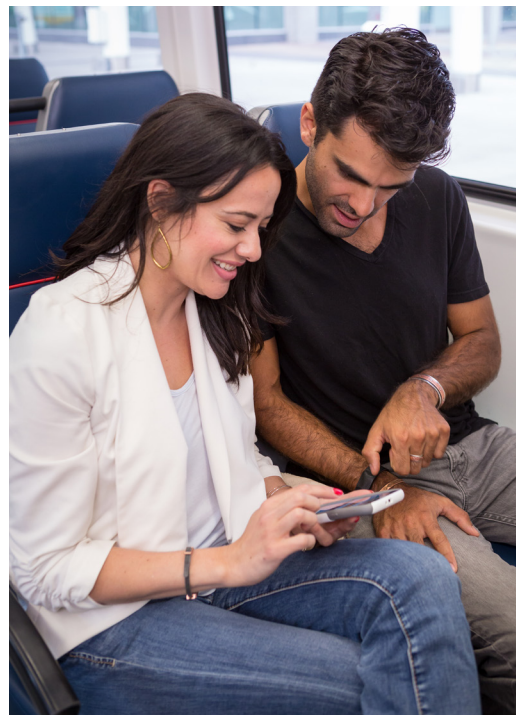
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Acronyms

ACS	American Community Survey
CDE	Colorado Department of Education
DOT	Department of Transportation
LAP	Language Access Plan
LEP	Limited English Proficiency or Limited English Proficient
PUMS	Public Use Microdata Sample
RTD	Regional Transportation District
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

Definitions

Limited English Proficiency or **Limited English Proficient (LEP)** – People with limited English proficiency (LEP) are persons whose primary language is not English and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. In demographic data, the U.S. Census Bureau defines an LEP person as an individual who is age five or older and speaks English less than "very well." RTD refers to persons with limited English proficiency as **linguistically diverse** persons where possible.

Meaningful Access – Language assistance that results in accurate, timely and effective communication at no cost to linguistically diverse people. Meaningful access denotes access that is not unreasonably restricted, delayed, or inferior as compared to access to programs or activities provided to persons proficient in English.

Reasonable Steps – Steps taken, or language assistance services provided, to ensure effective communication with linguistically diverse people (e.g., interpretation services).

Recipient – Any public or private entity that receives federal financial assistance from the FTA, whether directly from FTA or indirectly through a primary recipient. This term includes subrecipients, direct recipients, designated recipients, and primary recipients.

Safe Harbor (Language) – The safe harbor provision, as interpreted by the U.S. Department of Justice, explains when agencies are considered compliant with rules for translating written materials for diverse language groups. It states that agencies meet the requirements if vital documents are translated for each eligible language group, as determined by the Four Factor Analysis. To qualify, the language group must make up at least 5% or 1,000 people (whichever is smaller) of the population being served.

Vital Document – Paper or electronic material that is critical for accessing RTD's services, programs, and activities or contains information about procedures and processes required by law. Classification of a document as "vital" depends upon the importance of the program, information, encounter, or service involved, and the consequence to the linguistically diverse person if the information in question is not provided accurately or in a timely manner.

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Executive Summary

RTD is committed to ensuring equitable access to its services for all individuals regardless of their background or ability — including English proficiency. This Language Access Plan (LAP) provides a framework for meeting the needs of limited English proficient persons (hereafter referred to as "linguistically diverse" persons) in the agency's service area, ensuring compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and aligning with its mission to provide inclusive, accessible, and equitable transit services. By proactively addressing language barriers, RTD enhances mobility and improves the customer experience for its diverse ridership. This commitment supports RTD's strategic priorities — Community Value and Customer Excellence — as well as its strategic initiatives: a Welcoming Transit Environment and Customer and Community Connections.

RTD's LAP is structured off of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) requirements in Circular 4702.1B, "Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for FTA Recipients." It begins with a **Four Factor Analysis**, which assesses the language assistance needs of local communities and provides the data RTD needs to make informed decisions on providing language assistance. Data includes the number of linguistically diverse people in the agency's service areas as well as the most common languages they speak, the frequency with which linguistically diverse persons interact with RTD frontline staff, the suggestions staff have to overcome language barriers with customers, the nature and importance of RTD's services to the linguistically diverse population, and, finally, the costs to pursue various language assistance measures.

In **Factor 1**, using the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), Colorado Department of Education, and Colorado Health Authority data, the Transit Equity Office (TEO) found that approximately 200,812 individuals speak English "less than very well," representing 6.88% of the population. Spanish speakers account for 65.4% of the linguistically diverse population (per the ACS) followed by Vietnamese and Chinese (4.73% and 3.97% of the linguistically diverse population, respectively). Overall, the Factor 1 analysis identified 19 safe harbor languages,[1] which include (in alphabetical order) Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese), French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Karen, Korean, Nepali, Persian (including Dari and Farsi), Russian, Somali, Tagalog, Tigrinya, Spanish, Swahili, and Vietnamese.

In **Factor 2**, TEO conducted a survey with frontline employees who interact with customers. The survey received 662 responses. It was found that RTD's customer-facing staff are experiencing a notable increase in interactions with linguistically diverse customers, with daily interactions rising from 26% in 2021 to 40% in the most recent survey. Most of these interactions (86%) occur in person on buses, trains, or at stations, with a smaller portion happening over the phone (16%) or online (4%). It also found that staff employ a variety of techniques to bridge language barriers, commonly using translation apps (47%), body language or communicating in simplified English (44%), and customer interpretation (30%). However, challenges persist — 70% of staff find it difficult to communicate with customers who speak little or no English, a significant increase from 57% in 2021. Additionally, only 46% feel equipped to handle these interactions, while 54% report feeling somewhat or completely unprepared. To improve language accessibility, staff offered a variety of recommendations, including that RTD provide translation devices, offer language training (especially in Spanish), expand translated materials and signage, implement direct access to telephonic interpretation services, and hire more multilingual employees to better serve the agency's diverse ridership.

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[1] The safe harbor provision, as interpreted by the U.S. Department of Justice, explains when agencies are considered compliant with rules for translating written materials for diverse language groups. It states that agencies meet the requirements if vital documents are translated for each eligible language group, as determined by the Four Factor Analysis. To qualify, the language group must make up at least 5% or 1,000 people (whichever is smaller) of the population being served.

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In **Factor 3**, TEO conducted a survey with linguistically diverse people, receiving 578 responses. Findings indicate that respondents face significant language barriers. The majority (73%) spoke Spanish, followed by Chinese (18%), with 23 languages represented overall. Most respondents indicated high usage of RTD services, with 70% frequently using RTD buses, while train usage was lower (41%), and demand-response services were rarely used. Importantly, the survey respondents were largely transit reliant, where 61% of respondents reported not having access to a household vehicle. While 51% say they use RTD as much as needed, nearly a third (29%) report that language barriers prevent them from using transit more often, and many struggle to navigate key RTD services. For example, over 70% do not know how to apply for discounts, report a safety concern, or make a customer service complaint. Survey participants provided detailed suggestions on how RTD can enhance language accessibility, including hiring more bilingual bus operators and frontline employees, providing staff with real-time translation tools, improving translation and signage, introducing Spanish audio announcements, enhancing the accessibility of digital tools (e.g., the RTD website and Next Ride app), and partnering with community-based organizations to better engage linguistically diverse customers. Beyond language access, respondents highlighted three key concerns: affordability, security, and cleanliness.

For Factor 3, TEO also hosted a focus group with the Interpreter Network from the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning in September 2022. The focus group corroborated the findings of the aforementioned survey, especially reinforcing the need for improved digital communications, in-system language assistance resources (e.g., improved wayfinding, audio announcements, signage), and community partnerships.

In **Factor 4**, TEO reported agency expenditures on language assistance activities from June 1, 2022 to March 31, 2025 across the Paratransit Services Division; the Communications and Engagement, Transit Police, and Human Resources departments; the Board Office; the Risk Management Division; and the Civil Rights Division. During this period, RTD and its contractors spent an estimated $309,882 on language assistance services — a 78% increase from the $176,318 reported for the June 2019-May 2022 time period. The largest expense was the cost of contracts with TEO's multicultural outreach partners, estimated at $101,442.

Based on the data gathered in the Four Factor Analysis, the final portion of the plan is the **Language Access Measures section,** which outlines specific activities and commitments — both new and ongoing — that RTD will pursue to improve language assistance in the coming years. Activities that the agency will carry over from prior years include, but are not limited to, providing telephonic interpretation (as well as bilingual English-Spanish information specialists) via Customer Care, providing the RTD website and Next Ride app in RTD's top five safe harbor languages, developing resources for frontline staff that they have identified may be useful in bridging language barriers with customers, and delivering the Serving Non-English-Speaking Customers training to frontline staff. New activities identified for the 2025 to 2028 period include exploring providing translation devices in RTD fixed-route buses, making email and text service alerts available in Spanish, ensuring language assistance measures are integrated into RTD's upcoming all-in-one mobile ticketing app, piloting Spanish audio announcements in fixed-route buses, and establishing a translation review process for the translation tool on the RTD website (among the 23 total new tasks).

In conclusion, the 2025-2028 LAP builds upon the framework and tasks of RTD's 2022-2025 LAP, incorporates updated data on Denver's language needs, and sets forth specific, measurable, and data-driven actions to enhance the accessibility of RTD's transit services and programs.

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Introduction

As the Denver metropolitan region's public transportation provider, the Regional Transportation District (RTD) is committed to serving residents, customers, and visitors regardless of race, color, or national origin. This includes making reasonable accommodations and removing barriers for individuals in protected classes, including linguistically diverse individuals. These individuals, language can hinder access to RTD's services and programs, compliance with responsibilities like payment or safety measures, or awareness of their civil rights while riding. Providing language assistance is not only a federal requirement but also a reflection of RTD's mission, vision, and values to ensure accessible public transportation for all.

Legal Basis for Language Access Requirements

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) guidance require federally funded agencies, including RTD, to take reasonable steps to ensure linguistically diverse individuals have meaningful access to their programs and services.

At the core of these requirements is Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.), which states: "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." While Title VI does not explicitly list language as a protected category, the 1974 Supreme Court case *Lau v. Nichols* (414 U.S. 563) interpreted Title VI regulations to prohibit actions that disproportionately impact linguistically diverse individuals, as such effects constitute national origin discrimination.

To ensure compliance, USDOT issued its "Policy Guidance Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient Persons" (USDOT LEP Guidance) on December 14, 2005. Further guidance came from the FTA, which published Circular 4702.1B, "Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for FTA Recipients," on October 1, 2012. Chapter III, Part 9 of this Circular directs FTA recipients, including RTD, to:

1. Conduct a Four Factor Analysis;
2. Develop a Language Access Plan (LAP); and
3. Provide appropriate language assistance.

By meeting these requirements, RTD and other transit agencies work to reduce language barriers and ensure equitable access to their programs and services.

RTD's Dedication to Language Access

Language access is not just about meeting federal compliance requirements; however, it is fundamental to RTD's mission of making lives better through connections and ensuring equitable mobility for all. Providing meaningful access to linguistically diverse communities aligns directly with RTD's strategic priorities of Community Value and Customer Excellence. By removing language barriers, RTD strengthens its role as a trusted community partner, enhances the customer experience, and ensures that all customers — regardless of their preferred language — can navigate the transit system with confidence. Language access also supports RTD's Welcoming Transit Environment strategic initiative by fostering a more inclusive and secure transit experience, where all customers feel respected and informed. Additionally, it reinforces Customer and Community Connections by deepening engagement with the diverse populations RTD serves. Ultimately, language access is not just an obligation — it is a commitment to equity, dignity, and accessibility, ensuring that no one's mobility options are limited by language. Through this work, RTD continues to create a transit system that is truly welcoming and inclusive for everyone.

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Figure 1. RTD's Strategic Priorities and Strategic Initiatives Related to Language Access

Strategic Priorities

Community Value
RTD strives to be a strong community partner, providing value to customers as well as to the broader Denver metro region while sustaining planet Earth.

Customer Excellence
RTD strives to consistently deliver high-quality customer service.

Strategic Initiatives

Welcoming Transit Environment
RTD seeks to reduce the impacts of criminal behaviors and Code of Conduct violations on agency services and workplaces and, in doing so, to improve community and employee perception of personal and public security on RTD property and vehicles.

Customer and Community Connections
RTD is committed to fostering community building and enriching the customer experience.

Four Factor Analysis

Background

A key component of the USDOT's and FTA's framework for creating a Language Access Plan, RTD's Four Factor Analysis helps the agency assess the language needs of local communities and determine appropriate language assistance measures. The Analysis evaluates the following four factors:

1. Factor 1: The number or proportion of linguistically diverse people eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by an RTD program, activity, or service. This involves analyzing demographic data, such as U.S. Census Bureau data, to identify significant populations who speak little or no English
2. Factor 2: The frequency with which linguistically diverse people interact with RTD programs, activities, or services. Higher frequency of contact increases the need for language assistance services to accommodate linguistically diverse people effectively

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3. <u>Factor 3</u>**:** The nature and importance of programs, activities or services provided by RTD to the linguistically diverse population. Services critical to basic well-being, such as transportation, typically warrant greater attention to language accessibility
4. <u>Factor 4</u>**:** The resources available to RTD and overall cost to provide language assistance. This factor balances the need for language services with the organization's ability to allocate funding and resources effectively

RTD's Transit Equity Office within the Civil Rights Division updated the agency's Four Factor Analysis in the fall and winter of 2024 through 2025 to inform this updated Language Access Plan. The following sections outline the approach to and results of each of the Four Factor analyses.

Factor 1: Number or Proportion of Linguistically Diverse Persons within RTD Service Area

Methodology

To complete Factor 1, RTD must assess the number or proportion of linguistically diverse individuals[2] who are eligible for RTD services or may interact with the agency. The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) serves as a key source for identifying safe harbor languages in RTD's service area.[3] To supplement these estimates, the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data is analyzed to identify additional language groups as it allows for a more detailed examination of language subcategories, especially African languages (e.g., Amharic and Somali) and Asian languages (e.g., Cambodian and Laotian).

RTD's Transit Equity Office collaborated with Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates to compile and analyze this data. The ACS data, released on December 12, 2024, was sourced from the 2018–2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates Table C16001, while the PUMS data was obtained from Table B1600, following its release on January 23, 2025. Both datasets were used to determine the proportion and languages spoken of LEP individuals within census tracts and Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) across RTD's service area.

In addition to data from the ACS and PUMS, the Factor 1 analysis incorporates the most recent Student Language of Origin data from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) for the 2024 school year. This dataset provides information on languages spoken at home and enrollment in English as a Second Language (ESL) services for students from kindergarten through high school. It is assumed that if a child speaks a language other than English, their parents or guardians likely speak the same language at home, particularly if the student receives ESL services. While this dataset does not capture non-school-aged populations, it serves as a valuable complement to Census data. School districts included in the analysis were those with at least one school located within a zip code covered by RTD's service area.

Finally, TEO sourced additional supplementary data from the Colorado Health Authority on languages spoken at participating Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics. The dataset covered January 2023 to December 2024 and includes information from clinics across Jefferson, Boulder,

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[2] RTD recognizes the importance of balancing technical accuracy with inclusive language throughout Factor 1. In this analysis, the term "LEP" refers to individuals who speak another language at home and speak English less than "very well." This standardized definition, used by the U.S. Census Bureau, serves as the foundation for the data in this report. To align with federal guidelines and ensure clarity, RTD will retain the term "LEP" in data-driven sections. However, RTD is committed to using more inclusive language that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves. Therefore, while maps, tables, and some written portions in Factor 1 will use the term "LEP" for accuracy, this report aims to use "linguistically diverse" in all other contextual narratives to describe these communities.

[3] RTD estimated service area boundaries used the ACS 5-Year Estimates at the census tract level. RTD analyzed all census tracts required to include all 8 counties where RTD has services: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson, and Weld counties.

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and Denver counties as well as most of the City and County of Broomfield and portions of Adams, Douglas, Weld, and Arapahoe counties. TEO obtained this data through the Colorado WIC Data Dashboard by selecting the last two full calendar years and isolating the relevant counties. The dataset provides additional insights into linguistic diversity within RTD's service area.

This comprehensive approach ensures that multiple data sources are leveraged to provide an accurate assessment of language needs within RTD's service area.

Key Findings

The RTD service area, home to approximately 2.92 million people, includes 200,812 individuals who speak English "less than very well," representing 6.88% of the population. Spanish remains the most widely spoken language at home after English, accounting for 65.4% of the linguistically diverse population (per the ACS). Vietnamese and Chinese are the second- and third-most spoken languages, making up 4.73% and 3.97% of the linguistically diverse population, respectively. By combining ACS, PUMS, CDE, and WIC data and confirming them with the Transit Equity Office's qualitative experiences engaging with the community, the Factor 1 analysis identifies 19 safe harbor languages, which include (in alphabetical order) Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese), French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Karen, Korean, Nepali, Persian (including Dari and Farsi), Russian, Somali, Tagalog, Tigrinya, Spanish, Swahili, and Vietnamese.

The general distribution of LEP individuals around the RTD service area remains similar to the 2022-2025 Factor 1, with the highest concentrations of LEP populations in north and northeast Denver, east Lakewood/west Denver, and throughout Aurora. However, south Boulder saw a significant increase in all LEP populations since the last Factor 1 analysis, and Aurora continues to grow its LEP population as well.

Taken together, these findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic diversity and dispersion within RTD's service area, informing targeted language access initiatives. By continuously assessing demographic trends, RTD can implement targeted engagement strategies to ensure the language accessibility of its services and programs.

Results

American Community Survey (ACS)[4]

According to the ACS, approximately 2.92 million people[5] live in the RTD service area, including an estimated 200,812 individuals who speak English "less than very well" (representing 6.88% of the population). This percentage is roughly consistent with the 2022-2025 Factor 1 analysis.[6]

The figures below show the linguistically diverse populations by language that meet the LEP safe harbor language threshold, defined as 5% of the service area population or 1,000 individuals likely to be served by RTD, whichever is lower. Spanish remains the most widely spoken language at home after English, accounting for 65.4% of the

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[4] U.S. Census American Community Survey Tables: 2018-2023 (5-Year Estimates), Table C16001: Language Spoken at Home for the Population 5 Years or Older (Census Tracts)

[5] The total population whose language ability is determinable — here, 2.92 million people — is lower than the estimate of total population that may be noted in other RTD documentation. This is due to the inability of the Census to identify the spoken languages or English proficiency for everyone estimated to reside in a particular census tract. Linguistically diverse people may also belong to one or several "hard-to-count" populations, leaving them undercounted.

[6] Please note that comparison between actual population numbers should not be drawn between this Factor 1 analysis and the previous analysis from the 2022-2025 Language Access Plan. Previously, the population sample included the total populations of all eight counties where RTD has service (i.e., Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson, and Weld Counties) whereas this analysis used the address method of population distribution to estimate LEP data for the population within RTD's service area — thus making it a smaller sample size.

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linguistically diverse population. Vietnamese and Chinese remain the second- and third-most spoken languages, making up 4.73% and 3.97% of the linguistically diverse population, respectively. These rankings exclude broader language categories such as "other and unspecified languages," "other Indo-European languages," and "other Asian/Pacific Island languages."

In all, ACS data allows us to identify nine initial languages that meet the safe harbor threshold: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Figure 1.1. Languages Spoken at Home for LEP Persons Five Years or Older in RTD Service Area (ACS)

Language Spoken at Home	LEP Population Estimate	% of Total Population	% of LEP Population
Spanish	131,421	4.50%	66.60%
Other and unspecified languages	11,005	0.38%	5.58%
Other Indo-European languages	9,798	0.34%	4.97%
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages	9,682	0.33%	4.91%
Vietnamese	9,506	0.33%	4.82%
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)	7,970	0.27%	4.04%
Russian, Polish, or other Slavic languages	7,859	0.27%	3.98%
Korean	4,148	0.14%	2.10%
Arabic	3,628	0.12%	1.84%
French, Haitian, or Cajun	3,494	0.12%	1.77%
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)	1,231	0.04%	0.62%
German or other West Germanic languages	1,071	0.04%	0.54%

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Figure 1.2. Languages with 1,000 or More LEP Persons Five Years or Older (ACS)

Language	LEP Persons
Spanish	131,421
Other and unspecified languages	11,005
Other Indo-European languages	9,798
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages	9,682
Vietnamese	9,506
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)	7,970
Russian, Polish, or other Slavic languages	7,859
Korean	4,148
Arabic	3,628
French, Haitian, or Cajun	3,494
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)	1,231
German or other West Germanic languages	1,071
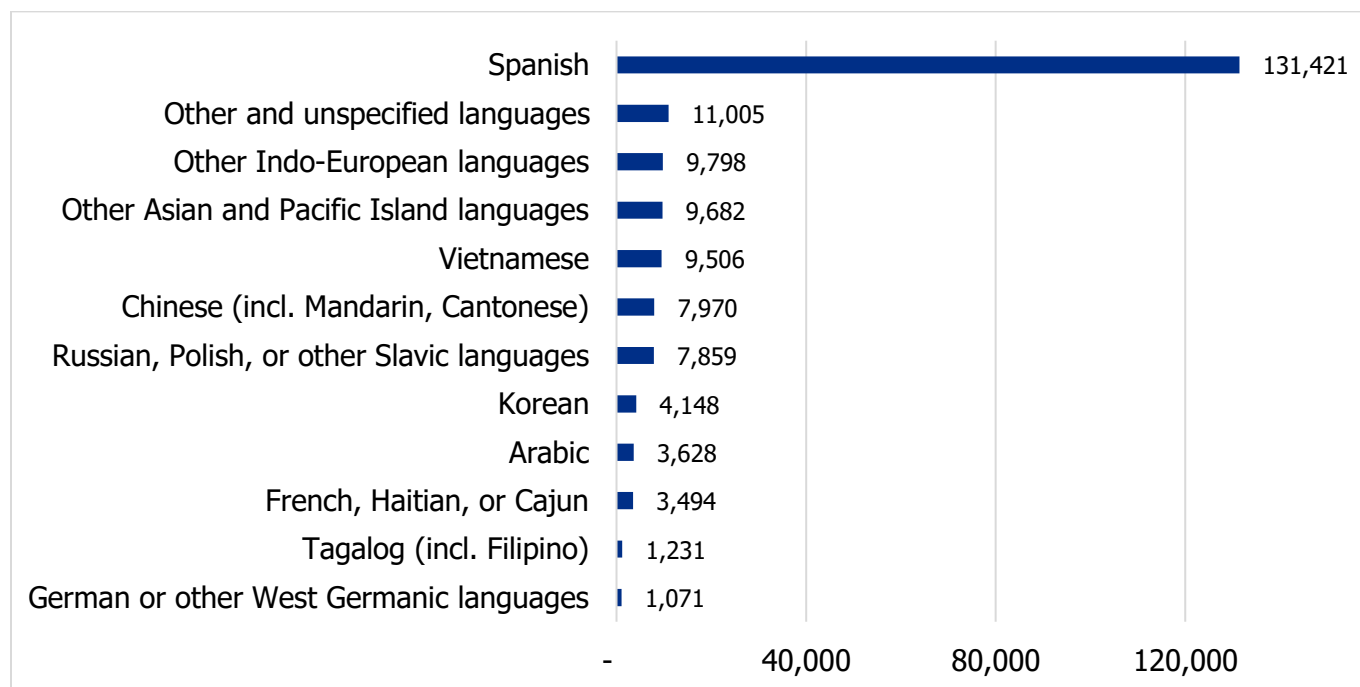
The following maps illustrate the distribution of linguistically diverse individuals throughout RTD's service area based on the most recent American Community Survey data. The first map displays the overall population of linguistically diverse individuals, while subsequent maps highlight the three most common languages spoken: Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese.[7] As a whole, the general distribution of LEP individuals around the RTD service area remain similar to the 2022-2025 Factor 1, with the highest concentrations of LEP individuals in north and northeast Denver, east Lakewood/west Denver, and throughout Aurora. However, south Boulder saw a significant increase in all LEP populations since the last Factor 1 analysis, and Aurora continues to grow its LEP population as well. Spanish speakers remain predominantly concentrated around the City and County of Denver urban core, with the greatest populations in east Denver (e.g., Montbello, Green Valley Ranch), north Aurora, east Lakewood/west Denver, and north of Denver headed to Thornton (e.g., Federal Heights, Welby, Derby, Elyria-Swansea). Similarly, the Vietnamese-speaking population has increased in Northglenn and Erie as well as select census tracts between Aurora and Centennial; generally, it appears that Vietnamese speakers have become more concentrated in specific areas like East Lakewood compared to a more general dispersion in the last Factor 1 analysis. Meanwhile, Chinese-speaking populations tend to be more prevalent in south Denver suburban areas such as Cherry Creek, Dove Valley, Dakota Ridge, and Highlands Ranch, with an increased concentration of this population in select census tracts in this area. Boulder remains an important concentration in addition to an increased concentration of LEP Chinese speakers in Louisville/Superior.

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[7] Please refer to Appendix A for population distributions Lof other languages according to the ACS (and PUMS).

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Figure 1.3. Distribution of the Entire Limited English Proficient Population Five Years or Older (ACS)

All Limited English Proficient Population Distribution

All LEP Population Percentage by Census Tract

- 0%
- <3%
- 3% - 9.9%
- 10% - 19.9%
- 20% - 29.9%
- >30%
- —— September 2024 Network
- ▪▪▪▪ RTD Rail
- ⌐⌐⌐ Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table C16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

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Figure 1.4. Distribution of Limited English Proficient Spanish Speakers Five Years or Older (ACS)

Limited English Proficient Spanish-Speaking Population Distribution

Spanish-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Tract

- 0%
- <3%
- 3% - 9.9%
- 10% - 19.9%
- 20% - 29.9%
- >30%
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table C16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates
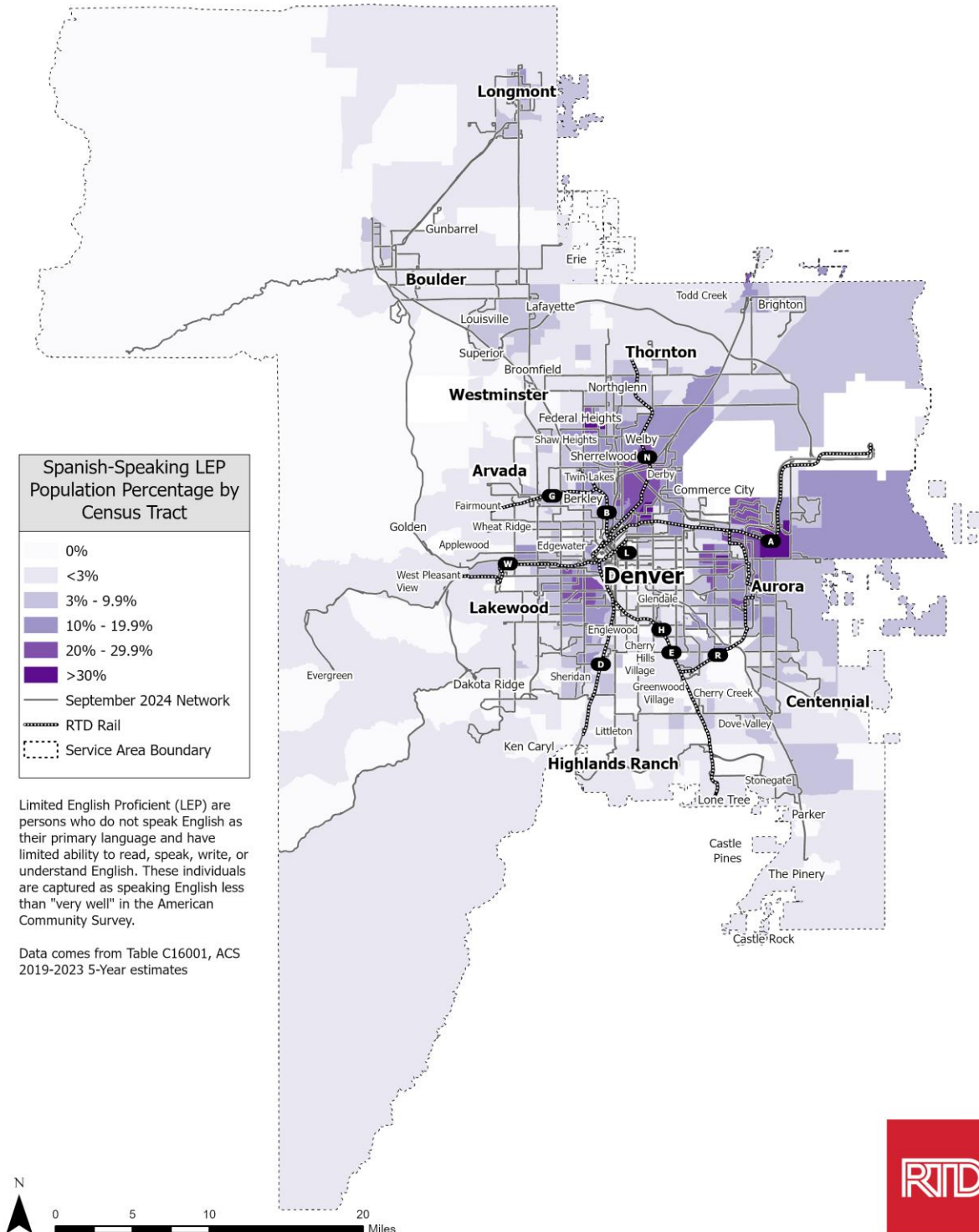
Figure 1.5. Distribution of Limited English Proficient Vietnamese Speakers Five Years or Older (ACS)
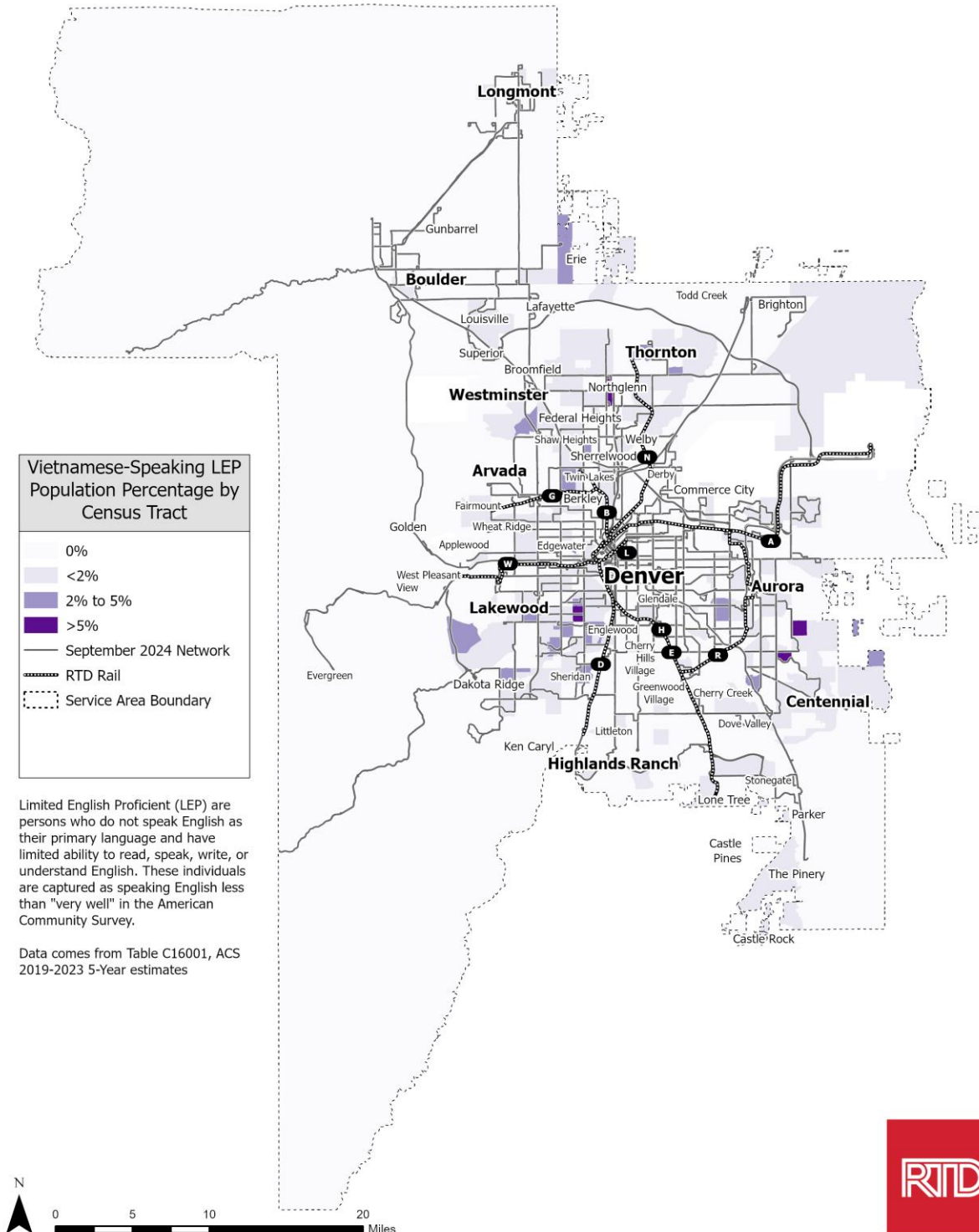
Limited English Proficient Vietnamese-Speaking Population Distribution

Figure 1.6. Distribution of Limited English Proficient Chinese Speakers Five Years or Older (ACS)

Limited English Proficient Chinese-Speaking Population Distribution
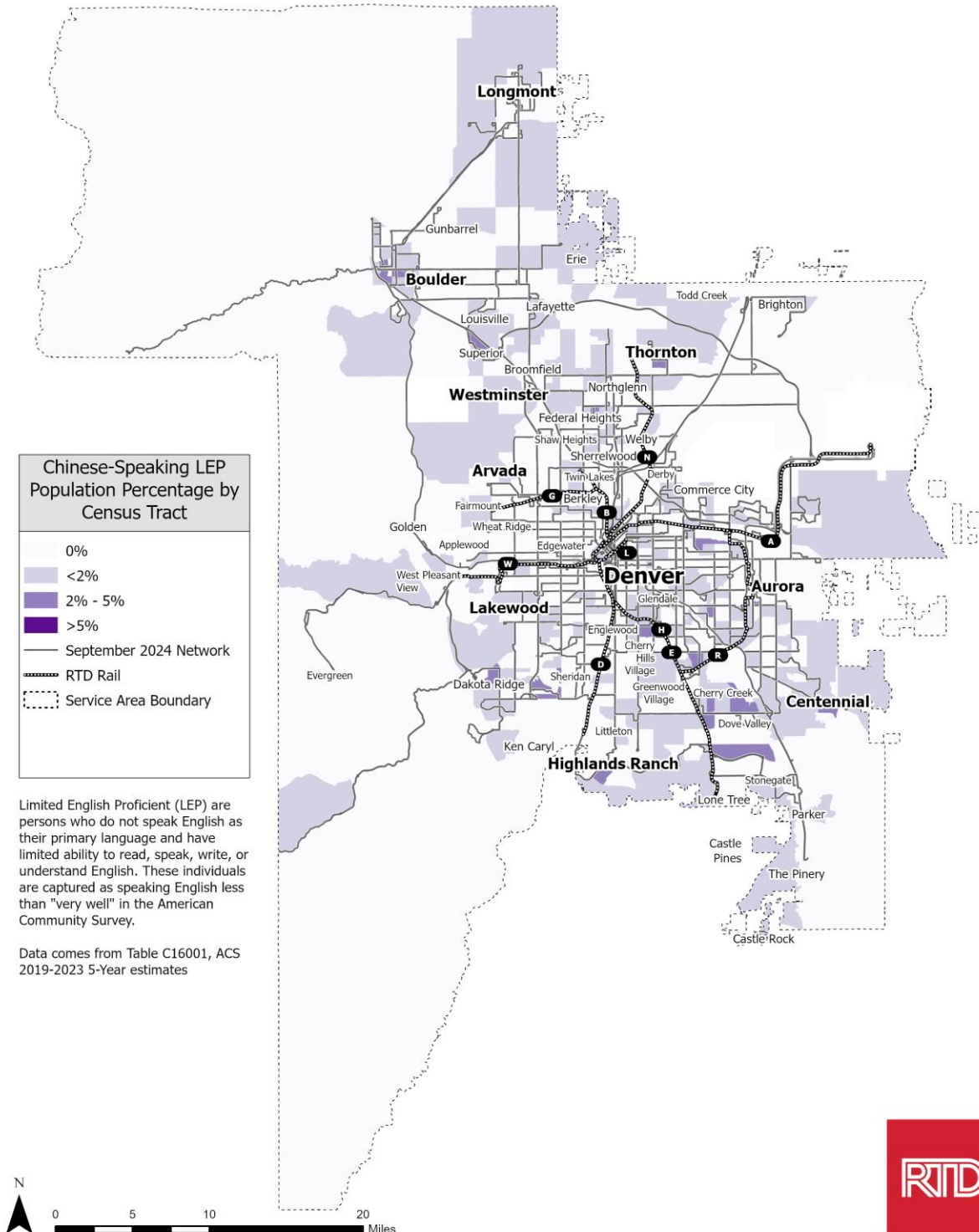
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Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)[8]

To identify additional language groups prevalent in the RTD service area beyond those captured by the ACS, RTD's Transit Equity Office examined Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data. PUMS supplements ACS estimates by providing more granular insights into grouped or general language categories. As a result, in addition to Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese being recognized as safe harbor languages per ACS data, PUMS data identifies Persian (including Dari and Farsi), Japanese, and Hindi as safe harbor languages while highlighting additional languages that may warrant consideration, such as Amharic, Nepali, Hindi, and Ukrainian (among others), as shown in Figure 1.7.

Figure 1.7. Languages Spoken at Home for Persons Five Years or Older in RTD Service Area (PUMS)

Language Spoken at Home	LEP Population Estimate	% of Total Population	% of LEP Population
Spanish	131,196	4.53%	65.91%
Vietnamese	9,235	0.32%	4.64%
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)	7,592	0.26%	3.81%
Amharic, Somali, or other Afro-Asiatic languages	7,205	0.25%	3.62%
Russian	5,248	0.18%	2.64%
Korean	4,049	0.14%	2.03%
Arabic	3,699	0.13%	1.86%
French (incl. Cajun)	3,305	0.11%	1.66%
Nepali, Marathi, or other Indic languages	3,215	0.11%	1.62%
Other Languages of Asia (incl. Burmese, Karen, Turkish, Uzbek)	2,605	0.09%	1.31%
Persian (incl. Farsi, Dari)	1,694	0.06%	0.85%
Yoruba, Twi, Igbo, or other languages of Western Africa	1,538	0.05%	0.77%
Ilocano, Samoan, Hawaiian, or Other Austronesian Languages	1,480	0.05%	0.74%
Thai, Lao, or other Tai-Kadai languages	1,359	0.05%	0.68%
Swahili or other languages of Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa	1,212	0.04%	0.61%
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)	1,192	0.04%	0.60%

[8] U.S. Census Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) Tables: 2018-2023 (5-Year Estimates), Table B16001 (PUMS) – Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over

Japanese	1,167	0.04%	0.59%
Hindi	1,134	0.04%	0.57%
Other Indo-European languages (incl. Albanian, Lithuanian, Pashto [Pushto], Romanian, Swedish)	1,086	0.04%	0.55%
Ukrainian or other Slavic languages	1,054	0.04%	0.53%
German	1,018	0.04%	0.51%

Figure 1.8. Languages with 1,000 or More LEP Persons Five Years or Older (PUMS)
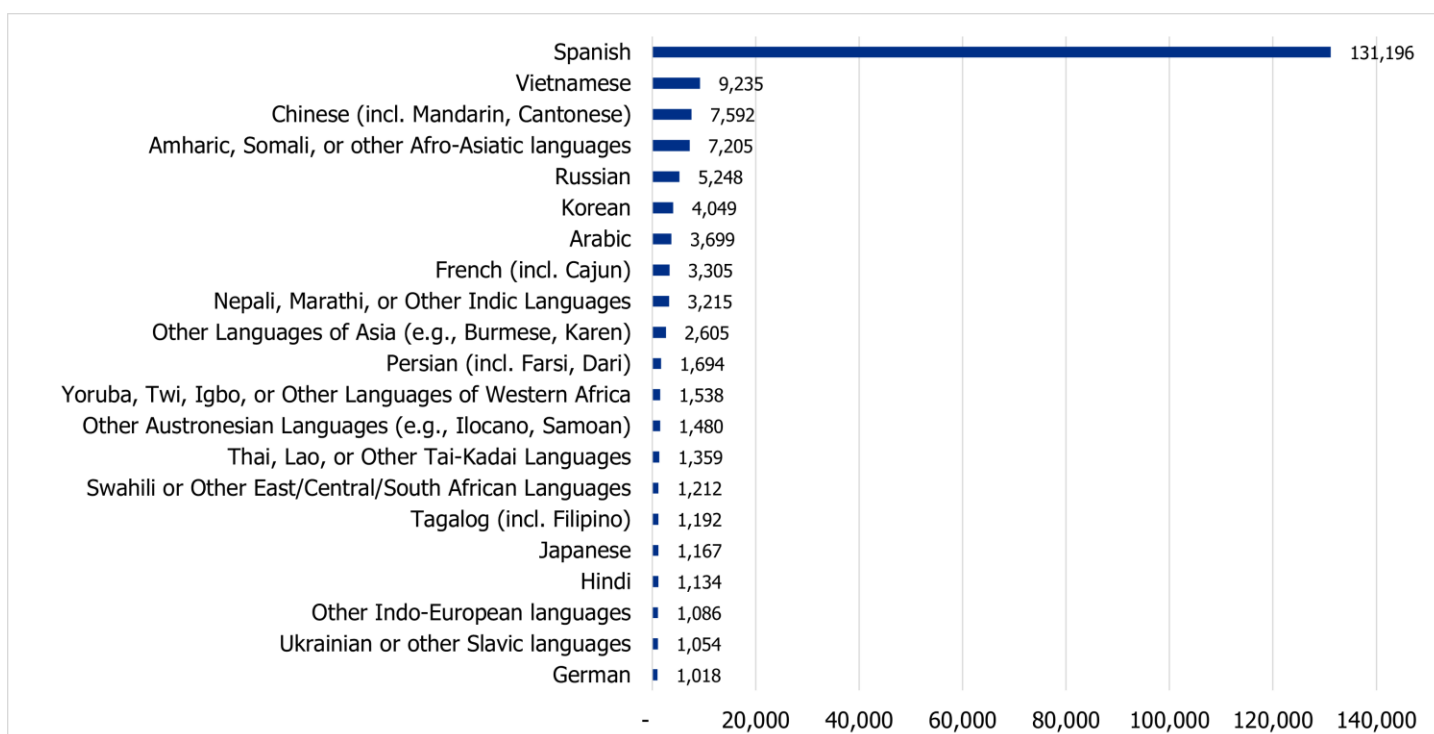
The following PUMS maps illustrate the distribution of linguistically diverse Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese-speaking populations within the RTD service area. These maps highlight PUMAs where the percentage of speakers in each language group is above or below their respective share of the total population. The remaining maps are available in Appendix A.

Figure 1.9. Distribution of the Entire Limited English Proficient Population Five Years or Older (PUMS)

All Limited English Proficient Population Distribution

All LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than 7%
- 7% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

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Figure 1.10. Distribution of Limited English Proficient Spanish Speakers Five Years or Older (PUMS)

Limited English Proficient Spanish-Speaking Population Distribution

Spanish-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than 4.53%
- 4.53% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates
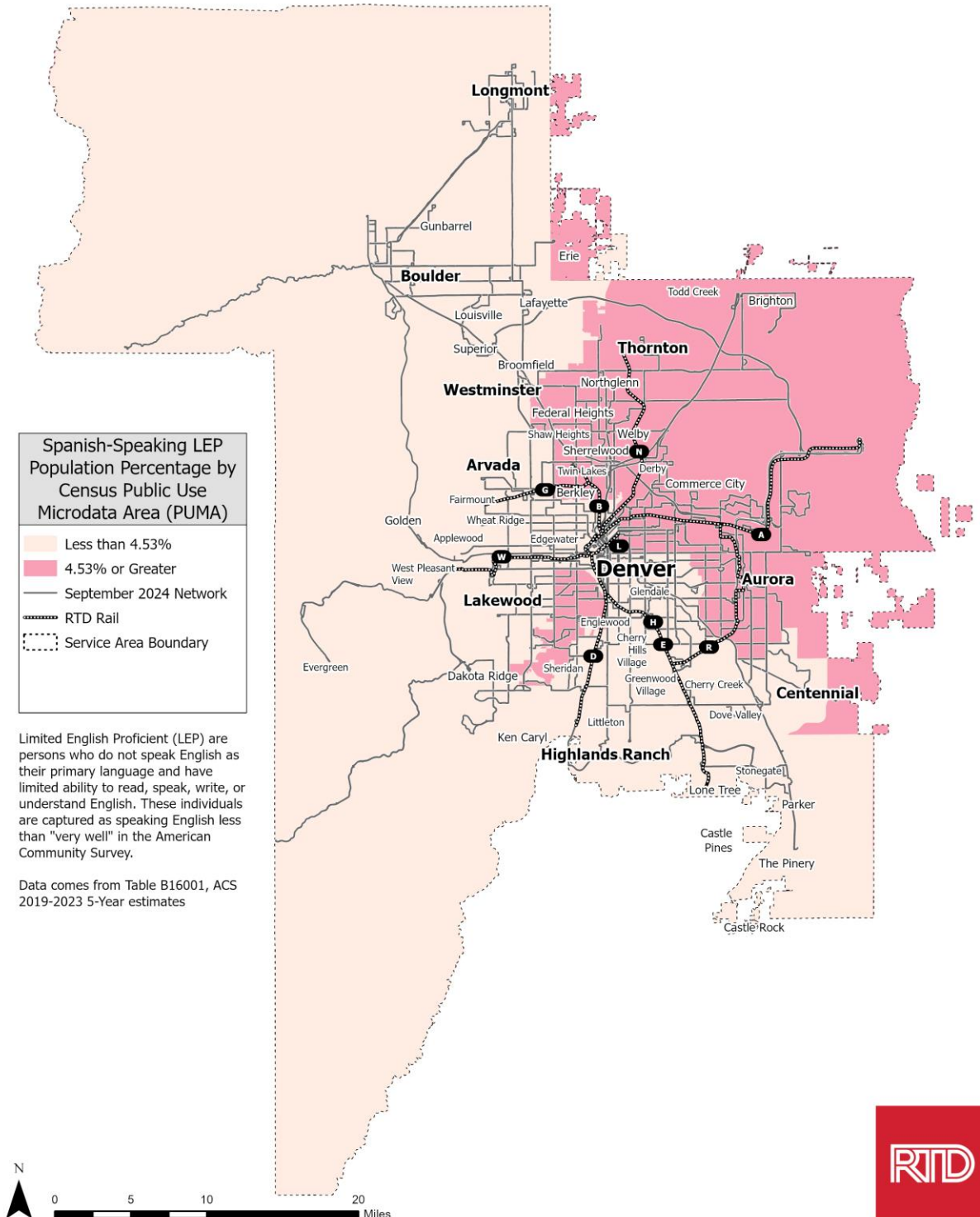
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Figure 1.11. Distribution of Limited English Proficient Vietnamese Speakers Five Years or Older (PUMS)

Limited English Proficient Vietnamese-Speaking Population Distribution

Vietnamese-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .4%
- .4% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates
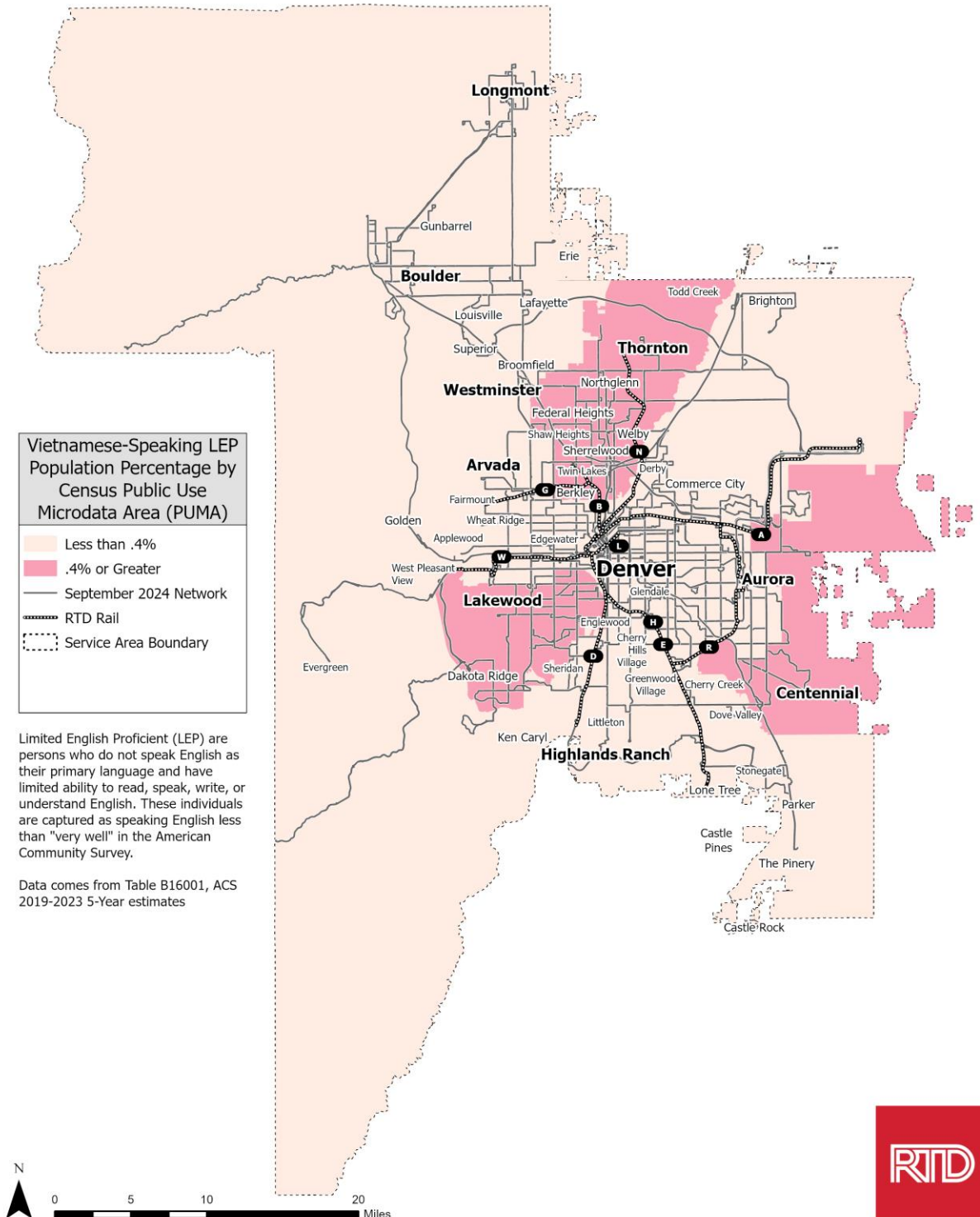
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Figure 1.12. Distribution of Limited English Proficient Chinese Speakers Five Years or Older (PUMS)

Limited English Proficient Chinese-Speaking Population Distribution (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)

Chinese-Speaking LEP Population (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese) Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .2%
- .2% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

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Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

In addition to ACS and PUMS estimates, the Factor 1 analysis incorporates the most recent Student Language of Origin data from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) for the 2023-2024 school year.[9] This dataset provides insights into the languages spoken at home and enrollment in English as a Second Language (ESL) services among students from kindergarten through high school. It is reasonable to assume that if a child speaks a language other than English, their parents or guardians likely do as well, particularly for students receiving ESL services. While this dataset does not capture the number of non-school-age individuals who speak a language other than English, it serves as a valuable complement to Census (both ACS and PUMS) data in assessing linguistic diversity and, paired with Colorado Health Authority and qualitative data from RTD's outreach efforts, can help RTD finalize its list of safe harbor languages and inform language assistance measures.

Data was compiled from the following school districts serving students within the RTD district boundaries.[10]

Figure 1.13. School Districts Included in Factor 1 Analysis

School Districts			
Adams 12 Five Star Schools	Cherry Creek 5	Englewood 1	Mapleton 1
Adams County 14	Clear Creek RE-1	Expeditionary BOCES	School District 27J
Adams-Arapahoe 28J	Denver County 1	Gilpin County RE-1	Sheridan 2
Boulder Valley Re 2	Douglas County Re 1	1 Jefferson County R-1	St Vrain Valley RE1J
Byers 32J	Education reEnvisioned BOCES	Julesburg Re-1	Weld County School District RE-3J
Charter School Institute	Elizabeth School District	Littleton 6	Westminster Public Schools

While CDE data generally aligns with ACS and PUMS data regarding the most commonly spoken languages among linguistically diverse populations generally, it shows a higher percentage of Spanish speakers in the school-age population as a percentage of the total school-age population that speak another language at home. Specifically, Spanish accounts for 75.4% of the school-aged population that speak a language other than English at home in the CDE dataset compared to 65.4% in ACS and 65.91% in PUMS for the general LEP population. Additionally, Arabic replaces Vietnamese as the second-most spoken language, pushing Vietnamese to third. Further, compared to the 2022-2025 Factor 1 analysis, both Russian and Amharic surpass Chinese to become the fourth- and fifth-most spoken language at home in the school-age population.

These languages are the same as those identified in the previous Factor 1 analysis, albeit in a slightly different order of prevalence. This CDE data reinforces ACS and PUMS data regarding the presence of Amharic and Nepali in local communities, confirming the need to add them to RTD's list of safe harbor languages.

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[9] Colorado Department of Education: Languages Spoken at Home (2023-2024).
[10] RTD included school districts that have a minimum of one individual school with a zip code within RTD's service area.

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Figure 1.14. Languages Spoken at Home for School Districts within RTD's Service Area (2023-2024)

Language	Number of Students[11]	Percent of Students[12]
Spanish	96,074	75.4%
Arabic	3,082	2.4%
Vietnamese	2,769	2.2%
Russian	2,482	1.9%
Amharic	2,238	1.8%
Chinese, Mandarin	2,087	1.6%
Nepali	1,302	1.0%
French	1,192	0.9%
Korean	1,026	0.8%

Colorado Health Authority

Finally, data were collected via the Colorado Health Authority from participating Colorado Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics across Jefferson, Boulder, and Denver counties, as well as most of the City and County of Broomfield and portions of Adams, Douglas, Weld, and Arapahoe counties. The dataset covers the period from January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2024. Across these clinics, clients spoke 16 distinct languages. Figure 1.15 presents a frequency count of unique clients by spoken language.

Figure 1.15. Spoken Languages of WIC Clients within the RTD Service Area (2023-2024)[13]

Language	Average Monthly Enrollment in 2023	Average Monthly Enrollment in 2024	Average Percentage of Clients[14]
Spanish	13,106	16,618	75.9%
Other	1,487	1,583	7.2%
Unknown	1,590	1,375	6.3%
Arabic	381	409	1.9%
French	284	328	1.5%
Amharic	307	301	1.4%
Nepali	198	196	0.9%
Somali	197	180	0.8%
Tigrinya	138	152	0.7%

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[11] RTD included all students who speak a language other than English at home in the analysis. This includes students who are enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) services by students ranging from kindergarten to high school.

[12] The CDE redacts data where there are less than 16 foreign language speakers in a school district. RTD utilized data that were not anonymized, therefore the percentages listed are estimates and should not be used to determine safe harbor languages.

[13] Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment does not disclose the exact number of clients where a language spoken at home is less than 50 per county in order to protect privacy.

[14] RTD utilized data that were not anonymized, therefore the percentages listed are estimates and should not be used to determine safe harbor languages.

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Russian	129	150	0.7%
Vietnamese	122	150	0.7%
Burmese	135	117	0.5%
Dari	-	114	0.5%
Swahili	95	108	0.5%
Karen	45	43	0.2%
Mandarin	43	30	0.1%
American Sign Language	35	32	0.1%
Karenni	28	23	0.1%
Total	**18,320**	**21,909**	**100%**

WIC data confirms previous findings that Amharic, Burmese, Karen, Nepali, Somali, and Swahili may warrant inclusion in language assistance measures and addition to RTD's safe harbor language list. Additionally, WIC data identified Tigrinya and Karenni as spoken languages that did not explicitly appear in other datasets but may have been grouped in all-inclusive "other" categories.

Discussion

Factor 1 of RTD's Four Factor Analysis provides key insights into the languages that should be prioritized for language assistance and the geographic areas where these services are most needed. Using data from the ACS and PUMS, the analysis initially identifies 12 distinct languages that meet the safe harbor threshold. These include Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Persian (including Dari and Farsi), Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

CDE and WIC data then allow RTD to differentiate specific languages from the ACS and PUMS datasets that group languages together by region. From these datasets, the Transit Equity Office has determined that Amharic, Burmese, Karen, Nepali, Somali, and Swahili should also be added to the safe harbor language list. Notably, WIC data highlights the presence of two other languages not captured in preceding datasets: Tigrinya and Karenni. Given the prevalence of Tigrinya in the Transit Equity Office's outreach efforts, Tigrinya has also been added to the list. However, TEO decided to exclude Karenni at this time given no exposure to this language through its work to date.

In conclusion, 19 languages serve as a foundational guide for RTD's language assistance efforts. The designated languages, listed in alphabetical order, are Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Chinese (incl. Mandarin and Cantonese), French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Karen, Korean, Nepali, Persian (including Dari and Farsi), Russian, Somali, Tagalog, Tigrinya, Spanish, Swahili, and Vietnamese. This list is reflective of the languages the agency regularly interacts with when engaging with local communities, especially newcomer populations.

This is a reduction in the 21 safe harbor languages identified in the previous Factor 1 analysis, with the loss of Hmong, Khmer, Laotian, Telugu, and Thai from the list paired with the new additions of Burmese, Karen, and Tigrinya.

These safe harbor languages can be organized into groups based on the average of all four data sources in Factor 1 to ensure a targeted and data-driven approach to language accessibility. It is essential to note that identification of the linguistically diverse populations by way of producing the safe harbor list is merely a guide for providing language assistance. Importantly, these data do not necessarily represent the language groups that are actually *using* RTD services. Moreover, language assistance activities should remain flexible to incorporate other languages that may not be listed as requested by the community or required by any given

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RTD project or activity. For additional information on how RTD will use the safe harbor language list to inform language access efforts, please see the Language Access Measures section following the Four Factor Analysis.

Figure 1.16. RTD's Four Language Groups

Language Group 1	Language Group 2	Language Group 3	Language Group 4
Spanish	Vietnamese	Russian	Amharic
	Chinese (incl. Mandarin and Cantonese)	Arabic	Nepali
		Tagalog	Burmese
		German	Karen
		French	Somali
		Korean	Tigrinya
		Persian (incl. Dari and Farsi)	Swahili
		Japanese	
		Hindi	

Taken together, these findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic diversity within RTD's service area, informing targeted language access initiatives. Ensuring language accessibility for Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese speakers, who continue to represent the largest linguistically diverse populations, remains a top priority. Since the last Factor 1 update, RTD has significantly expanded bilingual English/Spanish translations of key documents, signage, service and policy updates, and materials for community meetings. While these efforts have improved language access, further improvements are needed both for Spanish speakers and other less common language groups. For example, recent increases in Arabic-, Russian-, and Persian-speaking residents may reflect broader global migration trends driven by conflicts in Ukraine, Palestine, Afghanistan, and Syria. These shifts underscore the importance of a flexible, data-informed approach to language assistance. Finally, Factor 1 data allow RTD to strategically allocate language assistance resources based on geographic needs. Transit routes and services in areas with high concentrations of linguistically diverse populations, particularly throughout Aurora, southeast Boulder, north Denver into Thornton, and east Lakewood/west Denver should be prioritized for expanded language access initiatives. By continuously assessing demographic trends and implementing targeted engagement strategies, RTD can ensure that all customers, regardless of the language they speak, have equitable access to transit services.

Factor 2: Frequency of Contact with Linguistically Diverse Persons
Methodology
To complete Factor 2, the Transit Equity Office (TEO) conducted surveys with employees who are likely to interact with customers from October 14 through November 8, 2024. TEO crafted the survey based on the Factor 2 survey in the agency's 2022-2025 Four Factor Analysis, though this newest version omitted questions deemed

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no longer relevant and rephrased several questions to improve clarity.[15] TEO distributed the surveys in both paper and digital formats to employees via managers, Division Managers, and liaisons at RTD as well as contracted facilities. Please find the survey copy in Appendix B.

The survey received 662 responses (excluding staff who reported never interacting with customers), with 225 responses to the online version and 437 responses to the paper version. This represents a 15.6% increase in responses from the 614 responses received to the 2021 version of this survey. Please note that total response rates may vary question-to-question, as respondents may have skipped questions. Additionally, percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding or if a question allowed respondents to select multiple answers to a question.

Key Findings

Customer-facing staff at RTD increasingly interact with linguistically diverse customers, with daily interactions rising significantly since 2021. Currently, 40% of respondents report daily interactions and 26% report near-daily interactions, compared to 26% and 21%, respectively, in 2021. Most of these interactions are in person, with 86% occurring on buses, trains, and at stations or stops. A smaller percentage, 16%, occurs over the phone; 4%, online. Most inquiries from linguistically diverse customers pertain to trip-related topics, including directions, fares, and schedules. Notably, conversations about language assistance services have more than doubled since 2021, increasing from 6% to 13%.

Staff employ various methods to communicate with linguistically diverse customers. The most common methods include using translation apps on their phones (47%), relying on body language or simplified English (44%), asking other customers to interpret (30%), speaking directly in the customer's language (29%), and seeking assistance from coworkers (26%). Among staff who reported speaking another language, Spanish is the most common (53%), followed by Amharic (13%), French (7%), Arabic (7%), and Oromo (4%) Less staff use resources like Customer Care (20%), informational signage (16%), the RTD website (8%), or translated brochures (5%). Perceptions on the effectiveness of these methods varies.

Despite these efforts, communication challenges remain prevalent. Most staff find it difficult to interact with customers who speak little or no English, with 18% describing it as extremely difficult and 52% as somewhat difficult — a statistically significant increase from 2021, when 10% found it extremely difficult and 47% found it somewhat difficult.[16] These challenges may stem from an actual lack of resources or unfamiliarity with available resources, as only 46% of staff feel somewhat or very equipped to communicate with linguistically diverse customers, while 21% feel not at all equipped and 33% feel only somewhat equipped.

To address these barriers, staff recommend RTD make several improvements, including providing translation devices, offering language classes (particularly in Spanish), and increasing the availability of translated materials and signage. Some also suggest implementing direct access to telephonic interpretation services and hiring more multilingual employees to better serve RTD's diverse customer base.

Results

Respondent Characteristics
Most of the 662 survey respondents work in Bus Operations (57%), as shown in Figure 2.1. After Bus Operations, the top departments/divisions where respondents work are Rail Operations (11%), Paratransit (7%),

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[15] Though altering questions complicates some statistical comparisons between this survey and its predecessor, the questions in their updated form will allow for improved year-over-year comparisons moving forward.

[16] An independent t-test comparing 2021 and 2024 survey responses found that employees in 2024 reported significantly greater difficulty interacting with LEP customers ($p < 0.001$) compared to 2021.

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Communications and Engagement (7%), Transit Police and Emergency Management (5%) and Administration (non-specified; 4%). Planning, Human Resources, General Counsel and Capital Programs staff each comprised 1% of respondents. Overall, respondents to this survey represented more diverse business units than in the 2021 survey, where 71% worked in Bus Operations, 16%, Rail Operations; 11%, Communications; and 2%, Paratransit.

Figure 2.1. Respondents' Departments

Bus Operations — 57%
Rail Operations — 11%
Paratransit — 7%
Communications and Engagement — 7%
Transit Police and Emergency Management — 5%
Administration — 4%
Finance — 2%

(n=662)
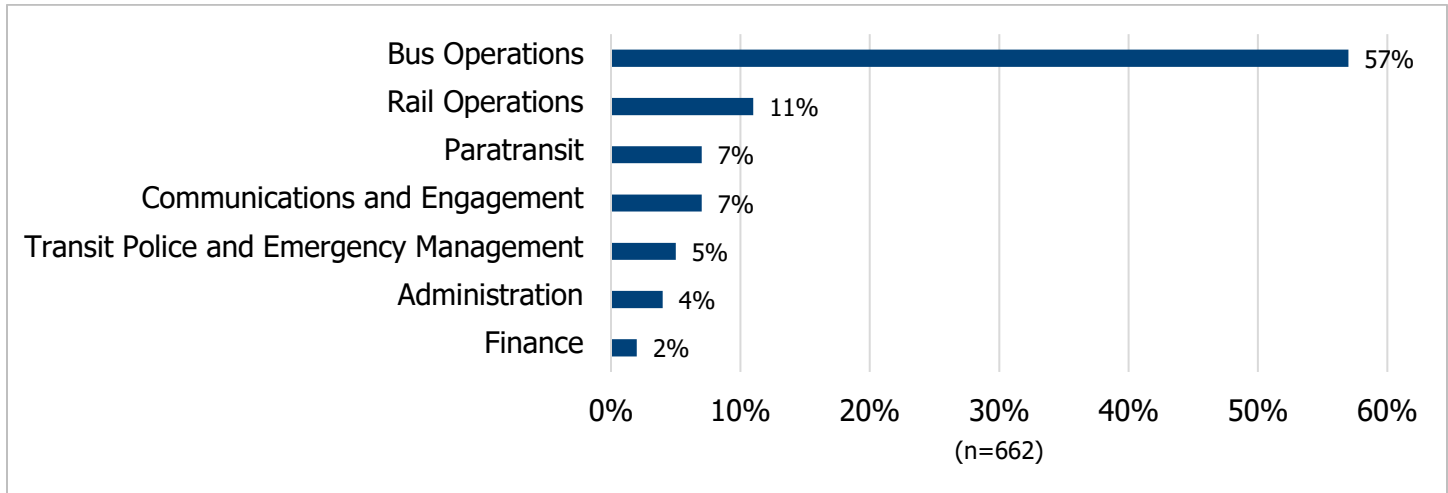
Thirty percent (30%) of respondents (180 employees) speak another language fluently besides English, where fluency indicates that the respondent can speak and read in a language easily and quickly without difficulty or errors. According to Figure 2.2, most (53%) speak Spanish, followed by Amharic (13%), French (7%), Arabic (7%) and Oromo (4%). Other languages include Swahili, Italian, Nepali, German, Hindi, and Farsi.

Figure 2.2. Languages Spoken by Respondents Fluently Besides English

Spanish — 53%
Amharic — 13%
French — 7%
Arabic — 7%
Oromo* — 4%
Swahili* — 3%
Italian* — 3%
Nepali — 3%
German* — 2%
Hindi* — 2%
Farsi (Persian)* — 2%
American Sign Language* — 2%

(n=178; * denotes a write-in response)
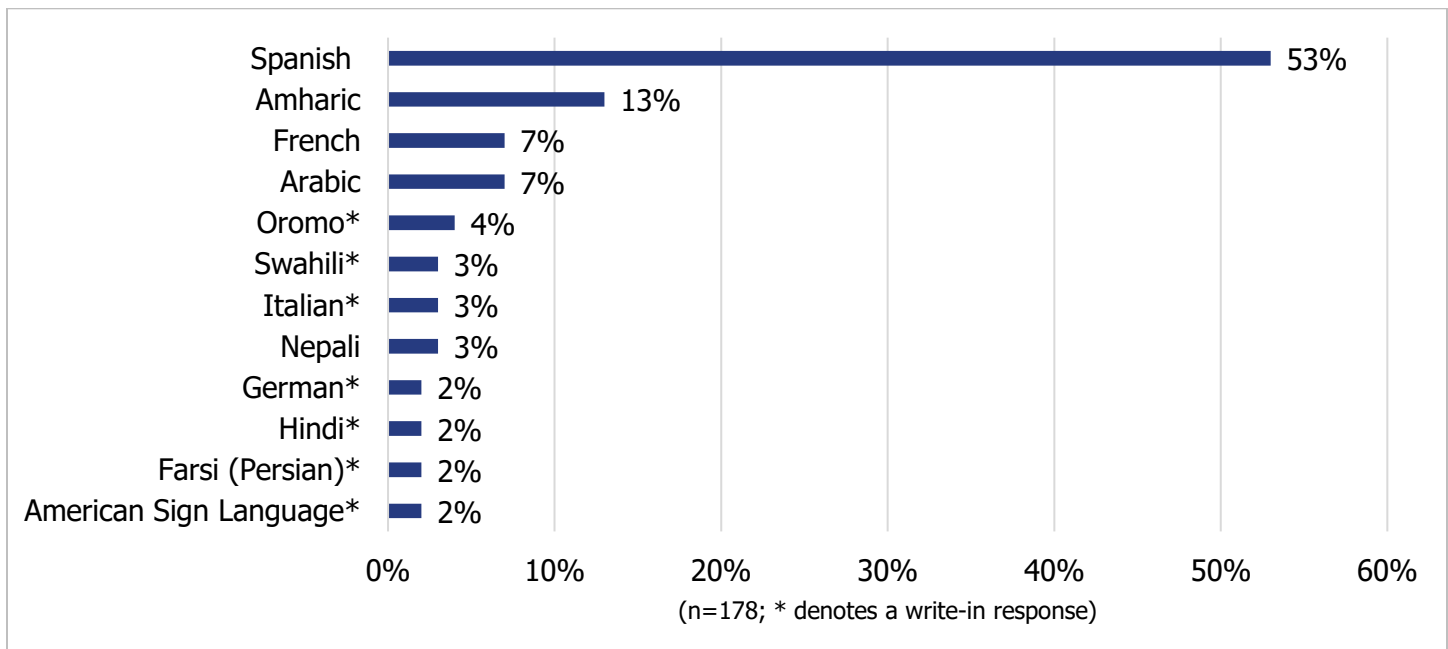
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Frequency and Location of Interactions with Linguistically Diverse Customers

Unsurprisingly, these staff interact with customers frequently. 67% report interacting with customers daily, while another 15% interact with customers almost daily; 4%, once weekly; 3%, once monthly; and 7%, rarely (Figure 2.3). Of those, interactions with customers who are limited English proficient are common. Forty percent (40%) of respondents interact with linguistically diverse customers daily — this is almost a 60% increase from 2021, where just 26% respondents noted interacting with linguistically diverse customers daily.

Figure 2.3. Frequency of Interactions with Linguistically Diverse Customers
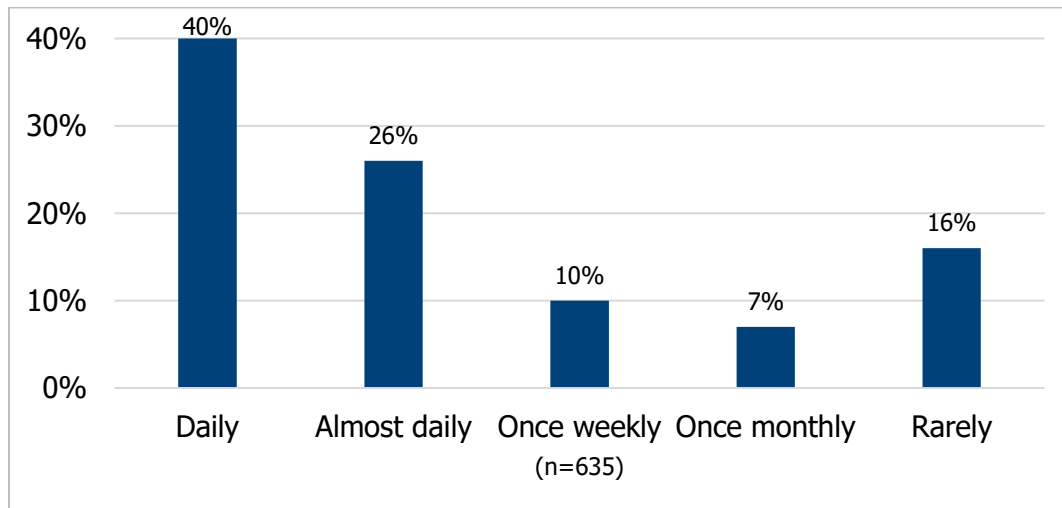
Overall, the vast majority (76%) interact with linguistically diverse customers at least once weekly, and Figure 2.4 demonstrates that most of these interactions occur in-person (78%) as opposed to over the phone, online or in other ways.

Figure 2.4. Type of Interactions with Linguistically Diverse Customers
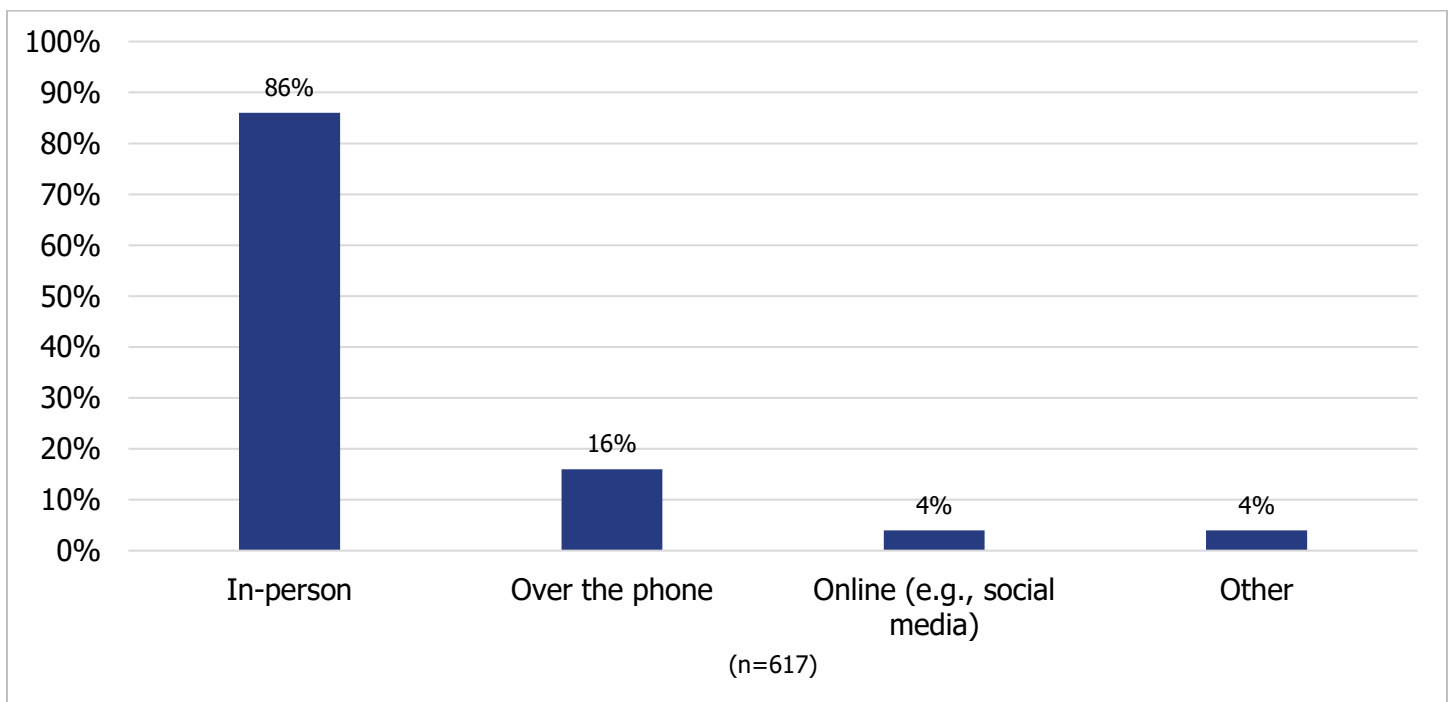
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The locations of in-person interactions vary, but most occur on a bus (68%), at a station or stop (40%) or on a train (14%; Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5. Location of In-Person Interactions with Linguistically Diverse Customers
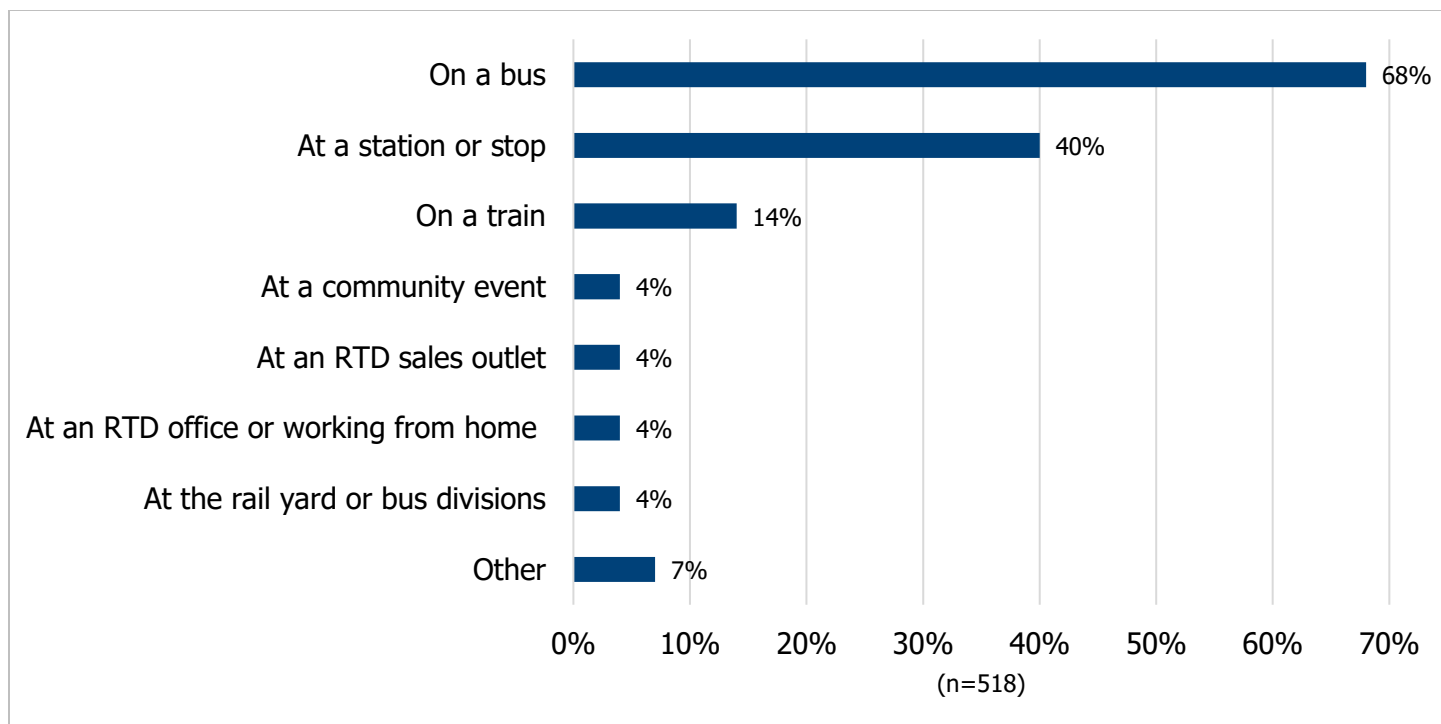
The top five most cited bus routes, stations, stops and rail lines for interactions with linguistically diverse customers are listed in Figure 2.6 below. Note that many respondents indicate "all" routes, stations/stops, and rail lines, demonstrating the prevalence of interactions with linguistically diverse customers across the system. "All routes," as well as the 15, 0, and 16, were some of the most common responses to the previous Factor 2 survey as well.[17]

To view all routes, stations/stops and lines respondents cited, please visit *Employee Interaction Locations* in Appendix C.

Figure 2.6. Top Five Bus Routes, Stations/Stops, and Rail Lines
for Interactions with Linguistically Diverse Customers

Bus Routes	Response Count
All Routes	65
15	53
0	28
16	26
40	22

Stations or Stops	Response Count
Union Station	43
All Stations	33
Civic Center	14
Peoria	11
Central Park	10

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[17] Comparing this survey's results on rail lines to previous results is challenging, as small differences may reflect shifts in the business units of respondents rather than changes in interaction locations (e.g., a higher proportion of N Line staff may have participated this time).

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Rail Lines	Response Count
N	16
All Rail Lines	13
A	9
R	8
H	8

Characteristics of Interactions with Linguistically Diverse Customers

When interacting with linguistically diverse customers, respondents note a range of topics that the customers ask questions about. Figure 2.7 illustrates that the most common topic is directions and trip planning (76%), followed by fares (57%), schedules (56%) and how to buy a ticket or pass (43%).

Figure 2.7. Topics of Conversations with Linguistically Diverse Customers
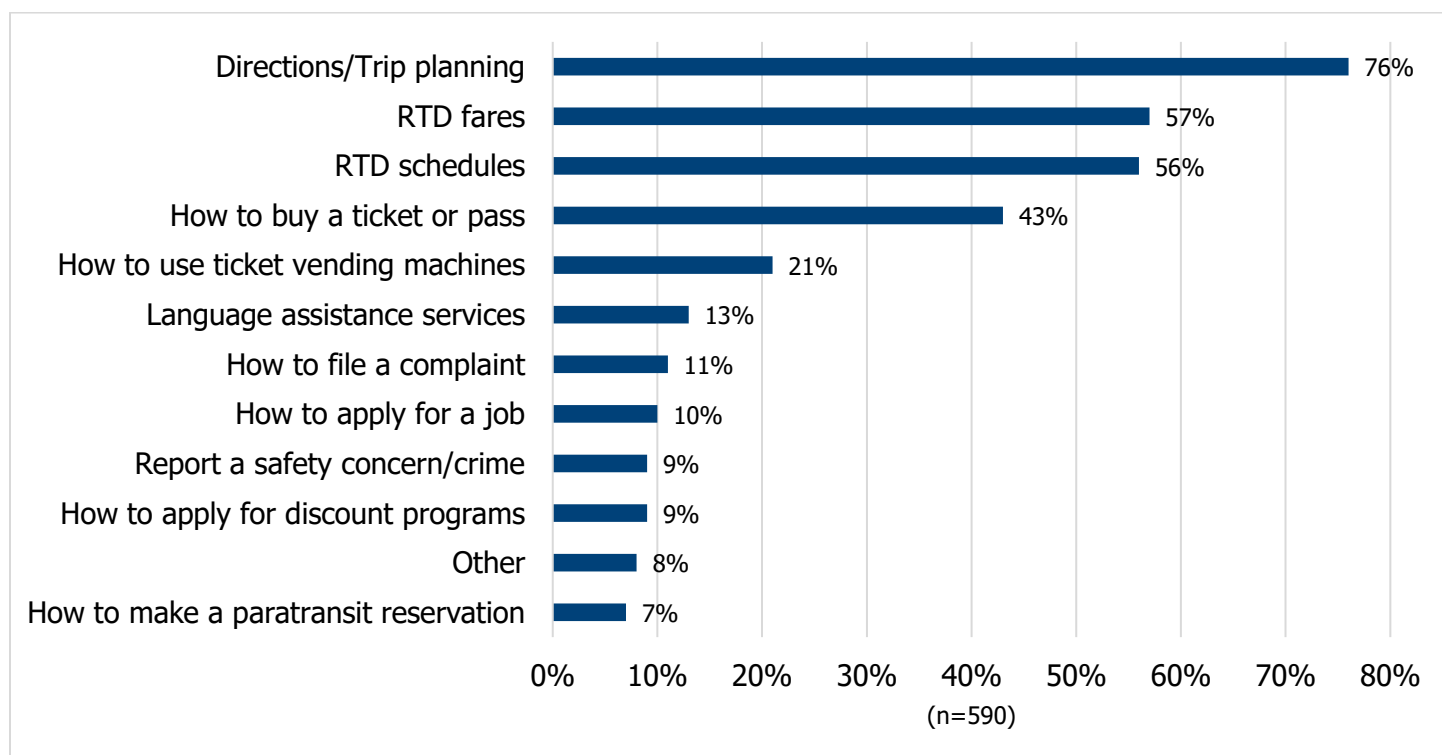
But if there is a language barrier present, how do respondents communicate with customers in these conversations? Forty-seven percent (47%) use a translation app on their phones, such as Google Translate, Deepl or Microsoft Translator (Figure 2.8). Forty-four percent (44%) use body language, such as hand gestures, or simple words to try to communicate in English. Thirty percent (30%) ask other RTD customers to interpret for them, and another 29% speak in the customers' language with them given their multilingual skills.

Figure 2.8. Communication Methods Used with Linguistically Diverse Customers

Communication Method	Percentage
Use a translation app	47%
Use body language or simple words in English	44%
Ask other RTD customers to interpret	30%
Speak in their language with them	29%
Ask multilingual coworkers to interpret	26%
Direct them to RTD Customer Care	20%
Direct them to informational signage	16%
Direct them to the RTD website	8%
Call a telephonic interpreter directly	8%
Other	7%
Provide translated brochures	5%

(n=599)

The methods respondents use to interact with customers do not necessarily correspond to how *effective* they believe that communication method to be; respondents' opinions on effectiveness varies, as shown in Figure 2.9. For instance, 82% of respondents perceive the use of translation apps to be somewhat effective or effective methods to communicate, which aligns with the high reported use of this communication method (46%).[18] Conversely, where many respondents note the use of body language or simple words to try to communicate in English, only 60% report that this is a somewhat effective or effective communication method. On the other hand, fewer respondents ask RTD customers or multilingual coworkers to interpret (30% and 26%, respectively), but employees generally find these people-forward approaches quite effective (70% somewhat effective or effective and 64% somewhat effective or effective, respectively).

Respondents tend to have the strongest perceptions of ineffectiveness towards the translation widget on the website, providing translated brochures and calling a telephonic interpreter directly (63%, 57%, and 52% not effective or somewhat ineffective, respectively).

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[18] This is true even though respondents consistently noted RTD technology policy as a key hindrance to using a translation app as a communication method; see *Staff Recommendations to Improve Communication with Linguistically Diverse Customers* below.

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Figure 2.9. Perceptions of Communication Methods' Effectiveness[19]

	Not effective	Somewhat ineffective	Somewhat effective	Effective
Directing them to informational signage	28%	17%	29%	26%
Translation widget on the RTD website	45%	18%	22%	16%
Using body language or simple English	15%	25%	34%	26%
Calling a telephonic interpreter directly	43%	9%	14%	34%
Using a translation app	13%		27%	55%
Providing translated brochures	42%	15%	17%	26%
Asking other RTD customers to translate	16%	14%	30%	40%
Asking multilingual coworkers to translate	16%	11%	21%	53%
Interpretation via RTD Customer Care	32%	10%	25%	32%
Speaking in their language with them	8%	2%	13%	77%

(n=187-356)

Regardless of communication methods used and their perceived effectiveness, many respondents find it either somewhat difficult (52%) or very difficult (18%) to community with customers who speak little or no English (Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.10. Level of Difficult Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Customers

Extremely difficult	Somewhat difficult	Somewhat easy	Extremely easy
18%	52%	23%	8%

(n=598)

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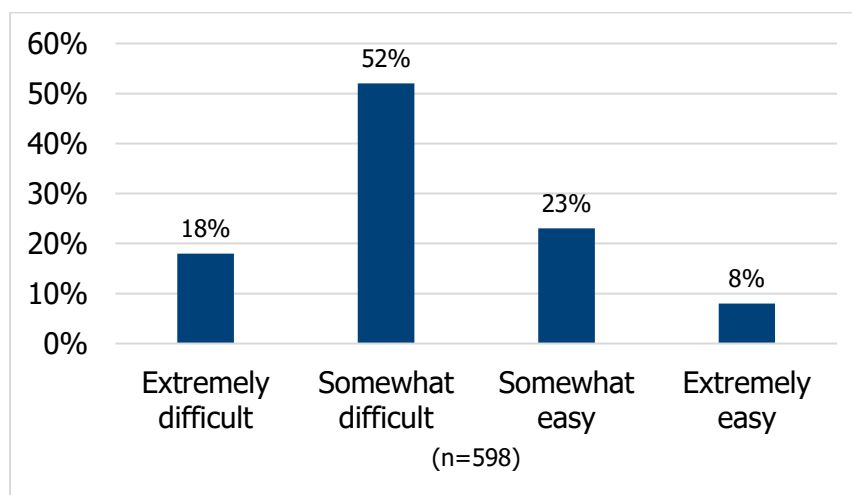
[19] Respondents who marked "Not Applicable" to this question in the survey were excluded from this chart.

Per Figure 2.11, this is not surprising given that most also feel either somewhat unequipped (33%) or not at all equipped (21%) to communicate with these customers.

Figure 2.11. Feeling of Being Equipped to Communicate with Linguistically Diverse Customers
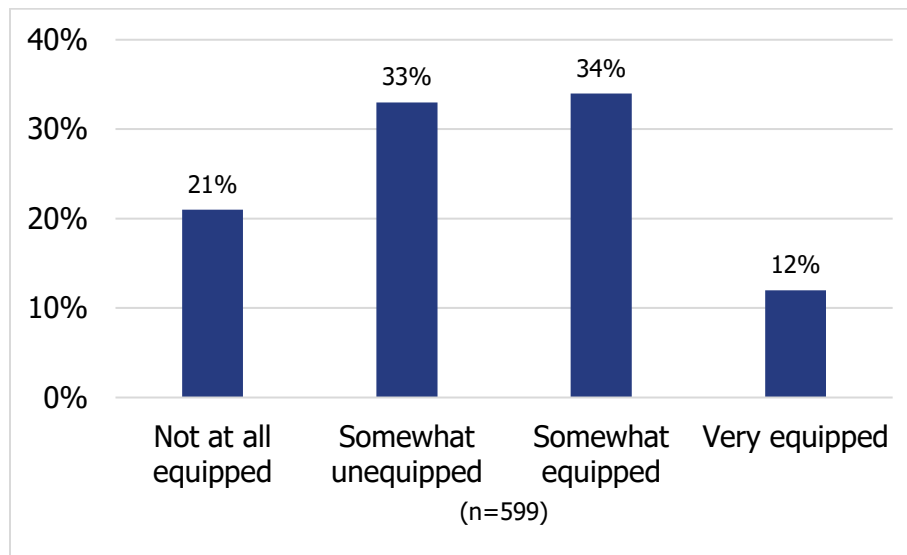
(n=599)

Staff Recommendations to Improve Communication with Linguistically Diverse Customers

When asked what materials, services, or tools RTD could provide to make them feel more equipped and to improve communication with customers who speak little or no English, many respondents (56%) would like access to translation devices, where 43% would like access to language classes and 41% would like more translated materials and signage (Figure 2.12). This is a similar result to the 2021 survey, in which translated materials, a "translation tool" and language training classes were the most popular write-in responses. When asked which language classes they would like, 69% of respondents indicate Spanish; 5%, Chinese; 4%, American Sign Language; and 3%, Arabic and French.

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Figure 2.12. Recommendations for Improving Communication with Linguistically Diverse Customers
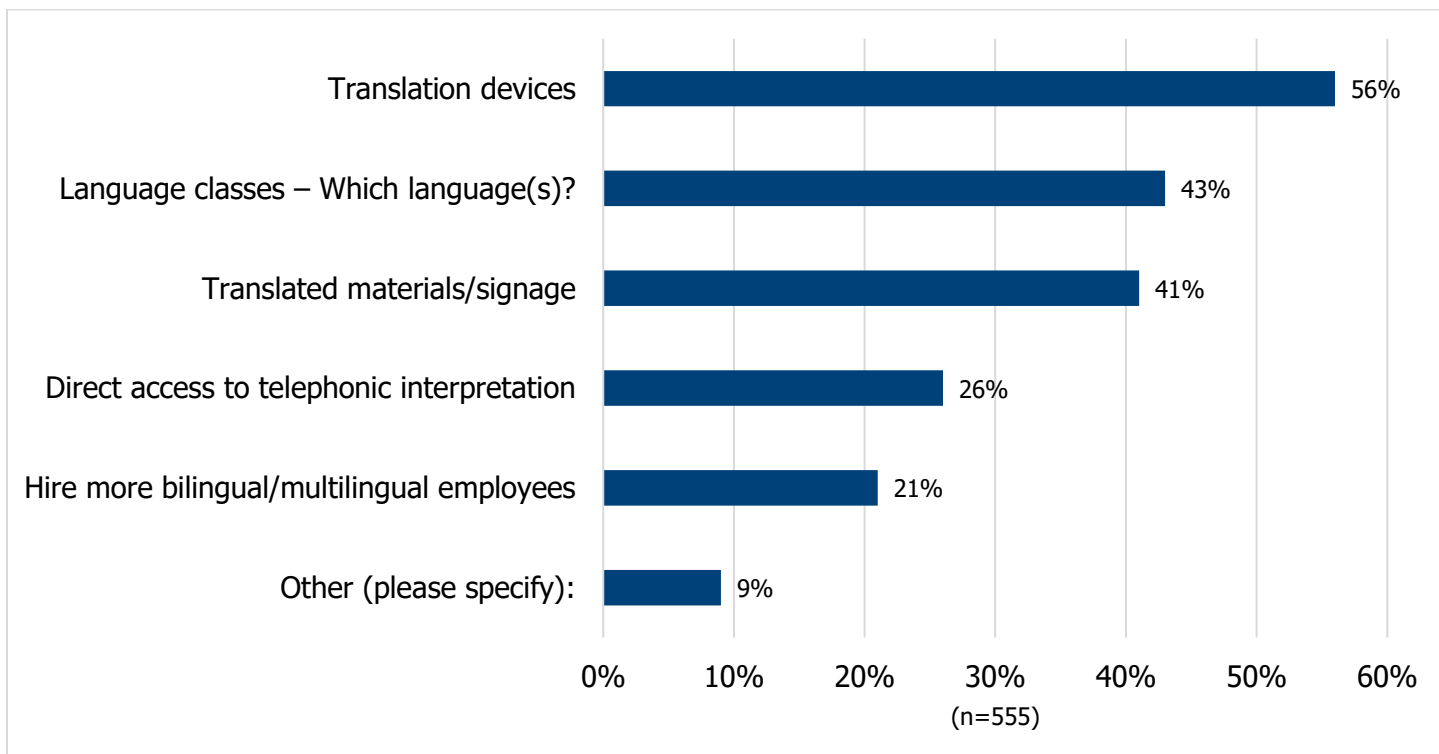
In response to an open-ended question inviting additional suggestions, the following themes arose and expand upon the responses offered in the multiple-choice question above. The quotations were taken directly from the survey responses and have not been revised.

Technology and Policy

Many respondents emphasize the importance of technological solutions for addressing language barriers. While many speak to the installation of translation devices on buses and at stations/stops, there were some who also feel that RTD policy (specifically, Rule 18: Cell Phone and Other Mobile Electronic Device Usage in the RTD Trailblazer) prevents them from adequately providing language assistance via their personal phones. Importantly, though, this rule exists mainly due to safety concerns and finds its roots in FTA and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) regulations prohibiting or severely restricting cell phone use while driving transit vehicles.

> "Allow operators access to their phones so we can use the programs and abilities provide by our personal devices to access better communication between operators and riders. Having to grab your powered off device out of your bag then stepping out of the cab only to have to power it on, wait for it to power up and communicate with the network before you can even access the tools we need for that single interaction. Now multiply that by however many times you need to do that in a shift. This isn't even counting the time you need to power it off again and store it in your bag once more."

> "There needs to be more technology resources provided in how to effectively assist the customer. Whether we provide it or have a resource guide to provide."

> "Not able to use our phones get fired"   "Device to help with language barriers"

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"Our phones can help translate"

"Devices that can hear and read"

"Put translate app on copilot"

"Translation devices - big time"

"Need a translating device to interpret directly to them"

"Using Google translate but phones are not allowed"

"Communication device/translation"

"Add Google translate to all ticket kiosks"

"Communication Technology in General"

Enhance and Expand Audio Announcements

Several respondents note how audio technology could be used to improve communications, both on vehicles and at stops or stations. They suggest improving English audio announcements and adding Spanish audio announcements on both bus and rail vehicles — with consideration for other languages.

"I think translated announcements of bus bridges or service delays at CR stops would be extremely beneficial to many of our customers. Many of our customers only speak Spanish, so I think that translating audio and visual announcements into Spanish would be a good and reasonable starting point to providing equitable and accessible service to our customers."

"Better signs near tracks. Audio announcements all the time. for example, "the Airport train is located on track one. Light Rail trains are located on Chestnut and 17th."

"Audio device in bus"

"Have announcements in different languages"

"Automated announcements in more languages"

"Incorporate into existing Radio on busses"

Translate and Modify Signage

Respondents suggest that signage could better support multilingual communication by including translations and incorporating non-written methods, such as the use of colors and images, into signage design to assist linguistically diverse customers.

"Add language options to some signage. Or a separate sign for multilingual at union station. Signage in multiple languages"

"More translated/picture-based signage, improved communications about availability of language assistance."

"Signage in multiple languages"

"Signs need to be hung more convenient locations."

"Color coding"

"More specific information on digital boards"

"Simple fare interpretation and maps"

Expand Language Accessibility of RTD's Digital Tools and Customer Care Working Hours

RTD's website translation widget currently supports English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, and Korean; however, some respondents recommend adding more languages, which is already in development. Additionally, respondents note that RTD's Customer Care is not available at certain times when services are in use, leading

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to suggestions for extending its hours to better assist customers or making another 24/7 language assistance service available. Respondents also note that RTD phone apps, such as MyRide, are only available in English.

"Expanded languages on RTD website"   "Make customer care available 24/7"

"RTD app in Spanish"   "24-hour Translator"

Hire Bilingual/Multilingual Staff and Compensate Them for Language Use

Respondents emphasize the importance of RTD intentionally hiring bilingual/multilingual staff and recommend compensating employees for using their language skills in their work as an ongoing recognition of their value (e.g., by way of a pay differential).

"Pay employees who speak another language more. This may help those who currently are not bilingual to learn another language."

"Hire more bilingual/multilingual customer service employees who speak other languages commonly used in our RTD districts such as: Arabic, Persian, Mandarin, etc. Many employers have employees from those countries, they could help us in other RTD departments."

"More effectively recognize and utilize those bilingual employees already working for RTD"

"Hire more bilingual/multilingual employees"   "RTD needs more people fluent in Amharic"

Provide Staff with Language Assistance Tools

In addition to educational resources, respondents would like to have other assets on hand to help overcome language barriers, such as sheets with translated phrases.

"a cheat sheet with common phrases like 'Where are you going?'"   "Booklet with related info"

"Maybe a cheat sheet laminated card or something?"

Support Staff Language Learning

Respondents express interest in learning additional languages if classes and other educational resources were more readily available. Respondents request Spanish classes the most, with American Sign Language equally popular.

"Provide language classes that teach very specific words and phrases related to transit and giving people directions."

"Teaching RTD employees and personnel the transit basics in various languages."

"Learning a 2nd language would help or having a communication board"

"I would love to see online ASL and Spanish classes made available"

"More language training"   "I'd try Roseta Stone or equivalent if offered"

"Teach ASL & Spanish"

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Discussion

The survey results highlight a notable increase in daily interactions between customer-facing RTD staff and linguistically diverse customers since 2021, emphasizing the growing importance of effective communication strategies in an increasingly diverse community. These interactions predominantly occur in person, often on buses, trains, and at stations or stops, underscoring the need for staff to have pragmatic, real-time language assistance tools that meet their needs as well as the needs of customers. Despite efforts by staff to bridge language barriers through translation apps, body language and multilingual skills, many still report challenges in effectively communicating with customers who speak little or no English.

The significant rise in conversations about language assistance services suggests increased awareness or demand among customers for these resources. However, less than half of staff feel adequately equipped to handle such interactions, reflecting a need for targeted interventions. This is especially notable given that the Civil Rights Division released its first Serving Non-English-Speaking Customers training to frontline staff in 2022, which outlines strategies for communication across language barriers as well as the various tools available to do so. Recommendations from staff, such as access to translation devices, language classes (with a focus on Spanish), and additional multilingual signage and materials, offer actionable pathways to enhance communication. Moreover, the call for hiring more multilingual employees and compensating them for their skills highlights the value placed on linguistic diversity within the workforce.

Addressing these needs will not only improve the customer experience for linguistically diverse individuals but also support RTD staff in delivering equitable and efficient transit services and programs. Implementing these solutions should be a priority as RTD moves forward with its Language Access Plan from 2025 to 2028.

Factor 3: Nature and Importance of RTD Services to Linguistically Diverse Persons

To complete Factor 3, the Transit Equity Office (TEO) conducted two different studies with linguistically diverse people: a survey and a focus group. Doing so allowed TEO to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the nature and importance of RTD services to this population.

Both studies are described in full below.

Language Access Survey

Methodology

TEO conducted surveys with linguistically diverse people from December 30, 2024 through February 2, 2025.[20] Survey languages included Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Simplified Chinese, English, Farsi, French, Karen, Korean, Nepali, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, and Vietnamese. TEO distributed the surveys in both paper and digital formats directly to community members as well as to community-based organizations who shared them with the populations they serve, using a communications toolkit that TEO produced.[21] These community-based organizations included (but were not limited to) the African Community Center, Aurora Asian Pacific Community Partnership, Aurora Mental Health, Boulder County Mobility for All, Caring for Denver, Colorado Vietnamese Cooperation Council, CREA Results, Denver Public Library, Denver Regional Mobility and Access Coalition (DRMAC), Denver Streets Partnership, Empowering Communities Globally, Hope Communities, Little Saigon

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[20] Though altering questions complicates some statistical comparisons between this survey and its predecessor, the questions in their updated form will allow for improved year-over-year comparisons moving forward.

[21] The toolkit included 11" by 17" posters, 8.5" by 11" and half-page flyers, social media graphics, blurbs, paper copies of the surveys, the survey drawing rules, and talking points.

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Denver, Organization for Chinese Americans, Russian Cultural Center, and the Vietnamese Community of Colorado. Additionally, TEO published half-page advertisements of the surveys in several multicultural publications — specifically, Colorado Chinese News, El Comercio de Colorado, and the Weekly Focus[22].

Figure 3.1. Screenshot of Little Saigon Sharing RTD's Language Access Survey in Vietnamese

The survey received 578 responses (133 paper and 445 digital), excluding people who:

- Did not meet the threshold for limited English proficiency,[23]
- Only wrote English as their preferred language, or
- Reported living outside of the state of Colorado

This represents a 180% increase from the 206 responses received in the 2021 version of this survey. The increased participation is likely due to improved distribution thanks to strengthened relationships with community partners and contracting with community-based organizations to support survey outreach.

Note that total response rates may vary question-to-question, as respondents may have skipped questions. Additionally, percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding or if a question allowed respondents to select multiple answers to a question.

Please find a copy of the paper survey in Appendix D.

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[22] Korean newspaper
[23] RTD used the US Census definition of "limited English proficient" to establish this threshold — specifically, those who speak, write, write, or understand English less than "very well."

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Key Findings

The results of the survey highlight the critical role language access plays in reducing barriers and ensuring equitable transit services for linguistically diverse communities.

- <u>Respondent Characteristics</u>: Compared to the 2021 survey, the 2024-2025 respondents are more likely to have significant language barriers, with fewer indicating they can read, write, or understand English well. The majority (73%) speak Spanish, followed by Chinese (18%), with 23 languages represented overall. Additionally, most respondents identify as Hispanic or Latine (71%) and female (63%).
- <u>Transit Usage and Barriers</u>: Most respondents (70%) frequently use RTD buses, while train usage is lower (41%), and demand-response services are rarely used. Sixty-one percent (61%) of respondents report not having access to a household vehicle, indicating high reliance on transit for mobility. While 51% say they use RTD as much as needed, nearly a third (29%) report that language barriers prevent them from using transit more often. Other concerns include limited service availability and infrequent schedules.
- <u>Access to RTD Information</u>: Respondents primarily obtain transit information through the RTD website (29%), signage (22%), and the Next Ride app (16%). However, many struggle to navigate key RTD services. For example, over 70% do not know how to apply for discounts, report a safety concern, or make a customer service complaint.
- <u>Importance of Language Assistance</u>: Respondents overwhelmingly support expanded language assistance services, with 86-89% rating options such as translated signage and multilingual staff as very or extremely useful. They also find it crucial to receive information in their preferred language on topics such as trip planning, fare discounts, and safety reporting.

Survey participants provided detailed suggestions on how RTD can enhance language accessibility, including:

- Increase bilingual staff and provide better language assistance tools
  - Hiring more bilingual bus operators and frontline employees would improve communication and customer confidence
  - Providing staff with real-time translation tools, such as an app, could enhance service
- Improve translations and signage
  - Address inaccuracies in existing translated materials
  - Expand multilingual signage at stations, on buses, and within trains
  - Introduce Spanish audio announcements and QR codes for instant translations
- Enhance digital and community engagement efforts
  - Expand language options on RTD's website, apps, and text alert systems
  - Utilize video content and multimedia formats for clearer communication
  - Partner with community-based organizations to better engage linguistically diverse customers

Beyond language access, respondents raised three key issues: affordability, security, and cleanliness. Some noted that fares are expensive for them, security concerns on buses and trains, and the need for cleaner transit vehicles and facilities. These concerns highlight that improving accessibility for linguistically diverse communities goes beyond language — it requires addressing broader challenges that affect all customers. In sum, the survey results reinforce the importance of RTD's language access initiatives while underscoring areas for further improvement. By expanding bilingual staffing, improving translated materials, enhancing digital tools, and addressing broader transit concerns, RTD could better serve its diverse ridership and advance equitable mobility for all.

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Results

Respondent Characteristics

All survey respondents are considered limited English proficient, indicating at least one area of English proficiency — whether speaking, reading, writing, or understanding — that they do not do "very well," as illustrated in Figure 3.2. Compared to the 2021 survey, respondents to the 2024-2025 survey are far more likely to indicate that they do not speak, read, write, or understand English at all (in 2021, 13%, 14%, and 14%, respectively for reading, writing, and understanding) or not well (in 2021, 27%, 34%, and 26%, respectively).[24]

In fact, most respondents to the 2021 survey indicated they could read, write, or understand English well or very well — contrary to the 2024-2025 survey, where very few do so (less than 20% across all categories). These results illustrate that the Transit Equity Office improved its ability to distribute the survey to an audience where language barriers are truly significant.

Figure 3.2. Respondents' Ability to Read, Speak, Write, or Understand English

(n=573-576)

Speak ■ Read ■ Write ■ Understand ■
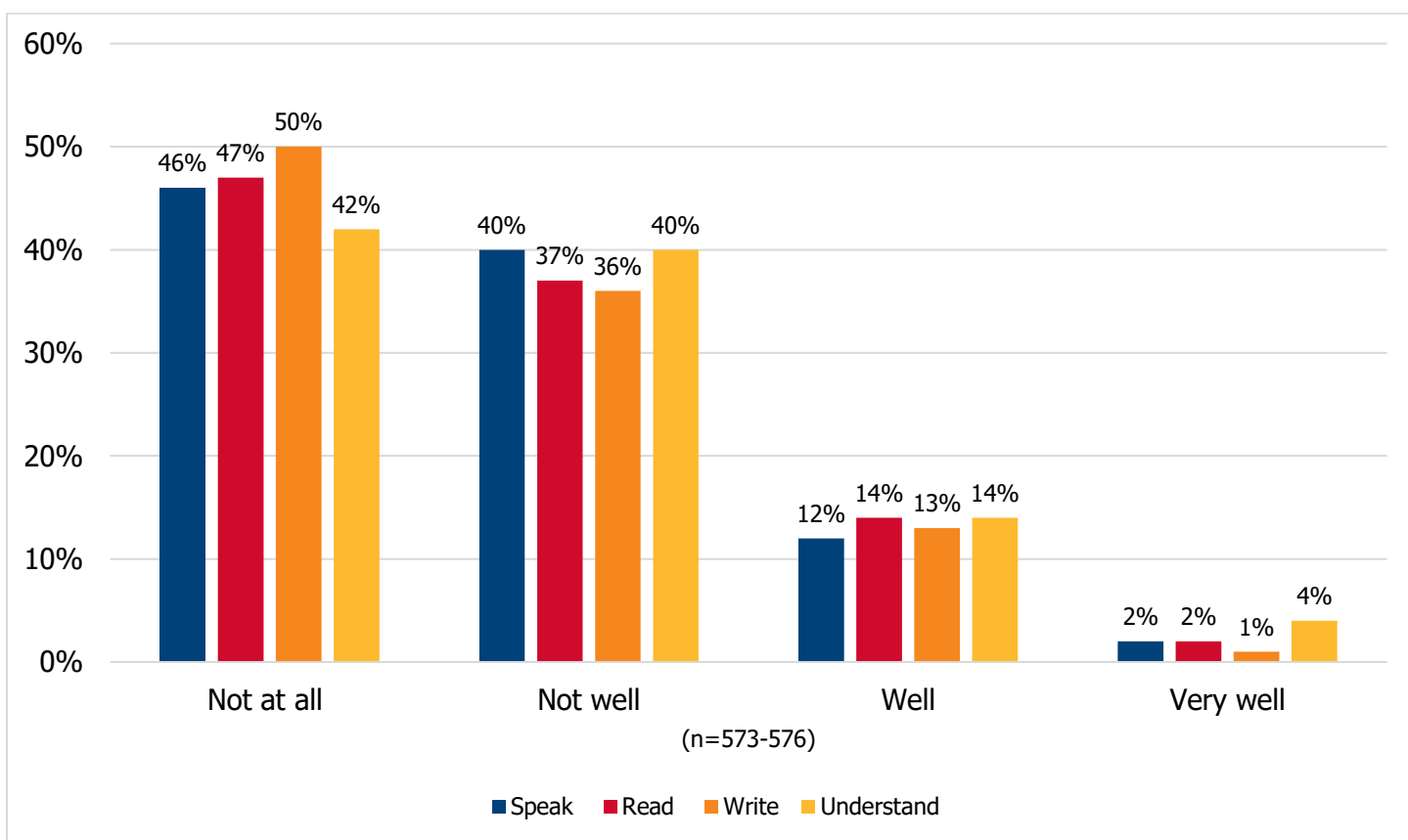
As shown in Figure 3.3, the languages that survey respondents speak vary widely, expanding beyond the survey translation offerings that TEO made available. The most commonly preferred language is Spanish (73%) followed by Chinese (18%). English was included in the results only if a respondent selected English in addition to another preferred language.

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[24]The 2021 survey did not capture data on respondents' ability to speak English.

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Given that US Census data indicates that 66% of the population that speaks languages other than English is Spanish speakers and the remaining 34% speak a variety of other languages, these results are fairly proportionally similar.

Figure 3.3. Respondents' Preferred Languages (Select All)
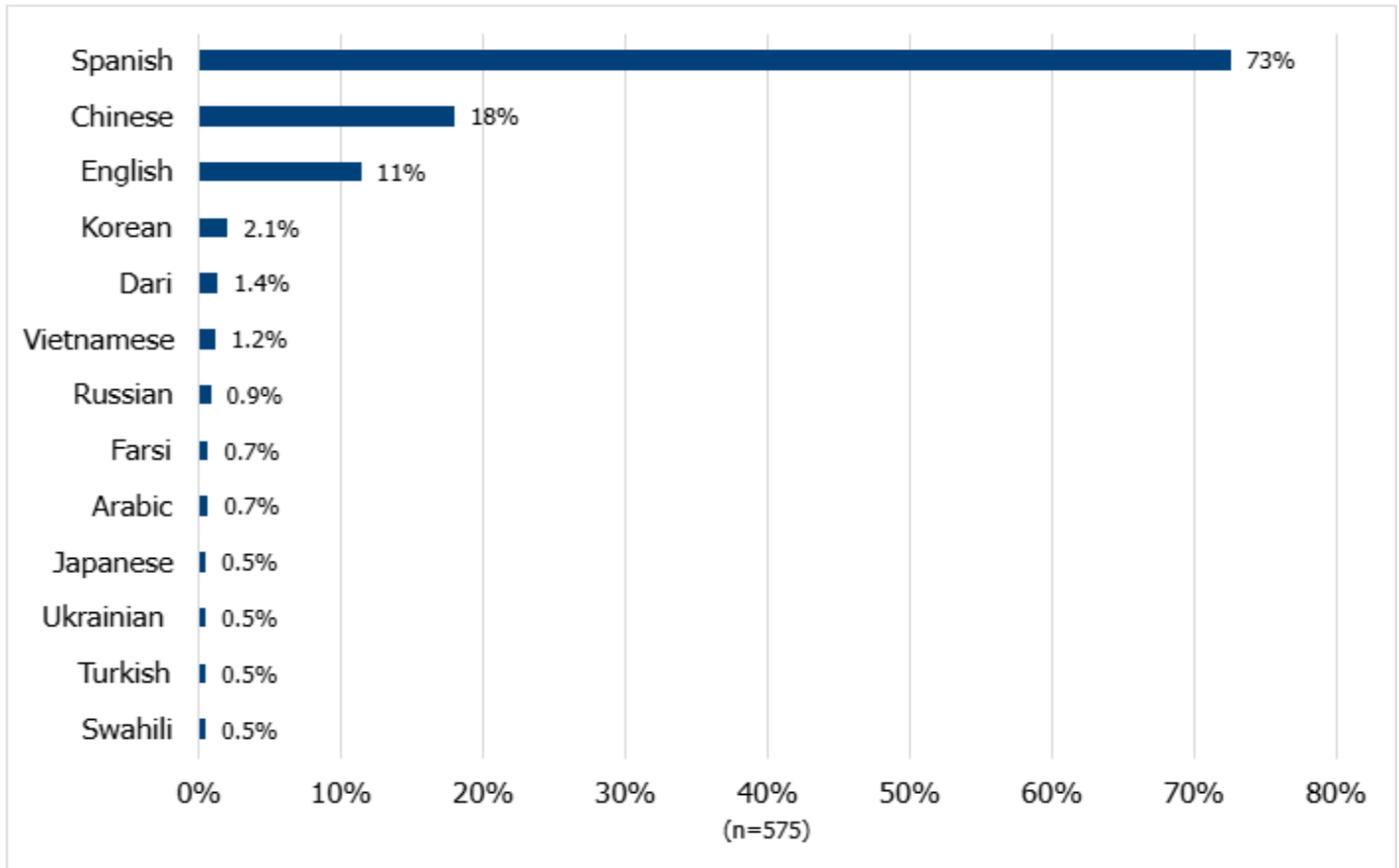
Figure 3.4 is a complete list of the respondents' 23 preferred languages, including write-in responses.

Figure 3.4. Complete List of Respondents' Preferred Languages

Preferred Language	Response Count	Preferred Language	Response Count
Spanish	419	Japanese	3
Chinese	104	French	2
English	66	Burmese	2
Korean	12	Haitian Creole	1
Dari	8	Indonesian	1
Vietnamese	7	Karen	1
Russia	5	Kinyarwanda	1
Arabic	4	Kirundik	1
Farsi	4	Somali	1
Swahili	3	Tagalog	1
Turkish	3	Amharic	1
Ukrainian	3		

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In addition to mostly speaking Spanish, Figure 3.5 shows how the majority of respondents (71%) claim Hispanic or Latine racial or ethnic origins, with Asian being the second most commonly cited origin (23%).

Figure 3.5. Respondents' Racial or Ethnic Origins
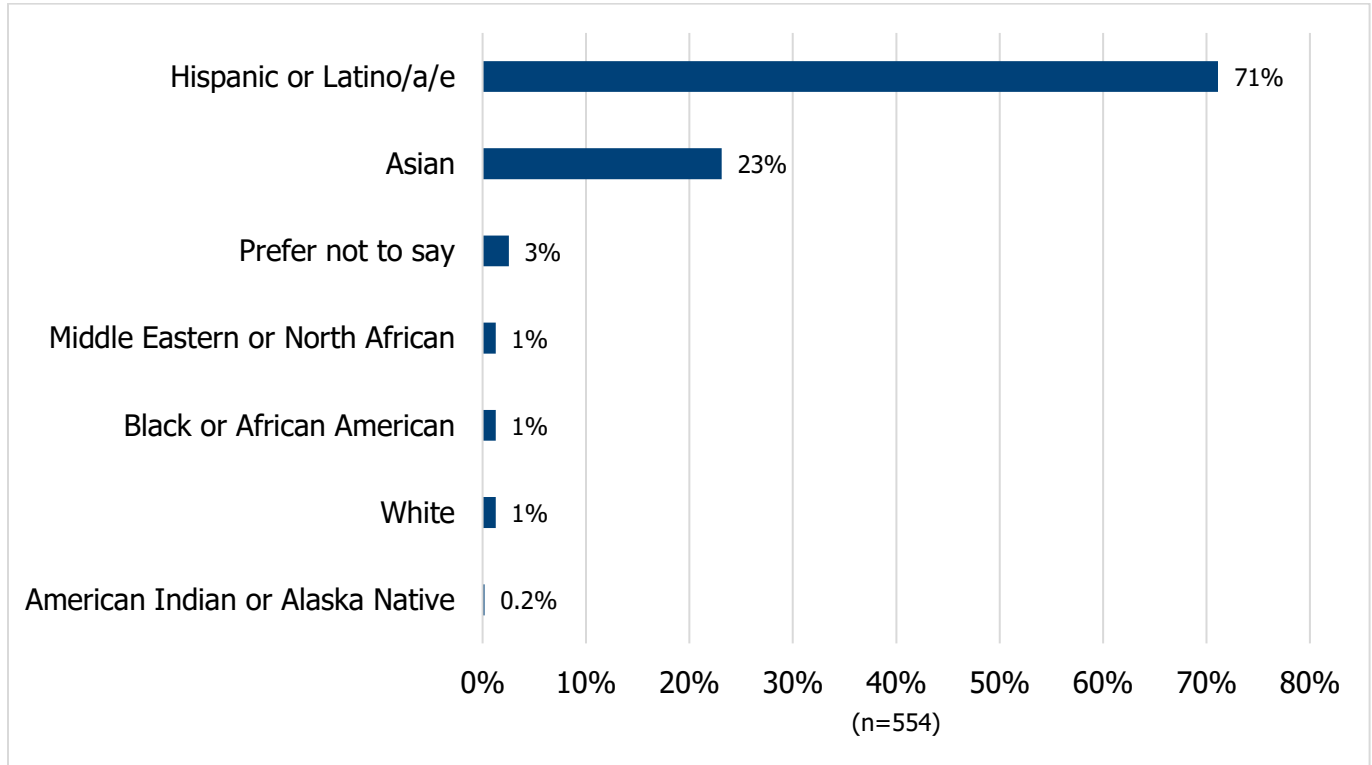
Further, survey respondents mostly identify as female (63%) and between the ages of 25 and 54 years old (please see Figures 3.6 and 3.7, respectively, for gender and age).

Taken together, these characteristics indicate that the average survey respondent is a middle-aged Latina woman.

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Figure 3.6. Respondents' Gender Identity

(n=556)

- Male — 30%
- Female — 63%
- Gender-diverse — 1%
- Prefer not to say — 6%
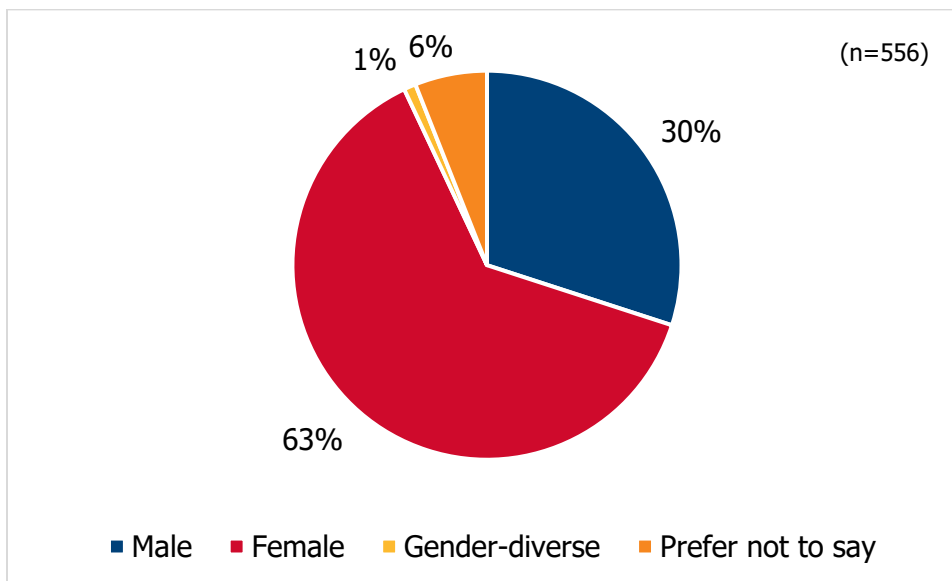
Figure 3.7. Respondents' Age

(n=557)

- 19 or under — 3%
- 20 - 24 — 6%
- 25 - 34 — 19%
- 35 - 44 — 19%
- 45 - 54 — 14%
- 55 - 64 — 6%
- 65 or older — 19%
- Prefer not to say — 14%
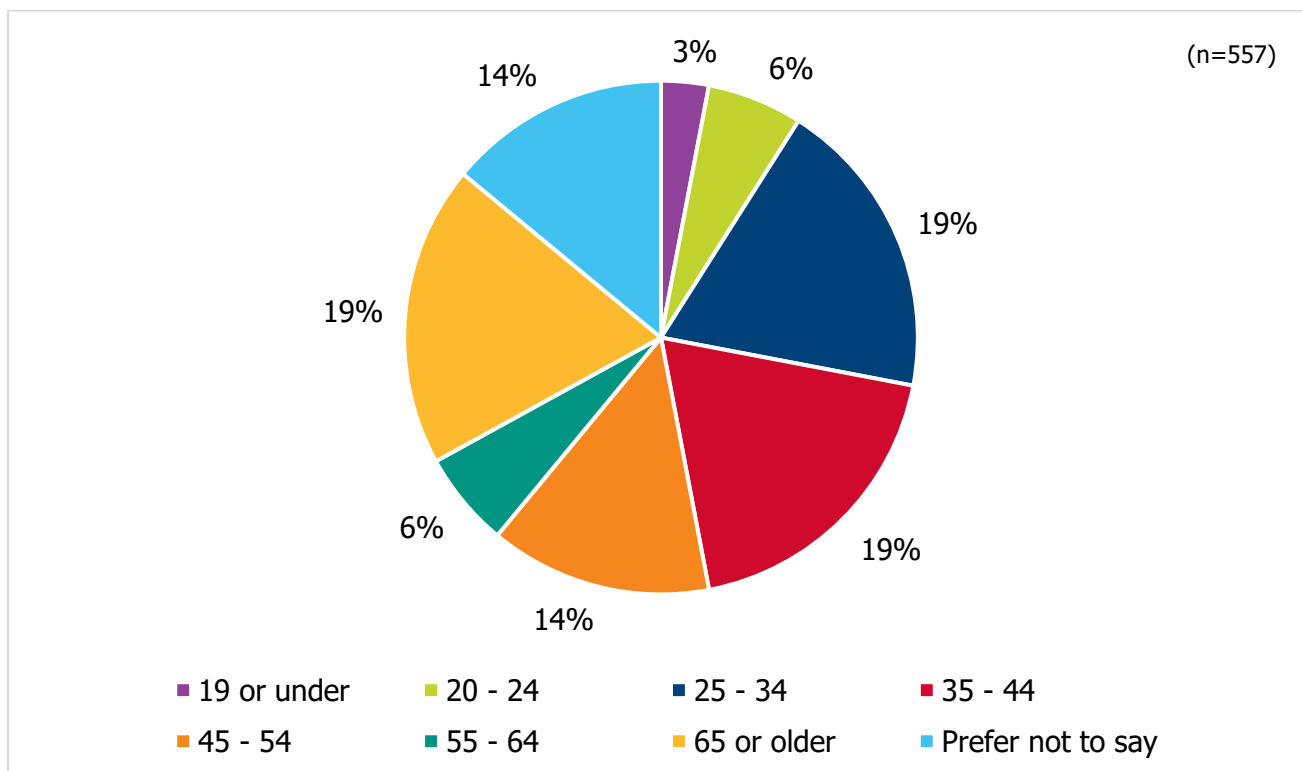
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Transit Usage, Barriers to Mobility, and Mobility Behaviors

Respondents more frequently use RTD buses than trains or RTD's demand-response services, FlexRide and Access-a-Ride/Access-on-Demand.[25] Specifically, 70% ride a bus once weekly or more, where 41% ride the train once weekly or more. The vast majority of respondents rarely or never use FlexRide and Access-a-Ride/Access-on-Demand (76% and 89%, respectively). This is likely because most survey respondents may not be traveling in FlexRide service areas nor be eligible to use Access-a-Ride services.

Figure 3.8. Frequency of Transit Usage by Mode[26]

(n=570-575)

Legend: ■ Daily ■ Almost daily ■ Once weekly ■ Once monthly ■ Rarely ■ Never
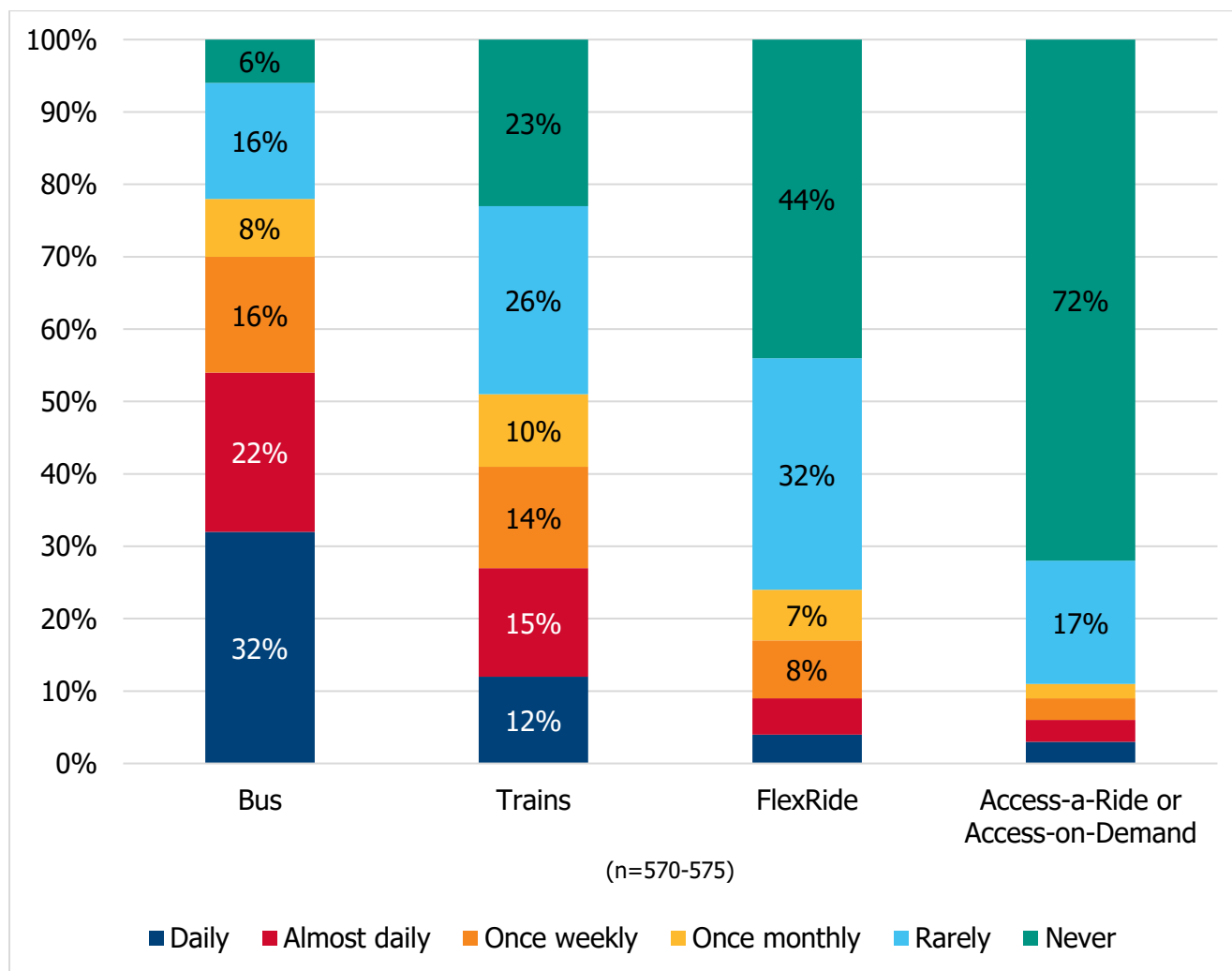
When asked what prevents them from using RTD's public transit services more frequently, a slim majority (51%) say nothing (i.e., they use RTD as much as they need). However, almost one-third (29%) of respondents state that language barriers prevent them from using agency services more. Other reasons unrelated to language barriers, such as lack of service availability (13%) and infrequency of service/service span (10%), also prevent more frequent usage, as shown in Figure 3.9.

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[25] FlexRide provides extended bus service in specific Denver metro areas, connecting customers to RTD Park-n-Rides and stations, medical centers, and business parks. Access-a-Ride is RTD's ADA complimentary paratransit service, and Access-on-Demand is RTD's premium supplemental paratransit subsidized curb-to-curb service using taxi and ride share providers. Individuals with current certification for Access-a-Ride are eligible to use Access-on-Demand.
[26] Stacked charts with results equal to or less than 5% will not have an accompanying data label due to space constraints.

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Figure 3.9. Barriers to Using RTD's Services

Nothing; I use RTD as much as I need — 51%
I can't read/understand the information — 29%
It doesn't go where I need to go — 13%
It is infrequent/not available when needed — 10%
It is difficult for me to make multiple stops — 8%
It is slow — 7%
It is expensive — 6%
It is not safe — 6%
I travel with someone who needs assistance — 4%
Other — 3%
It is not reliable — 3%
It is too crowded — 2%

(n=572)
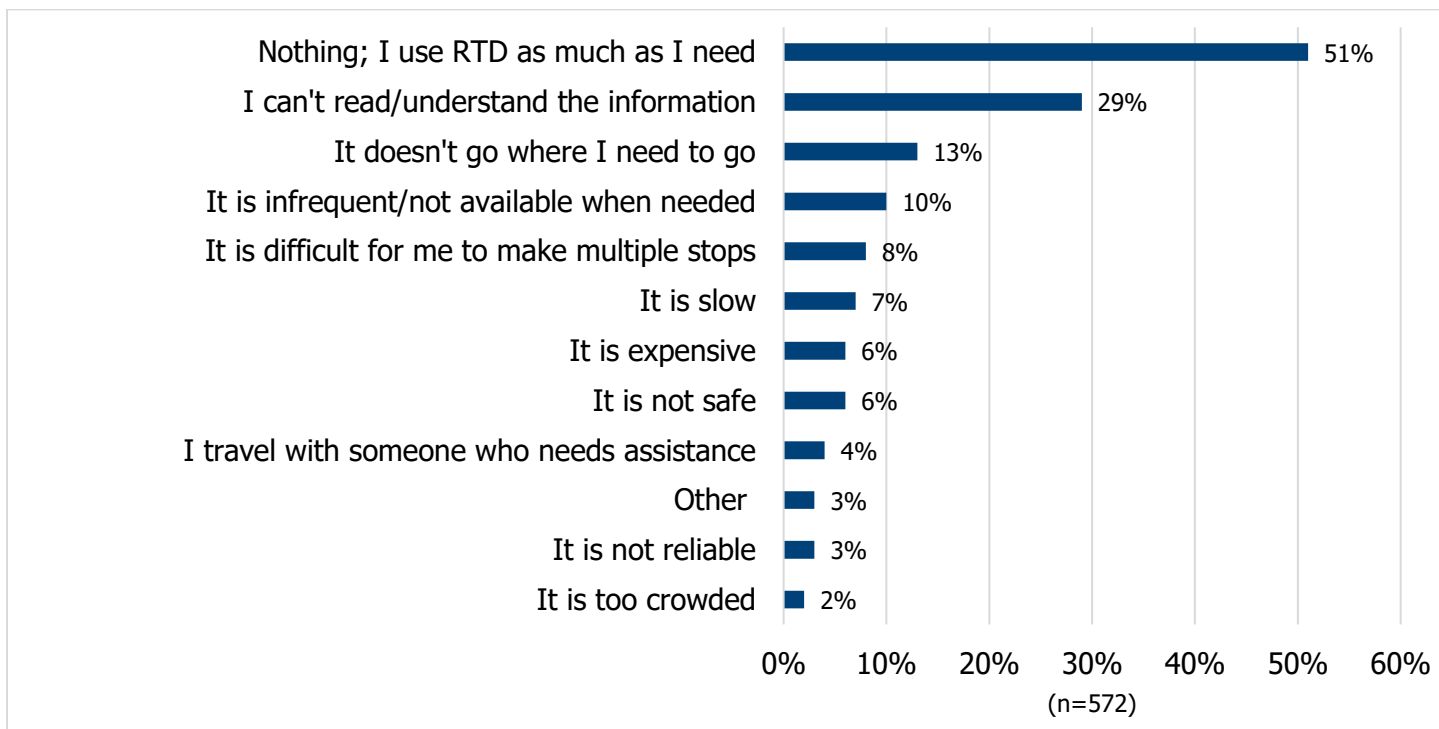
As for why respondents use RTD services (Figure 3.10), the most common reasons are that they do not have access to a vehicle (61%), do not have a driver's license (17%), and to save money (17%).

Figure 3.10. Reasons for Using RTD's Services

I do not have access to a vehicle (e.g., car, van) — 61%
I don't have a driver's license — 17%
To save money — 17%
Avoid traffic and/or parking — 16%
I can't drive or have difficulties driving — 15%
Better for the environment — 13%
Can't get a ride from others/don't want to — 9%
Transit is fastest and/or most convenient option — 7%
Employer or school helps me pay for transit — 3%
Other — 3%

(n=571)
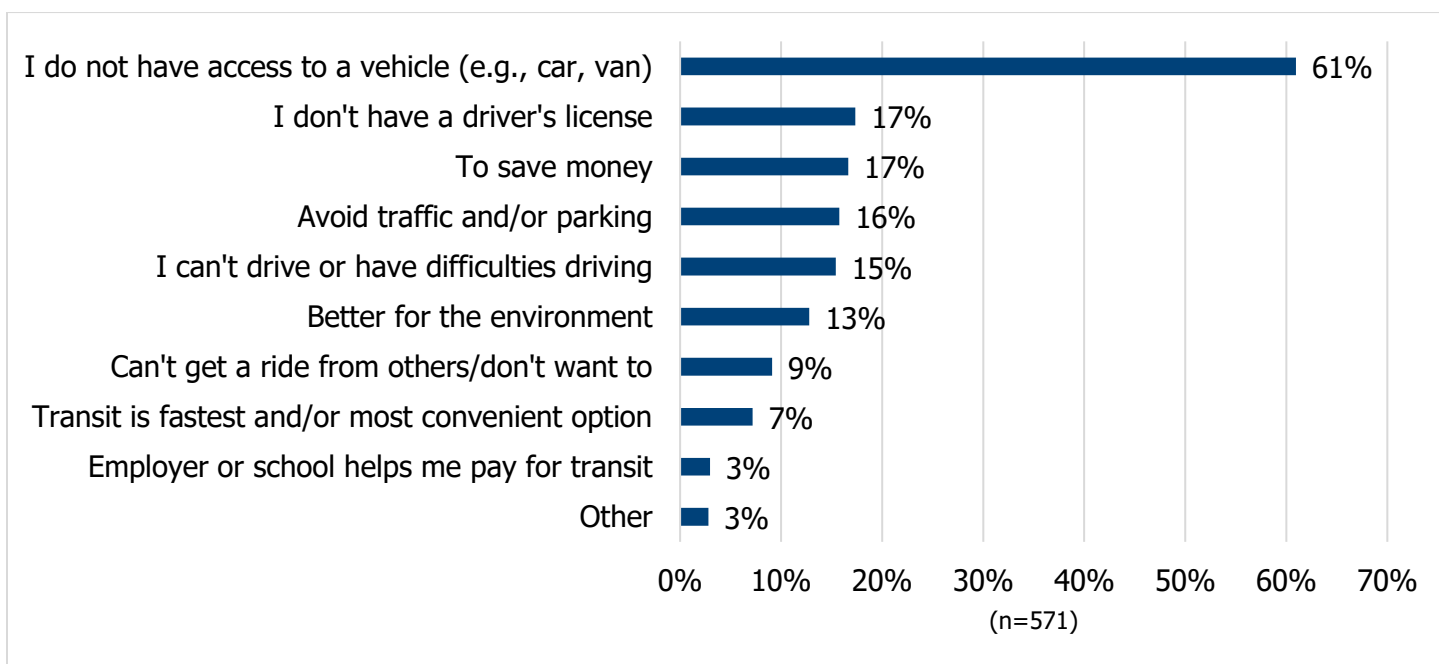
In a follow-up question on household vehicle access (Figure 3.11), 56% confirm that they rarely (19%) or never (37%) have access to a household vehicle for their personal transportation needs, indicating a high level of

transit reliance. This is in contrast to the 2021 survey, where 65% noted that they had a household vehicle available.

Figure 3.11. Availability of Household Vehicle for Personal Transportation
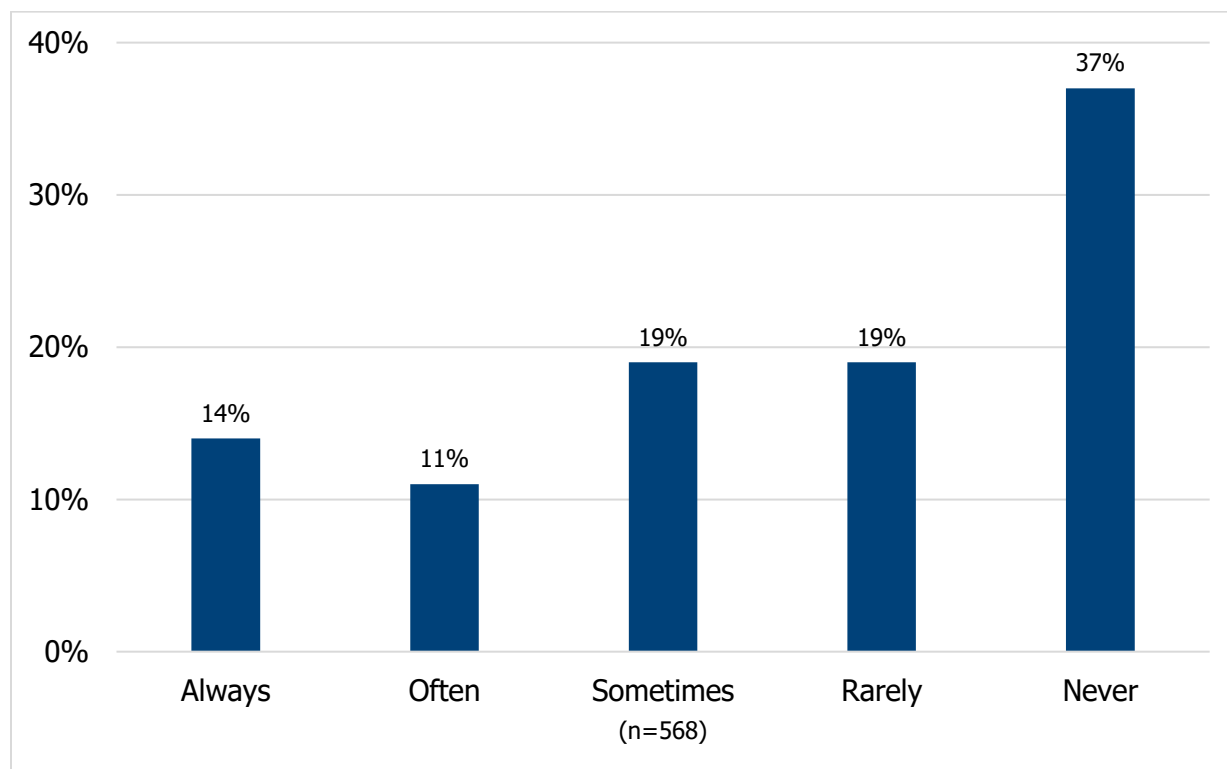
Where are respondents going when using RTD services? Figure 3.12 illustrates that destinations are diverse, including work (43%), running errands (38%), and health appointments (37%).

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Figure 3.12. Destinations Using RTD Services

Destination	Percentage
Work	43%
Run household errands (e.g., bank, groceries)	38%
Medical or other health-related appointments	37%
School	22%
Attend special events (e.g., a concert)	19%
Social or recreational activities (e.g., club, sports)	17%
Take a child or family member to a destination	14%

(n=564)
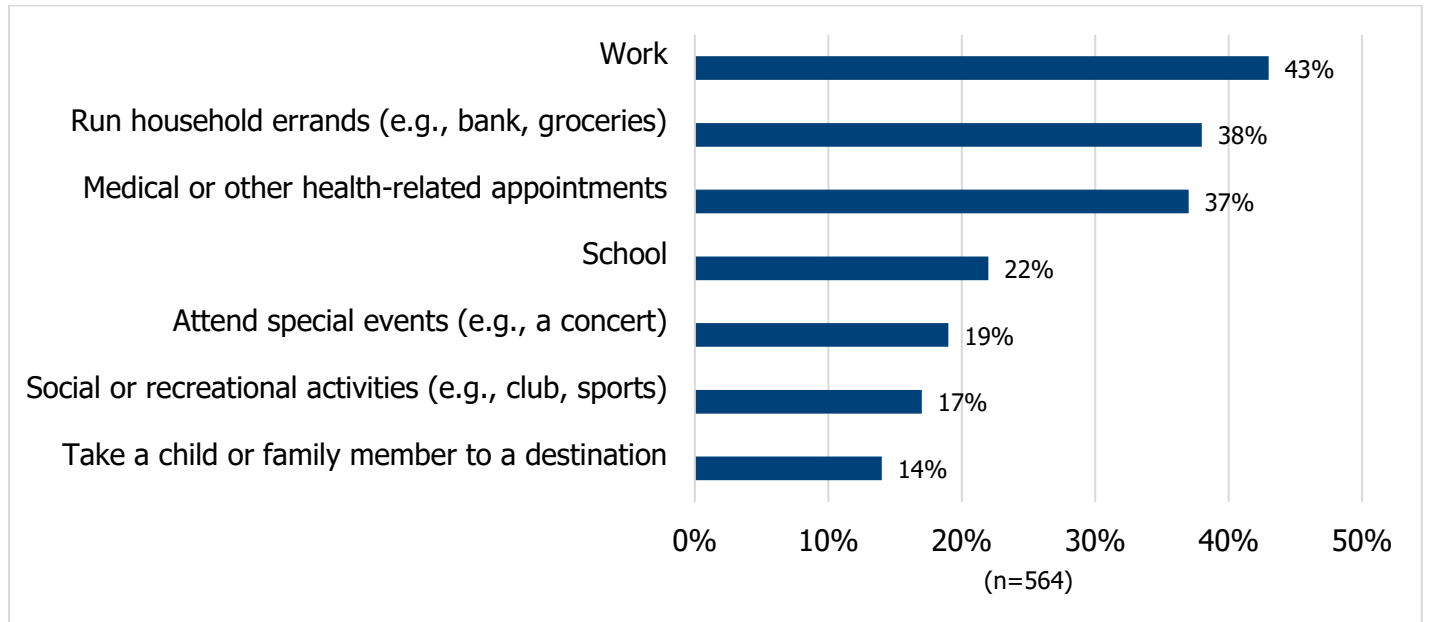
Respondents' Use and Perception of RTD Information

Survey respondents use a variety of ways to get information about RTD services, with the most popular being the RTD website (29%), signs at bus/train stops (22%), and the RTD Next Ride app (16%) as shown in Figure 3.13. Though the survey did not include "GPS-dependent systems" such as Google Maps or Apple Maps as an option, it was a frequent write-in response, with 8% of respondents mentioning it. Other write-in responses included the organizations that may have distributed this survey, such as CREA Results, Montbello Organizing Committee, and the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG).

Figure 3.13. Ways that Respondents Receive RTD Information

Way	Percentage
RTD website	29%
Signs at bus/train stops	22%
RTD Next Ride trip planning app	16%
Word of mouth (e.g., family or friends)	15%
RTD Customer Care at 303.299.6000 or via email	14%
Signs on board RTD buses/trains	14%
Place of worship, community-based organization	11%
At an RTD sales outlet (e.g., Union Station)	9%
GPS-dependent systems (e.g., Google Maps)*	8%
RTD's social media accounts (e.g., Facebook)	8%
I do not get information regarding RTD's services	6%
Local news (e.g., radio, website, newspaper)	4%
Other	0.5%

(n=567)

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To improve access to RTD information, the survey asked respondents how useful they think certain language assistance services would be (Figure 3.14). Respondents overwhelmingly think that all language assistance services listed, from translated signage to having more multilingual staff, are very useful or extremely useful (86-89%).

Figure 3.14. Usefulness of Language Assistance Services

	Not at all useful	Slightly useful	Very useful	Extremely useful
Bilingual/Multilingual staff		8%	41%	48%
Translated brochures, flyers, and other documents		9%	42%	46%
Translated signage at RTD stops/stations		9%	45%	43%
Translated signage on RTD vehicles		9%	44%	43%
Translated audio announcements at stops/stations		10%	44%	43%
Translated audio announcements on RTD vehicles		10%	44%	42%
Translations of digital tools (e.g., websites, apps)		10%	41%	47%
Access to an interpreter		10%	43%	43%

(n=563-566)

Similarly, respondents find it very important or extremely important to get information in their preferred language(s) across RTD topic areas included in the survey, from directions and trip planning to how to apply for discounts — though "how to attend RTD events" and "how to apply for an RTD job" were slightly less important informational topic areas to translate (Figure 3.15). "How to access language assistance" is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the most "extremely important" (48%) information to translate in respondents' languages.

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Figure 3.15. Importance of Translations in Respondents' Language(s) by Topic Area

Topic	Not at all important	Slightly important	Very important	Extremely important
How to attend RTD events		12%	48%	35%
How to apply for an RTD job	15%	8%	43%	34%
RTD FlexRide service		11%	50%	37%
Access-a-Ride (for people with disabilities)		9%	47%	41%
How to access RTD language assistance		6%	45%	48%
How to apply for RTD discounts		6%	47%	45%
Report a safety concern/crime to RTD		9%	48%	41%
How to use RTD ticket vending machines		6%	47%	46%
Service and schedule changes		8%	51%	40%
Directions/Trip planning		9%	48%	42%
RTD schedules		7%	49%	43%
RTD fares/How to buy an RTD ticket or pass		6%	49%	43%

(n=560-563)

Legend: ■ Not at all important ■ Slightly important ■ Very important ■ Extremely important

At the same time that respondents find it very or extremely important to have all inquired information translated into their preferred languages, they also report not knowing how to do the most common activities associated with these topic areas. Alarmingly, the majority of respondents only reported knowing how to find information on the cost of RTD fares (68%) and purchasing an RTD ticket or pass (71%). Otherwise, the majority — and in most cases, the vast majority — do not know how to sign up for and use MyRide (64%); find information on schedule and service changes (54%); use Next Ride for trip planning (69%); make a customer service complaint to RTD (73%); make a civil rights/discrimination complaint to RTD (77%); apply for discounts (70%); report a safety concern/crime to RTD (72%); access language assistance (69%); become eligible for Access-a-Ride, make an Access-a-Ride reservation, or make a FlexRide reservation (76%); contact RTD Customer Care (68%); apply for an RTD job (79%); and attend RTD events (78%).

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Figure 3.16. Respondents' Knowledge of How to Access RTD Information and Services

Category	Yes	No
Attend RTD events	22%	78%
Apply for an RTD job	21%	79%
Contact RTD Customer Care	32%	68%
Make a FlexRide reservation	24%	76%
Make an Access-a-Ride reservation	24%	76%
Become eligible for Access-a-Ride paratransit	24%	76%
Access language assistance	31%	69%
Report a safety concern/crime to RTD	28%	72%
Apply for RTD discounts	30%	70%
Make a civil rights/discrimination complaint to RTD	23%	77%
Make a customer service complaint to RTD	27%	73%
Use Next Ride for trip planning	31%	69%
Find information on schedules and service changes	46%	54%
Sign up for and use RTD MyRide	36%	64%
Purchase an RTD ticket or pass	71%	29%
Find information on the cost of RTD fares	68%	32%

(n=558-560)

■ Yes ■ No

Suggestions for Improving Language Accessibility

The end of the language access survey provided respondents with the opportunity to write suggestions to improve the language accessibility of RTD's services and programs. The responses highlight several key areas where RTD can improve language accessibility.

Bilingual Staff, Customer Service, and In-Person Engagement

A recurring theme in the feedback is the need for more bilingual English/Spanish staff, particularly bus operators and frontline employees. Many respondents expressed frustration with the lack of Spanish-speaking operators and suggested that hiring bilingual operators would significantly improve communication and the overall transit experience. Some also recommended providing RTD staff with translation apps or other real-time interpretation tools to assist linguistically diverse people.

Customer service and respectful treatment from staff were also key themes in the feedback. Some customers reported feeling dismissed or disrespected by operators who appear impatient with customers who don't speak

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English. A few respondents noted that they experienced bias or negative treatment based on their language or ethnicity. This suggests a need to bolster cultural competency, general customer service, and effective cross-cultural communications skills to foster a more welcoming and inclusive transit environment.

In addition to improving communication and customer service, respondents — especially Chinese-speaking respondents — expressed a desire for greater outreach to immigrant and non-English-speaking communities. Some, particularly elderly customers, expressed appreciation for the translations that RTD has already implemented but wished for more direct engagement. Suggestions included hosting informational sessions and even organizing cultural events to build stronger connections with diverse groups.

Enhanced Communication Tools: Improved Quality Control, Expanded Digital and Multimedia Communication

Another recurring concern is the quality and availability of translated information. Several respondents noted that existing Spanish translations, particularly those that appear to be machine-generated, can be inaccurate or difficult to understand. Customers suggested improving the clarity and accuracy of translated materials, including signs, announcements, and printed guides, and making them more visible at stations, on buses, and inside trains. Some respondents also recommended recording audio announcements in different languages and placing QR codes on signage that passengers can scan to access information in their preferred language.

Some participants emphasized the importance of digital and multimedia communication. A customer suggested that RTD create more video content to explain transit services in different languages. Others highlighted the need for better-translated content on RTD's website and mobile applications to ensure that linguistically diverse people can easily access essential transit information. Social media was also mentioned as a potential tool for outreach, with a respondent recommending that RTD collaborate with community leaders to disseminate important updates in multiple languages.

Finally, technology and real-time communication tools emerged as another area for improvement. Some customers suggested that RTD integrate more languages into its mobile applications and ticketing systems to make transit more user-friendly. Others emphasized the importance of using digital tools, such as text message alerts in multiple languages, to provide updates and important information.

Figure 3.17. Write-in Suggestions on Improving RTD's Language Accessibility

Spanish Original	English Translation
Con el crecimiento de la población latina, sería beneficioso. Hacer procesos en multimedia. Daria dinamismo y haría que la información llegue mejor. Y pues no sé cómo solicitar empleo en RTD, pero me gustaría trabajar allí con ustedes. Videos — medias no convencionales.	With the growth of the Latino population, it would be beneficial to do multimedia processes. It would give dynamism and make the information arrive better. And well, I don't know how to apply for a job at RTD, but I would like to work there with you. Videos - non-conventional media.
Con personas bilingües	With bilingual people
Conductores bilingües	Bilingual drivers
Conductores bilingües sería perfecto	Bilingual drivers would be perfect
Contar con personal bilingüe	Have bilingual staff
Emplear a conductores bilingües.	Employ bilingual drivers.
Enviar más notificaciones	Send more notifications
Es necesario que algunos conductores muestren respeto por los usuarios generalmente siempre están muy apresurados y de mal humor	It is necessary that some drivers show respect for the passengers, they are generally always in a hurry and in a bad mood
Español	Spanish
Falta avisos en idioma español en los buses	There is a lack of signs in Spanish on the buses

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Falta información que se entienda en español, porque al traducirlo en Google traslate sale otra información	There is a lack of information that is understood in Spanish, because when translating it on Google, other information comes out
Genie do equidad de lenguaje, los conductores solo lo ven Latino a uno y lo ven feo.	Genie of language equity, the drivers only see you as Latin and they see you in a bad way.
Grabar los audios en varios idiomas, traducir los avisos y textos y colocar un código QR que podamos escanear y seleccionar el idioma para tener fácil acceso a la información, en lo personal estoy aprendiendo inglés muchas veces me toca usar el traductor, pero cuando llego a un sitio y veo cosas en mi idioma eso me hace sentir muy feliz y tomada en cuenta. Gracias	Record the audios in several languages, translate the sigs and texts and place a QR code that we can scan and select the language to have easy access to the information, personally I am learning English, many times I have to use the translator but when I get to a place and see things in my language that makes me feel very happy and taken into account. Thank you
Hablar español y mejor trato ah las personas no importan como se vean	Speak Spanish and treat people better no matter what they look like
Hacer las traducciones al español mejorar la gramática y la ortografía tanto rn audio como impreso	Make the translations into Spanish improve the grammar and spelling both in audio and in print
Indicaciones de recorrido y paradas	Directions of route and stops
Instrucciones en otros idiomas	Instructions in other languages
Interpretación	Interpretation
Interpretación	Interpretation
Intérprete, más guías	Interpreter, more guides
La información en español	The information in Spanish
La verdad utilizo mucho el bus. pero a veces no entiendo muchas cosas. Hablo solo español. se me dificulta la comunicación. Sería bueno encontrar conductores que hablen español. Gracias	The truth is that I use the bus a lot. But sometimes I don't understand many things... I only speak Spanish... I have a hard time communicating. It would be good to find drivers who speak Spanish. Thank you
Los anuncios más visibles	More visible ads
Los conductores Sean más empáticos y respeto ante todo.	Drivers should be more empathetic and respectful above all.
Más respeto de los conductores.	More respect from drivers.
Mayor limpieza en las instalaciones de RTD, además de ayuda de un intérprete, ya que muchos conductores pierden la paciencia con la persona que por motivos personales o generales no lo es posible comunicarse en inglés.	More cleaning in RTD facilities, in addition to help from an interpreter, since many drivers lose patience with the person who for personal or general reasons is not able to communicate in English.
Me gusta que la mayoría de los avisos están traducidos. Lo malo es que nunca hay conductores que hablan español. Seria super que fueran bilingües.	I like that most of the ads are translated. The bad thing is that there are never drivers who speak Spanish. It would be great if they were bilingual.
Podrían poner en español o traducir para facilitar	Could you put it in Spanish or translate it to make it easier?
Poner los letreros importantes español	Put up important signs in Spanish
Mas educacion para Los conductors	More education for drivers
Proporcionar a los conductores una app que permita comunicarse en otros idiomas con los usuarios	Provide drivers with an app that allows them to communicate with users in other languages
Que incluyan más anuncios en español y choferes que de igual manera sean bilingües	That they include more announcements in Spanish and drivers who are also bilingual
Que se alguien pueda hablar español	That someone can speak Spanish
Que se encuentre información su cada estación, volvautes o letreros grandes	That one can find information at each station, buses, or large signs

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RESPETO DE LOS CONDUCTORES.HACIA LOS PASAJEROS.	RESPECT OF THE DRIVERS TOWARDS THE PASSENGERS.
Tener tecnología necesaria para comunicarse mejor	Have technology to communicate better
Tengan en cuenta un poco más el idioma en español	Take into account a little more the Spanish language
Teniendo programas de traducción para las personas que no hablan inglés	Having translation programs for people who do not speak English
Usar el Facebook contactar lideres de la comunidad para dar información de RTD	Use Facebook to contact community leaders to give information about RTD
yo quisiera que fueran más personas como bilingües	I wish there were more bilingual people
Las personas que verifican los tickets en los trenes deberían hablar al menos 3 idiomas o 2 para guiar a diferentes personas.	People who check tickets on trains should speak at least 3 languages or 2 to guide different people.

Chinese Original	English Translation
给老年人（低收入的办理免费的）乘车卡。	To provide Bus Passes to the elderly (and free of charge ones for those on low incomes).
能用手机翻译	I hope the translation will be available on mobile phones.
有更多的中文服务，尤其是网页上的中文。	More services in Chinese, especially website content.
最好每个中国节日都会有活动！因为我们这些老人时间不多了！谢谢！	Would like to have some activities or events on every Chinese traditional holiday! There are not too many days left for us old folks! Thanks!
能经常与我们公寓老人多多联系，多多互动，介绍RTD一系列服务和计划	Get in touch with the old folks in our place more often; have more interaction with us; tell us more about the services and programs RTD offers.
能否增加中文普通话语言普及。	To offer more services in Mandarin Chinese.

Farsi Original	English Translation
اگر معلومات به زبان های هر و بیشتر ایرید بسیار خوب بود	If information were available in more languages, it would be very good.
بیشتر های است	More are needed.

Korean Original	English Translation
번역된 안내 책자, 방송	Translated guidebook and broadcast
앱을 사용하여 안내하기	Guide using an app
티켓 구매방법을 자세히 번역해주는 것이 편리하겠습니다	It would be helpful if you could provide a detailed translation of the ticket purchase process.

Swahili Original	English Translation
Kwa kutuma ujumbe kutumia simu kwaluga ninayoifahamu	By sending a message to my phone in a language I understand.

Suggestions for Improvement: Affordability, Security, and Cleanliness

Aside from suggestions related to language access, respondents emphasized three other key concerns: affordability, security, and cleanliness (both environmental and the cleanliness of vehicles). While some may consider these issues off-topic, they are included here to highlight that improving accessibility for linguistically

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diverse communities is not just about language — it also means addressing broader concerns that affect all customers, regardless of their preferred language.

Figure 3.18. Write-in Suggestions on Improving RTD's Services (Other)

Spanish Original	English Translation
Camiones ecológicos y menos agresivos al medio ambiente para ayudar a detener un poco el cambio climático	Eco-friendly trucks that are less aggressive to the environment to help stop climate change a little
El costo poco menos por personas del diario se transportan, que en vacaciones sea gratis para las familias	The cost per person is a little less than the daily transportation, that on vacations it is free for families
En cuestión personal me gustaría que bajaran un poco la tarifa diaria comparado con Chicago el pase diario está a 5 dólares y en Denver a 10 dólares	Personally, I would like them to lower the daily rate a little compared to Chicago, the daily pass is 5 dollars and in Denver it is 10 dollars
Esta caro en rutas cortas, bajar los precios tarda 45 mins en pasar	It is expensive on short routes, lowering the prices takes 45 minutes to arrive
Deben de hacer rutinas para tener más seguridad en los camiones y en el tren he viajado varias veces y hay homeless que dan miedo porque no hay quien cheque nada y eso no está bien por seguridad de todos	They should create routines to have more security on the buses and on the train. I have traveled several times and there are homeless people who are scary because there is no one to check anything and that is not right for everyone's safety
La seguridad en las paradas de tren o por lo menos permitir ventas o microempresarios para que hagan cubículos pequeños y vendan cómo en Chicago, y así ayudar a la economía también	Security at the train stops or at least allow sales or micro entrepreneurs to make small cubicles and sell like in Chicago, and thus help the economy as well
Me gustaría más seguridad	I would like more security
Muy importante al igual que asegurar la seguridad dentro del bus	Very important as well as ensuring safety on the bus
Tener seguridad en el autobús	Have security on the bus
Que los buses se mantengan más limpios y que no se atrasen tanto	That the buses are kept cleaner and that they don't delay so much
Que estén en mejores condiciones las paradas donde esperamos	That the stops where we wait are in better condition
Mayor limpieza en las instalaciones de RTD	More cleaning in RTD facilities
Me gustaría que estuvieran más limpios	I would like them to be cleaner
Mas limpio	Cleaner
Tener más signos en español y que no esté sucio	Have more signs in Spanish and that it is not dirty

Discussion

One of the most striking findings is that compared to the 2021 survey, the 2024-2025 respondents reported much lower levels of English proficiency. This shift suggests that RTD's outreach efforts have been more effective in reaching individuals who face substantial language barriers by building more relationships with community-based organizations that serve newcomers and linguistically diverse people as well as contracting with community partners to support this work. Many of these respondents likely have limited access to English-language education, work in industries where English proficiency is not required, or are recent newcomers who have yet to develop fluency. As a result, their transit experience is heavily impacted by the availability — or lack — of language assistance services. The fact that a majority of respondents lack access to a household vehicle (61%) further underscores their reliance on transit and the urgency of improving accessibility for this population.

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Language barriers were a major reason why nearly one-third (29%) of respondents do not use RTD services more frequently. This indicates that even though RTD provides language assistance, these efforts may not be sufficient to overcome the challenges faced by non-English-speaking customers — or, alternatively, that they are not sufficiently reaching their intended audience. Many respondents reported difficulties in understanding RTD schedules, planning trips, and accessing fare discounts — tasks that are essential for effective transit use. For RTD's MyRide app, respondents overwhelmingly report not knowing how to use it; this is possibly due to the app being available only in English or, separately, due to technological barriers.

On the other hand, 32% of respondents say they know how to find information on RTD's fares, compared to 44% in the 2021 survey who reported being unfamiliar with RTD's fare structure. This improvement may be due to the Systemwide Fare Study and Equity Analysis conducted from 2022 to 2024, which led to the implementation of lower, simpler fares in 2024.

Beyond language-related barriers, respondents also expressed concerns about affordability, security, and cleanliness. Many of these customers are likely from low-income backgrounds, given the overlap between immigration and poverty, making fare costs a major concern. Security issues discourage some from using RTD services more frequently, especially if they feel unsafe due to crime or a lack of visible enforcement. That 72% of respondents do not know how to report a safety or security incident to RTD is particularly alarming given the recent expansion of both the RTD Transit Police Department and the robust marketing campaign for RTD's Transit Watch, the primary channel for submitting security concerns.[27] Cleanliness concerns, particularly related to buses and stations, may also influence perceptions of RTD's services and impact overall satisfaction.

To address these challenges, RTD can build on existing initiatives while expanding efforts to improve language accessibility, customer experience, and overall service quality.

1. Expand outreach to linguistically diverse communities
   - Improve communications on RTD services, programs, and language assistance with community partners who serve linguistically diverse people, especially immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees
   - Attend in-person, hyper-local community meetings, such as town halls, to meet these communities where they are
   - Explore alternative communications channels, such as joining new social media groups and making more video-based content
2. Enhance language assistance services
   - Bilingual staffing: Expand the number of bilingual bus operators and frontline employees to help bridge communication gaps and improve customer confidence
   - Improved translations: Ensure greater accuracy in translated materials, especially key service information, to help customers better understand their transit options
   - Multilingual digital tools: Increase language options on the RTD website, mobile apps, and text alert systems to provide real-time access to critical information
3. Address service barriers
   - Better communication of fare assistance programs: Many respondents may not be aware of available discounts due to language barriers. Clearer, multilingual outreach could improve access to cost-saving programs
   - More frequent and reliable service: While service availability was not the top concern, improving frequency and reliability — particularly in underserved areas — could encourage greater transit use

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[27] It is important to keep in mind, however, that historically underserved communities — especially those that are predominantly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color — may not associate law enforcement with improved security given past harms disproportionately committed against these populations by armed sworn officers.

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4. Improve customer experience
   - Increased security presence: Enhance safety at stations and on vehicles through more security personnel or surveillance measures to address concerns about crime and customer safety
   - Cleanliness initiatives: Examine maintenance and cleaning efforts at stations and on vehicles to improve perceptions of RTD services and contribute to a more welcoming transit environment

By implementing these solutions, RTD can make its services more accessible, welcoming, and effective for linguistically diverse communities. Language accessibility is not just about translating materials — it is about ensuring that all customers, regardless of their English proficiency, can confidently navigate and rely on public transit. Addressing affordability, security, and cleanliness concerns alongside language accessibility will help RTD create a transit system that truly serves all members of the community equitably.

Focus Group: Interpreter Network by Spring Institute
RTD's Transit Equity Office conducted a focus group in collaboration with the Interpreter Network by the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning. The purpose of the focus group was to enrich TEO's qualitative understanding of the mobility needs and concerns specific to linguistically diverse immigrant and refugee communities as well as to inform RTD's language access efforts.

Methodology
The focus group occurred on September 15, 2022, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. online using Microsoft Teams. Participants registered for the focus group on a dedicated Teams registration page, and they received a calendar meeting invite and several reminder emails in the days leading up to the September 15. Participants were all employed as interpreters within the Interpreter Network by Spring Institute at the time of the focus group. While 23 interpreters registered for the focus group, 15 attended (a retention rate of 65%).[28] Focus group participants, as well as the language(s) they speak in addition to English, are as illustrated in Figure 3.19.

Figure 3.19. Focus Group Participants

Participant	Language(s) Spoken
Mahvash G.	Dari, Farsi
Sally T.	Arabic
Sonja L.	Chinese (Cantonese)
Linda D.S.	Spanish
Jenny L.	Chinese (Mandarin)
Joyce W.	Swahili, Maragoli
Aziz V.	Tajik, Uzbek, Russian
Hoa-Loan P.	Vietnamese
Guadalupe L.	Spanish
Isaac A.	Kinyarwanda, Swahili, French
Wajiha F.	Dari, Pashto, Farsi, Urdu
Perla M.A.	Spanish
Elham Z.	Dari, Farsi
Nelin K.	Burmese, Malay
Aden H.	Somali

[28] Cynthia DeLarber, former Chief Operating Officer of the Spring Institute, also attended. However, she is excluded from the participant count.

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Key Findings

The focus group with interpreters from the Spring Institute provided valuable insights into the mobility needs, barriers, and communication challenges faced by linguistically diverse communities and reinforces the takeaways from the language access survey detailed above. The key findings are as follows:

1. Low transit usage due to structural barriers
   a. Most participants rely on personal vehicles for work due to time constraints and the need for flexibility
   b. Transit is seen as too time-consuming, expensive, and inconvenient for multi-stop trips
   c. Real-time service information is difficult to access, making transit less reliable
2. Language barriers limit access
   a. Language difficulties create anxiety, particularly for new customers
   b. Challenges include understanding schedules, remembering stops, and communicating with operators
   c. The application process for discount programs is inaccessible to many non-English speakers
3. Need for improved digital communications
   a. RTD's apps are not user-friendly and lack integrated fare purchasing and trip planning
   b. Multilingual service alerts and instructional videos are essential for better access
   c. Social media engagement could enhance outreach to diverse communities
4. Demand for in-person language assistance
   a. Electronic wayfinding maps, translated materials, and multilingual announcements at stations and on vehicles are needed
   b. Location-based language assistance should reflect community demographics
5. Importance of community partnerships
   a. Collaboration with resettlement agencies, libraries, and senior centers can improve awareness of transit resources
   b. Ride-alongs and community-led training sessions could enhance confidence in using public transit
6. Operator communication and cultural training
   a. Translation devices, community ambassadors, and better promotion of RTD's interpretation services were suggested
   b. Cross-cultural training for operators would help improve interactions with non-English-speaking customers

Results

The focus group explored three different themes and included one activity, in this order:

- Theme A: Use of the RTD System and Potential Barriers
- Activity: Give Input on a Language Access Icon
- Theme B: Communication Preferences and Access to Information
- Theme C: Exploring Language Assistance Options (Operators)

Each theme contained two or three questions each, with RTD staff asking additional probing questions as needed.

Theme A: Use of the RTD System and Potential Barriers

Use of the RTD System
Overall, focus group participants did not use RTD services frequently and chose to drive personal vehicles for most trips, especially for work. Many stated that this was due to the nature of their positions as interpreters, which requires them to travel to numerous locations on the same day quickly. Participants noted that when they

do use public transportation, they typically make trips downtown (e.g., Union Station), between college campuses, or to the airport. Reasons given for using public transportation included avoiding parking, traffic, or driving in inclement weather; having the ability to use what would have been driving time for other purposes instead; and good connectivity at Denver Union Station to many areas of interest. Some participants mentioned that they were more frequent RTD customers in the past, particularly when they lacked access to a vehicle or had a consistent destination, such as a college campus.

Barriers to Using the RTD System

Reasons for not using RTD's transit system more frequently included:

- It's too time-consuming; one participant felt that it sometimes takes 3-4 times longer to make a trip via bus or train than it does to drive
- It's not advantageous for trip-chaining (i.e., making multiple stops in one trip)
- It's expensive, especially for people using Local passes who must ride frequently
- It is not frequent enough; lack of frequency also contributes to the time-consuming nature of transit
- Real-time information is not accessible, especially for detours, cancellations, or other unscheduled service changes; further, participants did not know how to get RTD information generally
- The Denver metro is too sprawled to allow for adequate transit access to destinations

Participants highlighted that language barriers can cause significant fear and intimidation when using RTD's public transit system. One participant shared that her elderly mother, who does not speak English, was reluctant to change her route after moving because she was anxious about navigating a new one. Others noted that the first few experiences using transit can be particularly overwhelming for linguistically diverse people. Other barriers to language access included:

- Purchasing discount passes and submitting the necessary paperwork as part of the application process
- Having to learn how to read a schedule (due to the lack of frequency)
- Remembering where to get on and off the bus due to a lack of information and visual indicators on approaching stops' names
- Telling a bus operator that the customer needs to get off

Activity: Give Input on a Language Access Icon

After Theme A, the focus group participated in an activity to provide input on the icon they preferred RTD to use to brand its language assistance materials. Figure 3.20 illustrates the options that were provided:

Figure 3.20. Language Access Icon Options Presented to Focus Group

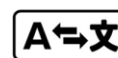Option 1   Option 2   Option 3

Option 4   Option 5   Option 6

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In the discussion that followed, participants largely shared their preference for Option 1 and Option 5**.** Though they seemed less familiar with an icon like Option 1, participants felt that it clearly illustrated elements of discussion and language; they also felt that it was humanizing and welcoming. On the other hand, participants also liked Option 5 because it is very similar to other language access icons that exist across smartphone apps and the internet. Because of this, they felt that linguistically diverse individuals would be most able to identify it and understand its meaning. Participants also commended Options 2 and Options 6 for their simplicity.[29]

Theme B: Communication Preferences and Access to Information

Focus group participants felt there is a lack of sufficient information for them and the linguistically diverse community to use public transportation more comfortably. This included:

- Accessible schedules and route information
- Payment options, ensuring that people know about accepted forms of payment, and payment rules (e.g., providing exact change on buses)
- Improved smartphone app for trip planning that is integrated into the payment app
- Better and more widespread marketing of digital tools such as RTD's smartphone apps so that people know about them
- More Spanish translations of key information

Ideas to Improve Communication and Language Access

Focus group participants provided many interesting ideas for improving RTD's communication generally while also offering recommendations for expanding language access. The ideas can be organized into the following three primary categories.

Category 1: Improve Digital Communications

Focus group participants provided extensive feedback on RTD's digital presence, emphasizing the need for improved smartphone apps, multilingual service alerts, videos, and social media engagement.

Enhancing RTD's Smartphone Apps

Participants highlighted that immigrant and refugee families, like many other populations, rely heavily on smartphones for transportation needs. They suggested several improvements to RTD's apps, particularly RTD MyRide, which currently functions as a gateway to the website rather than a fully independent mobile app. Key recommendations included:

- Developing a standalone app that does not require linking to RTD's website
- Creating an all-in-one platform integrating fare purchasing, trip planning, and general transit information. Participants found the separation between trip planning and fare payment confusing, making it difficult to determine trip costs
- Adding a chat feature to connect customers with Customer Care for real-time assistance.
- Providing translated versions of RTD's apps and increasing marketing efforts to raise awareness about their availability

Multilingual Service Alerts and Visual Content

Participants stressed the importance of receiving service updates in their preferred languages. They recommended offering translated service alerts or, at minimum, an option for translation.

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[29] Following the focus group, RTD proceeded with variants of Options 1 and 2 for its language access branding, which can be seen throughout some materials in Appendix E.

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Recognizing that some customers may be illiterate, participants also urged RTD to produce more multilingual instructional videos on how to use the transit system. They noted that even small details — such as where to sit on the bus or how to request a stop — can cause anxiety for new customers. These videos should be developed in collaboration with immigrant and refugee community members to ensure they address real concerns.

Leveraging Social Media for Multilingual Engagement
Participants encouraged RTD to better utilize social media to connect with multilingual and multicultural communities. They emphasized that social media is cost-effective and widely accessible, particularly among Latine, immigrant, and refugee families who frequently use Facebook and Facebook Messenger to stay connected.

Additional recommendations included:

- Creating a social media space where people can ask public transit-related questions, with responses from RTD, community members, or interpreters
- Expanding RTD's presence on platforms popular with diverse communities to enhance accessibility and engagement

Category 2: Expand In-Person Language Assistance Resources
While many suggestions focused on digital communication, participants emphasized the need for alternative methods to accommodate differences in technological access or competence, or situations where a phone is unavailable.

They identified two key areas where in-person communication should be enhanced: bus stops and vehicles. Specific recommendations included:

- Electronic wayfinding maps at stops and stations with translation options
- Translated informational materials (flyers, brochures, and other key documents) available at stops and stations, covering topics like how to use RTD services and access language assistance
- Multilingual auditory announcements at rail stations and on buses
- Comprehensive bus system maps similar to rail maps, integrating both modes to illustrate connectivity, with translations available
- Location-specific language assistance, ensuring translated signage, announcements, and documents reflect the primary languages spoken in each area, based on U.S. Census or other available data

Category 3: Secure Strategic Community Partners
Focus group participants emphasized the need for strategic engagement with community partners to improve language access. Many expressed concerns that RTD does not adequately reach immigrant, refugee, and senior populations.[30]

A key solution is partnering with organizations that already serve these communities, such as senior centers, case managers, resettlement agencies, public libraries, and human service offices, to provide public transportation trainings (e.g., ride-alongs) and information sessions. Specifically, organizations like the International Rescue Committee, Spring Institute, and resettlement agencies were recommended as ideal partners since they engage with immigrants and refugees early in their resettlement process and have established educational programs that could integrate RTD-related information.

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[30] According to a participant, seniors tend to live with others of the same language group. Additionally, data shows that seniors are less comfortable with and use technology less than other age groups, though this is changing over time.

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Additionally, participants stressed the importance of direct collaboration with community members to better understand their needs and shape RTD's equity and language access initiatives accordingly.

Theme C: Exploring Language Assistance Options (Operators)

The focus group concluded with a discussion on improving communication between operators and non-English-speaking customers. Suggested solutions included:

- Installing built-in translation devices on buses
- Hiring community ambassadors to assist customers
- Better promoting RTD's free interpretation and translation services through signage and the RTD app

Additionally, a participant highlighted the importance of cross-cultural training for operators to help them navigate language barriers and cultural differences. This aligned with RTD's Serving Non-English-Speaking Customers training, which RTD first implemented in 2022 and includes a cultural competence component.

Discussion

The focus group findings reinforce the challenges identified in RTD's language access survey, particularly regarding the accessibility of transit information and services for linguistically diverse customers. The focus group echoed the challenge of applying for discount programs identified in the survey, highlighting difficulties navigating fare structures and eligibility requirements due to language barriers.

Additionally, while the survey showed that 68% of respondents knew how to find fare information, the focus group revealed deeper concerns about real-time service updates and trip-planning tools. Participants emphasized the need for an improved RTD app that integrates trip planning and fare payment while offering multilingual support — an issue that aligns with previous survey findings about technological barriers. Fortunately, since this focus group took place, RTD greatly expanded the translation tools on both its website and Next Ride app, with more languages to come shortly. Further, RTD's plan to produce a mobile app that integrates fare payment and trip planning tools into one interface is in alignment with the focus group participants' recommendations.

The discussion also underscores the importance of language assistance resources apart from a mobile phone or computer. While digital tools are critical, many transit users — particularly those in immigrant and refugee communities — may disproportionately rely on the built environment at stops/stations as well as on vehicles and printed materials to navigate the system. The recommendation to install multilingual electronic wayfinding maps and provide translated announcements aligns with broader efforts to improve equity in RTD services.

Finally, both the survey and the focus group highlight the need for stronger community partnerships. Participants pointed to organizations that already serve immigrant and refugee populations as key allies in improving transit access. This supports prior findings that more outreach and education efforts are necessary to ensure linguistically diverse communities feel confident using RTD services.

Together, these findings emphasize that language access in transit is not just about translation but also about building trust, improving communication channels, and ensuring that transit information is available in multiple formats. Addressing these gaps will require a multifaceted approach, combining digital improvements, in-person resources, and deeper community engagement. As RTD continues to advance its language access initiatives, it will be crucial to honor the lived experiences of diverse customers, develop data-driven resources that reflect community needs, and foster intentional, reciprocal partnerships to ensure truly inclusive and effective communication.

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Factor 4: Available Resources and Costs of Providing Language Assistance Services

Methodology

To complete Factor 4, the Transit Equity Office (TEO) contacted numerous departments and divisions engaged in language access work — specifically, the Paratransit Services Division; the Communications and Engagement, Transit Police, and Human Resources departments; the Board Office; the Risk Management Division; and other offices in the Civil Rights Division — to report their expenses related to language assistance from June 1, 2022 to March 31, 2025. TEO gathered its own expenses as well, given the outsized role it plays in coordinating and paying for language assistance services across the agency.

Results

Resources

The resources available to RTD staff to provide language assistance have significantly increased from the 2019-2022 period to the 2022-2025 period, as is evidenced in part by the increased costs noted in the following section. For a summary of existing resources, see the Introduction and *Language Access Measures* below.

Costs

From June 2022 through March 2025, RTD and its contractors spent an estimated $309,882 on language assistance services — a 78% increase from the $176,318 reported for the June 2019-May 2022 time period. Figure 4.1 below details RTD's language assistance expenses with a brief description and the associated department.

The largest expense in the current period was the cost of contracts with the Transit Equity Office's multicultural outreach partners, estimated at $101,442. These expenses supported activities such as survey distribution, focus groups, resource fairs, and digital communications campaigns. Following, the second-largest expense was related to developing the agency's inaugural Serving Non-English-Speaking Customers training, estimated at $62,099 to hire an instructional designer and purchase access to training development tools like Articulate 360.

Expenses do not include printing with the exception of the "Transit Equity Office Signage and Materials" category. Additionally, costs do not include staff labor.

Figure 4.1. Costs of Providing Language Assistance: June 2022-March 2025

Description of Item	Associated Department	Cost
LanguageLink Telephonic Interpretation	Agency-wide	$1,321
CART Transcript (Spanish Generation)	Board Office	$761
Interpretation for Board-Related Meetings	Board Office	$1,360
Multicultural Outreach Partner Contracts	Civil Rights	$101,442
Video Production and Translation	Civil Rights	$20,650
Transit Equity Office Signage and Materials	Civil Rights	$4,541
Training Development	Civil Rights	$62,099
Interpretation for Events and Meetings	Civil Rights	$1,400
Event Outreach	Civil Rights	$3,310

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Language Access Survey Administration	Civil Rights	$8,968
Translation of Written Materials	Civil Rights	$7,811
Website Translations (Deepl and Google)	Communications (Digital)	$5,966
LiVE Income-Based Discount Program Videos	Communications (Market Development)	$19,240
Translation Links (Spanish Materials Translation)	Communications (Marketing)	$9,298
MTM Assessment Center	Paratransit	$8,900
Transdev Call Center Telephonic Interpretation	Paratransit	$4,873
Medi-Trans Inc, The Rock, United Language Interpretation and Translation	Risk Management	$25,293
Language Line Telephonic Interpretation	Transit Police	$4,124
Transit Watch Spanish Mobile Application	Transit Police	$18,525
TOTAL	**All Departments**	**$309,882**

Discussion

Though some of the spending on language assistance services likely reflects improved accounting across the agency, the expansion of RTD's language access efforts is the primary reason for cost increases during this period. For example, RTD has made significant strides in providing digital forms of language assistance, such as the buildout of the website's translation tool, launch of the Transit Watch mobile application in Spanish, and video production. Most notable, however, is RTD's commitment in connecting with linguistically diverse communities through paid partnerships with community-based organizations. All in all, RTD has demonstrated its dedication to language access since June 2022 directly through its financial investment, and this investment has allowed us to improve engagement with linguistically diverse communities, expand translated resources, support staff in overcoming language barriers, and beyond.

Finally, it is also crucial to recognize how staff contribute to RTD's language accessibility in ways not captured by this Factor 4 report. As mentioned in Factor 2, 30% of RTD's customer-facing staff speak a language in addition to English — providing (often daily) language assistance to linguistically diverse customers. Additionally, staff across departments — including Civil Rights, Operations, and Communications — play a vital role in coordinating and implementing language access initiatives. Although not reflected in financial reports, these contributions are fundamental to RTD's language access efforts.

Language Access Measures

RTD's Four Factor Analysis provides a data-driven foundation for understanding the language needs of the communities the agency serves. Data includes the number of linguistically diverse people in the agency's service areas as well as the most common languages they speak, the frequency with which linguistically diverse persons interact with RTD frontline staff, the suggestions staff have to overcome language barriers with customers, the nature and importance of RTD's services to the linguistically diverse population, and, finally, the costs to pursue various language assistance measures. Based on this analysis, RTD is committed to implementing targeted strategies that enhance language accessibility across agency programs and services. In the coming years, RTD will build on existing efforts by enhancing partnerships with community-based organizations, expanding and better promoting language assistance services, streamlining the integration of language access processes into operations, and finding new ways to support frontline staff in serving linguistically diverse customers.

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

As RTD looks forward to the 2025 through 2028 period, it is equally important to recognize the progress the agency has made. Over the past three years, RTD has taken significant steps to improve language accessibility, from expanding translated materials to increasing staff support. These accomplishments have laid the groundwork for future initiatives, informing next steps and ensuring that RTD continues to build a more inclusive transit system.

Language Access Progress Made from 2022 to 2025

While not comprehensive, the list illustrated in Figure 5 summarizes some of RTD's accomplishments in improving agency language access from 2022 to 2025.

Figure 5. Summary of 2022-2025 Language Access Accomplishments[31]

Translation of Vital Materials	✓ Conducted inventory of vital documents for translation needs ✓ Translated Title VI materials (complaint procedures in 21 safe harbor languages, public notice in four languages, full Title VI Program in Spanish) ✓ Translated How to Ride Guide into 26 languages ✓ Translated How to Ride video into Vietnamese and Simplified Chinese; quality-checked Spanish version (available on RTD's YouTube or website) ✓ Prioritized language access in the Systemwide Fare Study and Equity Analysis, with materials in 21 languages and bilingual website ✓ Translated LiVE income-based discount program materials into 9 languages ✓ Released Next Ride trip planning app in five languages (Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, and Korean), with more to follow ✓ Released Transit Watch app in Spanish ✓ Established built-in website translation tool in five languages, with more to come
In-Person and Telephonic Interpretation	✓ Established process for providing interpretation services upon request ✓ Provided interpreters at community engagement events (e.g., service council meetings, program webinars) ✓ Provided Access-a-Ride eligibility coordinators with telephonic interpretation access ✓ Increased usage of telephonic interpretation services (from one call in 2022 to 142 calls in 2024, in languages from French to Kinyarwanda)
Community Engagement and Outreach	✓ Conducted focus group with Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning to understand barriers for linguistically diverse communities ✓ Expanded outreach to Latine/Hispanic communities through partnerships with Cultivando, Una Mano Una Esperanza, Mi Casa Resource Center, and CREA Results ✓ Expanded outreach to multilingual, immigrant, and refugee organizations, including African Community Center, Servicios de la Raza, and more ✓ Participated in travel trainings, resource fairs, job fairs, and presentations for diverse communities

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[31] Please see Appendix E for examples of the various assets described in Figure 5. Additionally, please refer to Appendix F for usage metrics on RTD's website and Next Ride translation tools as well as Appendix G for a copy of RTD's Serving Non-English-Speaking Customers training slide deck.

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

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Internal Capacity and Resources

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✓ Established Serving Non-English-Speaking Customers training for frontline staff
✓ Created Language Access Program webpage for customers to request translations and access telephonic interpretation
✓ Added language assistance resources to RTD's internal Transit Equity Office Hub for staff
✓ Developed language access icon with community input to brand program and signal language assistance availability
✓ Created "I Speak" Language ID cards for frontline staff and piloted pocket-sized versions for Transit Police
✓ Installed bus interior cards and rail decals in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Simplified Chinese with telephonic interpretation information

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While some of these accomplishments were one-time occurrences, the general activities themselves — such as translating vital materials, providing telephonic and in-person interpretation, expanding engagement with linguistically diverse communities, and producing staff resources — will continue into the future.

Activities to Continue

The following is a general description of the activities RTD will carry over from its 2022-2025 Language Access Plan:

- Providing telephonic interpretation via Customer Care at 303.299.6000 and via the Access-a-Ride Call Center at 303.292.6560, including bilingual English-Spanish information specialists
- Providing the RTD website and Next Ride app in RTD's top five safe harbor languages
- Advertising the availability of language assistance for community meetings and events as well as service alerts
- Determining which RTD materials meet the definition of "vital materials" and translating accordingly, including signage
- Providing a Spanish-language interface on Ticket Vending Machines
- Continuing building and maintaining relationships with local newcomer communities in a culturally competent way
- Attending and tabling at cultural events to experience local traditions, connect with community and learn about different cultures
- Continuing to build out an internal network of multilingual individuals who can help review translated materials
- Monitoring language access activities on a continual basis
- Developing resources for frontline staff that they have identified may be useful in bridging language barriers with customers
- Continuously scrutinizing system for opportunities to add notification of language assistance
- Sharing (and translating) important RTD information with multilingual, multicultural outlets
- Delivering Serving Non-English-Speaking Customers training to frontline staff

Translation of Vital Materials

Undoubtedly, translating written materials is a fundamental method of providing language assistance. Accordingly, agencies receiving federal funding are required to identify "vital documents" that must be translated to the extent possible. Vital documents are defined as 1) any document critical for obtaining services and benefits, and/or 2) any document required by law. In other words, whether a document (or the information it solicits) is "vital" depends on the importance of the program, information, encounter, or service involved, and

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

the consequence to a person if the information in question is not accurate or timely. For instance, applications for a bicycle safety course would not generally be considered vital, although summaries of service changes (e.g., modifications to bus and rail services) are vital documents.

RTD refers to "vital documents" as "vital materials" recognizing that not all essential information comes in the form of a document. The Transit Equity Office has established a tiered classification system to identify vital materials, and it includes four classifications:

- Tier 1 — Safety, Security and Civil Rights
- Tier 2 — Information Critical to Access RTD's Services
- Tier 3 — Information to Empower Customers
- Tier 4 — Entertainment

These tiers are described below.

Tier 1: Safety, Security and Civil Rights
Tier 1 materials protect customers' physical safety and facilitates RTD customers exercising their civil rights protected by laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. While Tier 1 materials can be digital in nature, much of RTD's Tier 1 information can be found in printed signage across the transit system (including in vehicles). Examples include (but are not limited to) the Title VI public notice, Transit Watch signage, and ADA decals. Information about public meetings and engagement opportunities related to fare changes and service changes is also a Tier 1 material.

Tier 2: Information Critical to Access RTD's Services
Tier 2 materials may be critical to accessing, or facilitates customers' understanding of and participation in, RTD services and programs. Tier 2 examples include basic customer information (e.g., the website), fare payment information, program applications and information (e.g., for Access-A-Ride, Special Discount Fares or Programs), maps, service changes, and service alerts (e.g., Next Ride). Customer surveys and details about public hearings and engagement opportunities related to Tier 2 information are also Tier 2 materials.

Unlike Tier 1, Tier 2 information is more likely to be digital or both digital and print in nature.

Tier 3: Information to Empower Customers
Tier 3 materials help customers understand and participate with RTD at a higher level, empowering them to play a larger role in long-term service decisions. Tier 3 examples include project updates and planning information. Customer surveys related to Tier 3 information are also Tier 3 materials.

Tier 4: Entertainment
Tier 4 materials are solely for entertainment or describe how to use RTD for recreational activities. They do not present information directly related to safety, security, or civil rights; improving access to services; or empowering customers to participate in RTD service and planning decisions. Tier 4 materials are usually digital.

Once RTD classifies the material, the agency takes the following general approach to translation. Note, however, that the formatting of a material – for example, whether static signage or digital – may impact the ability to offer translations, thus requiring modified tactics. Digital and print assets, as opposed to materials like signage in stations, are easier to translate in many languages.

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Figure 6. A Flowchart Illustrating How RTD Approaches Translation
Using the Vital Material Classification System

Do the materials pertain to safety, security and civil rights (Tier 1)?

- Translation in Spanish is <u>always required</u>
- Translation in Vietnamese, Simplified Chinese, and other top safe harbor languages is <u>strongly encouraged</u>
- If resources (e.g., time, space) are limited, and translation is not possible, notification of language assistance is <u>required</u>

Do the materials pertain to information critical to access RTD's services (Tier 2)?

- Translation in Spanish is <u>always required</u>
- Translation in Vietnamese, Simplified Chinese and other safe harbor languages is <u>strongly encouraged</u>
- Notification of language assistance is <u>required</u>

Do the materials pertain to information that empowers customers (Tier 3)?

- Translation in Spanish is <u>strongly encouraged</u>
- Notification of language assistance is <u>strongly encouraged</u>

Are the materials exclusively for entertainment or describe RTD use for recreation (Tier 4)?

- Translation is not required

Is the intended audience (e.g., a social network, neighborhood) linguistically or culturally diverse?

- Contact RTD's Language Access Coordinator at language.services@rtd-denver.com or 303.299.2051 to determine if translation is needed

New Language Access Activities: Implementation Calendar

In addition to the language assistance activities RTD will continue noted above, agency staff have outlined 23 new tasks that align with the needs and suggestions identified in the Four Factor Analysis across customers and frontline staff. They can be organized into four general categories or "outcomes": update and monitor the LAP, strengthen and standardize language access processes, expand and promote language assistance services, and enhance employee training and resources to serve linguistically diverse customers.[32]

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[32] While this Language Access Plan focuses on how RTD provides language assistance to customers, it is important to note that RTD is also exploring how it can better support the agency's linguistically diverse staff. For instance, the Equal Employment Opportunity Office recently launched its training in Spanish, and Talent Acquisition began translating certain hiring assessments into Spanish as well. Other internally facing conversations, such as offering a pay differential to multilingual staff as well as tactics to hire more linguistically diverse staff, are ongoing.

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RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Key Outcomes

Outcome 1: Update and Monitor the LAP

RTD will maintain, monitor, and regularly update its Language Access Plan (LAP) to guide the administration of language access efforts. In addition to the three-year LAP update, RTD will adjust its language access approach on an ongoing basis, adapting to changes in service area demographics. To stay attuned to language assistance needs, RTD will continuously monitor demographic trends and collaborate with community-based organizations serving linguistically diverse populations.

In 2022, RTD established a formalized Language Access Program within the Civil Rights Division's Transit Equity Office, and the LAP forms the backbone of this program. A dedicated Transit Equity Specialist will oversee its implementation, coordinating language access activities across departments while monitoring the agency for adherence to language access requirements.

Outcome 2: Strengthen and Standardize Language Access Processes

RTD will refine and formalize agency-wide language access processes to ensure consistency and adherence across departments. While the 2022-2025 LAP introduced key internal procedures for language assistance, the 2025-2028 LAP will focus on strengthening compliance, streamlining workflows, and incorporating feedback from linguistically diverse communities to improve service delivery.

Outcome 3: Expand and Promote Language Assistance Services

RTD will actively provide and promote language assistance services, in a culturally competent manner, to ensure equitable access for linguistically diverse customers. This includes offering interpretation at community events, translating vital materials, producing multilingual signage, and enhancing outreach and communications strategies to increase awareness of available language assistance services.

Outcome 4: Enhance Employee Training and Resources to Serve Linguistically Diverse Customers

RTD will ensure that all frontline employees know their obligations to provide meaningful access to RTD services for linguistically diverse people; accordingly, the agency will sufficiently equip employees to assist linguistically diverse customers by improving training programs and expanding available resources. Though RTD produced its inaugural Serving Non-English-Speaking Customers training during the 2022-2025 LAP, the agency aims to improve the training that staff receive as well as continuously assess and refine tools that facilitate effective communication between employees and linguistically diverse customers.

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Figure 7. 2025-2028 Language Access Implementation Calendar

LAP Implementation Calendar		Target Completion			
Task ID	Task Description	2025	2026	2027	2028
Outcome 1	Update and Monitor the LAP				
1.1	Conduct annual LAP monitoring reviews	X	X	X	X
1.2	Complete Four Factor Analysis			X	X
1.3	Finalize Implementation Schedule for next LAP				X
1.4	Build out demographic tool (e.g., Tableau) that can be used agency-wide and/or publicly to inform the agency's Public Participation Plan and community engagement efforts.		X	X	
Outcome 2	Strengthen and Standardize Language Access Processes				
2.1	Finesse process for in-vehicle signage installation to ensure signage uniformity across the RTD fleet, conducting audits as needed.	X	X		
2.2	Explore and establish translation review process for the translation tool on the RTD website.		X	x	
Outcome 3	Expand and Promote Language Assistance Services				
3.1	Add the top 10 safe harbor languages to RTD's website widget and Next Ride app.	X	X		
3.2	Produce Transit Watch e-lerts in Spanish and explore the ability to add other languages.	X			
3.3	Explore feasibility of instating audio announcements in Spanish at select rail stations as well as on board vehicles; pilot announcements for fixed-route buses.	X	X		
3.4	Work with Communications and Operations to hang signage on rail vehicles into Spanish where not currently available.	X	X	X	X
3.5	Review signage in demand-response vehicles (e.g., FlexRide, Access-a-Ride) for opportunities to improve language accessibility and advertisement of the available language assistance services.		X		
3.6	Update signage in demand-response vehicles (as needed per Task 3.5).			X	
3.7	Ensure newly acquired Ticket Vending Machines' digital interface and signage offer adequate language assistance in RTD's top languages.	X	X		

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3.8	Incorporate Spanish translation into shelterboards and improve shelterboard notification of language assistance.		X	X	X
3.9	Make email and text service alerts available in Spanish; explore integration in other safe harbor languages.		X		
3.10	Ensure language assistance measures are integrated into RTD's upcoming all-in-one mobile ticketing app.	X	X	X	
3.11	Procure and distribute "I Speak" buttons for frontline staff.	X			
Outcome 4	**Enhance Employee Training and Resources to Serve Linguistically Diverse Customers**				
4.1	Develop digitized version of Serving Non-English-Speaking customers training.	X			
4.2	Input language access tools into upcoming digitized employee Trailblazer.	x	X		
4.3	Procure additional RTD Basic Spanish for Transit Employees Handbooks.	X			
4.4	Explore providing translation devices in RTD fixed-route buses.	X	X	X	
4.5	Pilot providing in-person Spanish language courses for staff (following cancellation of pre-pandemic courses).		X		
4.6	Expand advertisement of language-learning resources, including (but not limited to) professional development funds available for language learning apps.	X	X		

Conclusion

As part of the 2022-2025 Language Access Plan, RTD made great strides in strategizing and pursuing its language access efforts, setting a firm foundation for the 2025-2028 Language Access Plan. The 2025-2028 LAP builds upon the framework and associated tasks noted in the 2022-2025 LAP, provides updated data on the language needs of the Denver metro area, and identifies specific, measurable, and data-driven tasks to continue to improve the language accessibility of RTD's transit services and programs. Through its language access and other efforts, RTD will continue to build a respectful, dignified, and welcoming transit environment for all.

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Appendix

Appendix A: Additional ACS and PUMS Maps

ACS Maps

Limited English Proficient Arabic-Speaking Population Distribution

Arabic-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Tract
- 0%
- <2%
- 2% - 5%
- >5%
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table C16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient Other Asian and Pacific-Speaking Population Distribution

Other Asian and Pacific-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Tract

- 0%
- <2%
- 2% - 5%
- >5%
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table C16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient French-Speaking Population Distribution

French-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Tract

- 0%
- <2%
- 2% to 5%
- >5%
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

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Data comes from Table C16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

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Limited English Proficient German-Speaking Population Distribution

German-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Tract

- 0%
- <2%
- 2% - 5%
- >5%
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table C16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient Other Indo European-Speaking Population Distribution

Other Indo European-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Tract

- 0%
- <2%
- 2% - 5%
- >5%
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table C16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

Limited English Proficient Korean-Speaking Population Distribution

Korean-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Tract

- 0%
- <2%
- 2% - 5%
- >5%
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table C16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient Other Unspecified-Speaking Population Distribution

Other Unspecified-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Tract

- 0%
- <2%
- 2% - 5%
- >5%
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table C16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

Limited English Proficient Russian-Speaking Population Distribution

Russian-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Tract

- 0%
- <2%
- 2% - 5%
- >5%
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table C16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient Tagalog-Speaking Population Distribution

Tagalog-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Tract

- 0%
- <2%
- 2% - 5%
- >5%
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table C16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

Limited English Proficient Afro-Asiatic-Speaking Population Distribution

Afro-Asiatic-Speaking Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .02%
- .02% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient Arabic-Speaking Population Distribution

Arabic-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .2%
- .2% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

Limited English Proficient Austronesian Languages-Speaking Population Distribution

Austronesian Languages-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

Less than .06%

.06% or Greater

September 2024 Network

RTD Rail

Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient French-Speaking Population Distribution
(incl. Cajun)

French-Speaking LEP Population (incl. Cajun) Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .1%
- .1% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient German-Speaking Population Distribution

German-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .04%
- .04% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

Limited English Proficient Hindi-Speaking Population Distribution

Hindi-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .04%
- .04% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

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Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

Limited English Proficient Indic Languages-Speaking Population Distribution (incl. Nepali, Marathi)

Indic Languages-Speaking LEP Population (incl. Nepali, Marathi) Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .1%
- .1% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient Japanese-Speaking Population Distribution

Japanese-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .04%
- .04% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient Korean-Speaking Population Distribution

Korean-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .2%
- .2% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

N

0   5   10   20 Miles

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient Languages of Western Africa-Speaking Population Distribution

Languages of Western Africa-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .04%
- .04% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient Other Languages of Asia-Speaking Population Distribution

Other Languages of Asia-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .2%
- .2% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient Other Indo-European Languages-Speaking Population Distribution

Other Indo-European Languages-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .03%
- .03% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

Limited English Proficient Persian-Speaking Population Distribution
(incl. Farsi, Dari)

Persian-Speaking LEP Population (incl. Farsi, Dari) Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

Less than .04%

.04% or Greater

September 2024 Network

RTD Rail

Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

Limited English Proficient Russian-Speaking Population Distribution

Russian-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .2%
- .2% or Greater
- —— September 2024 Network
- .... RTD Rail
- ⌐ ⌐ Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

Limited English Proficient Slavic Languages-Speaking Population Distribution

Slavic Languages-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .04%
- .04% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient Swahili-Speaking Population Distribution

Swahili-Speaking LEP Population Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .04%
- .04% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Limited English Proficient Tagalog-Speaking Population Distribution (incl. Filipino)

Tagalog-Speaking LEP Population (incl. Filipino) Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .04%
- .04% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

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Limited English Proficient Tai-Kadai-Speaking Population Distribution (incl. Thai, Lao)

Tai-Kadai-Speaking LEP Population (incl. Thai, Lao) Percentage by Census Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

- Less than .04%
- .04% or Greater
- September 2024 Network
- RTD Rail
- Service Area Boundary

Limited English Proficient (LEP) are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These individuals are captured as speaking English less than "very well" in the American Community Survey.

Data comes from Table B16001, ACS 2019-2023 5-Year estimates

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Appendix B: Factor 2 Survey Instrument (Paper Copy)

The Civil Rights Division is conducting a brief survey with staff to better understand how frontline staff and contractors interact with customers who speak limited or no English as well as customers with disabilities. All staff and contractors who interact with customers, either in-person, over the phone or digitally (e.g., email, social media) are invited to participate. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes or less to complete. **Represented employees who complete the survey will be compensated for 20 minutes' regular pay.**

Please submit the paper copy of the survey by 11:59 PM MT on October 31 to your manager. If you prefer to take the survey online, please go to www.rtd-denver.com/TEOADASurvey or scan the QR code below.

1. **As of October 2024, in which RTD department/division were you working? The lists provided for each department are intended to serve as guidance and may not represent every single function within the department.**

   ○ Administration, including:
   - o Civil Rights
   - o Contracting and Procurement
   - o Cybersecurity
   - o Information Technology
   - o Safety and Environmental Compliance

   ○ Bus Operations, including:
   - o Administrative Support
   - o Contracted Services
   - o Maintenance
   - o Street Operations
   - o Transportation

   ○ Capital Programs, including:
   - o Engineering
   - o Construction
   - o Mapping and Engineering
   - o Real Property
   - o Quality Assurance and Budget
   - o FasTracks Program Closeout
   - o Fixed Facilities
   - o Facilities Maintenance

   ○ Communications and Engagement, including:
   - o Community Engagement
   - o Customer Care
   - o Government Relations
   - o Marketing
   - o Public Relations

   ○ Finance, including:
   - o Accounting
   - o Asset Management
   - o Budget and Financial Analysis
   - o Cost Control
   - o Treasury

   ○ General Counsel, including:
   - o Information Governance and Management
   - o Risk Management
   - o Legal Services

   ○ Human Resources, including:
   - o Benefits/Compensation/Wellness
   - o Development and Training
   - o HR DOT Compliance/Office Services
   - o Labor Relations
   - o Support Services
   - o Talent Acquisition

   ○ Paratransit

   ○ Planning, including:
   - o Planning Technical Services
   - o Transit Oriented Communities

   ○ Rail Operations, including:
   - o Administrative Support
   - o Commuter Rail
   - o Contracted Services
   - o Light Rail

   ○ Service Development

   ○ Transit Police and Emergency Management

   ○ Not listed here (Please specify):
   _____

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2. **About how often do you interact with RTD customers?**
   - ○ Never – I don't interact with customers (<mark>SKIP TO END OF SURVEY</mark>)
   - ○ Daily
   - ○ Almost daily
   - ○ Once weekly
   - ○ Once monthly
   - ○ Rarely

The following questions ask about your experience working with **customers who speak little or no English**.

3. **About how often do you interact with RTD customers who speak limited or no English?**
   - ○ Never – I don't interact with customers (<mark>SKIP TO END OF SURVEY</mark>)
   - ○ Daily
   - ○ Almost daily
   - ○ Once weekly
   - ○ Once monthly
   - ○ Rarely

4. **How do you typically interact with customers who speak limited or no English? (Select all that apply.)**

   - ☐ In-person
   - ☐ Over the phone
   - ☐ Online (i.e., email, social media, RTD website, etc.)
   - ☐ Other (please specify): _____

> **STOP: IF YOU RESPONDED "IN-PERSON" TO QUESTION 4, PLEASE PROCEED TO QUESTION 5.**
> **IF YOU DID NOT RESPOND "IN-PERSON" TO QUESTION 4, PLEASE PROCEED TO QUESTION 6.**

5. **Where are you when you typically interact with customers who speak limited or no English? (Select all that apply.)**

   - ☐ On a bus – Which routes(s)? _____
   - ☐ On a train – Which lines(s)? _____
   - ☐ At a station or stop – Which one(s)? _____
   - ☐ At the rail yard or bus divisions
   - ☐ At an RTD office (e.g., Blake Street) / working from home
   - ☐ At an RTD sales outlet (e.g., Civic Center Station)
   - ☐ At a community event (e.g., resource fair, service change meetings) – Which one(s)? _____
   - ☐ Other (please specify): _____

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6. **Which of the following topics, if any, do customers who speak limited or no English ask you questions about? (Select all that apply.)**

- ☐ RTD fares
- ☐ RTD schedules
- ☐ Directions/Trip planning
- ☐ How to buy a ticket or pass
- ☐ How to use ticket vending machines
- ☐ How to file a complaint
- ☐ Report a safety concern/crime
- ☐ How to apply for discount programs
- ☐ Language assistance services (e.g., translation, verbal interpretation)
- ☐ How to make a paratransit reservation
- ☐ How to apply for a job
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

7. **How do you typically communicate with customers who speak limited or no English? (Select all that apply.)**

- ☐ Speak in their language with them (I am bilingual/multilingual)
- ☐ Direct them to interpretation via RTD Customer Care
- ☐ Ask multilingual coworkers to interpret (verbally translate)
- ☐ Ask other RTD customers to interpret
- ☐ Provide translated brochures
- ☐ Direct them to informational signage (e.g., diagrams, maps)
- ☐ Use a translation app (e.g., Google Translate, Deepl, Microsoft Translator)
- ☐ Call a telephonic interpreter directly (e.g., LanguageLink, LanguageLine)
- ☐ Use body language (e.g., hand gestures) or simple words to try to communicate in English
- ☐ Direct them to the RTD website/translation widget
- ☐ Other (please specify):_____

8. **On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not effective at all and 5 being very effective, rate how effective the following materials, services, or tools are to communicate with customers who speak little or no English.** If you're not aware of or do not use a particular material, service, or tool, please mark N/A.

- ___ Speaking in their language with them (I am bilingual/multilingual)
- ___ Interpretation via RTD Customer Care
- ___ Asking multilingual coworkers to interpret (verbally translate)
- ___ Asking other RTD customers to interpret
- ___Providing translated brochures
- ___Using a translation app (e.g., Google Translate, Deepl, Microsoft Translator)
- ___Calling a telephonic interpreter directly (e.g., LanguageLink, LanguageLine)
- ___Using body language (e.g., hand gestures) or simple words to try to communicate in English
- ___Directing them to the RTD website/translation widget
- ___Directing them to informational signage (e.g., diagrams, maps)
- ___Other (please specify):_____

9. **In general, how difficult/easy is it to communicate with customers who speak little or no English?**

○ Very difficult   ○ Somewhat difficult   ○ Somewhat easy   ○ Very easy

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10. Do you feel equipped to communicate with customers who speak limited or no English?

○ Not at all equipped   ○ Somewhat unequipped   ○ Somewhat equipped   ○ Very equipped

11. What materials, services, or tools can RTD provide to improve communication with customers who speak little or no English? Select all that apply.

☐ Language classes – Which language(s)? _____

☐ Direct access to telephonic interpretation (note: interpretation is already available via Customer Care)

☐ Hire more bilingual/multilingual employees

☐ Translated materials/signage

☐ Translation devices

☐ Other (please specify): _____

12. Do you speak another language <u>fluently</u> besides English? Note: "Fluently" means you can speak or read in a language easily and quickly without difficulty or errors.

○ Yes   ○ No <mark>(SKIP TO QUESTION 16)</mark>   ○ Not sure <mark>(SKIP TO QUESTION 16)</mark>

13. What other language(s) do you speak fluently besides English? (Select all that apply.)

☐ Spanish   ☐ Korean   ☐ Amharic   ☐ Japanese

☐ Vietnamese   ☐ Russian   ☐ Arabic   ☐ Other (please specify):

☐ Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)   ☐ Nepali   ☐ French   _____

14. In general, about how often do you speak the language(s) selected in Question 14 with customers?

○ Never – I don't speak in another language with customers   ○ Once weekly

○ Daily   ○ Once monthly

○ Almost daily   ○ Rarely

15. The Transit Equity Office plans to buy "I Speak ____" buttons to be optionally worn by frontline staff. The buttons can ease communication with customers and let customers know that you can help them in your shared language. It also recognizes and celebrates your multilingualism. The image to the right is an example (note: not the actual) of the I Speak buttons. **Would you like to have one of the pins in the language(s) you speak?**

○ Yes

○ No

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16. Please provide any suggestions you have to improve communication with linguistically diverse people below.

```
[                                                                    ]
```

17. Are you a represented employee or non-represented employee?

○ Represented   ○ Non-represented

18. Please enter your RTD employee number (This is the number on your RTD badge.) Represented staff must provide badge number to ensure you are paid for taking this survey. Survey responses are completely confidential.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

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Appendix C: Employee Interaction Locations

Bus Routes	Count
All Routes	65
15	53
0	28
16	26
40	22
11	19
51	19
43	17
19	16
121	16
Mall	16
31	15
FF1	15
SKIP	13
1	12
6	11
21	11
105	11
BOLT	11
7	10
8	10
28	10
65	10
153	10

Stations or Stops	Count
Union Station	43
All Stations	33
Civic Center	14
Peoria	11
Central Park	10
Nine Mile	8
40th & Colorado	7
Colfax	7
Aurora Metro Center	6
Alameda	5
I12 & Broadway	5
Oak	5
Downtown Boulder	4
Englewood	4
Littleton-Mineral	4
Denver Airport	4
Decatur-Federal	3
Lafayette	3
N Line 124th Station	3
Ridgegate	3
Wagon Road	3

Rail Lines	Count
N	16
All Rail Lines	13
A	9
R	8
H	8
D	6
W	6
E	5
G	3
L	2
B	1

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Appendix D: Language Access Survey (English Copy)

RTD's Civil Rights Division is conducting this survey to understand how important RTD services are to you and to find ways to make them more accessible for non-English speakers. **Complete the entire survey by January 31 to be entered into a drawing for one of 20 $25 King Soopers gift cards!** The survey takes less than 8 minutes. It DOES NOT collect any contact information unless you wish to participate in the drawing for the gift cards.

To take this survey, you must be at least 18 years old OR under 18 but have parental consent to participate.

If you prefer to take the survey online, please go to www.rtd-denver.com/LAPsurvey or scan this QR code.

I certify that I am at least 18 years old or under 18 with parental consent to participate in this survey (initial here if you agree): _____

How well do you do each of the following? Mark an "X" where applicable.

	Not at all	Not well	Well	Very well
Speak English				
Read English				
Write English				
Understand English				

What language(s) do you speak? (Select all that apply.)
- ☐ English
- ☐ Español (Spanish)
- ☐ Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese)
- ☐ 中文 (Chinese)
- ☐ 한국어 (Korean)
- ☐ Русский (Russian)
- ☐ नेपाली (Nepali)
- ☐ አማርኛ (Amharic)
- ☐ عربى (Arabic)
- ☐ Français (French)
- ☐ 日本語 (Japanese)
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

How often do you use the following RTD services? Mark an "X" where applicable.

	Daily	Almost daily	Once weekly	Once monthly	Rarely	Never
Buses						
Trains						
FlexRide						
Access-a-Ride or Access-on-Demand						

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What prevents you from using RTD's public transit services more frequently? (Select <u>up to three</u>.)

- ☐ Nothing — I use RTD as much as I need
- ☐ I cannot read or understand the information due to language barriers
- ☐ It doesn't go where I need to go
- ☐ It is slow
- ☐ It is not reliable
- ☐ It is not safe
- ☐ It is too crowded
- ☐ It is not frequent enough or available when I need
- ☐ It is expensive
- ☐ It is difficult for me to make multiple stops
- ☐ I travel with an individual who needs assistance (e.g., child or older adult)
- ☐ Other (please specify):

_____

Why do you use RTD's public transportation services? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ I do not have access to a vehicle (e.g., car, van, motorcycle)
- ☐ I can't drive or have difficulties driving
- ☐ I don't have a driver's license
- ☐ Can't get a ride from others/don't want to
- ☐ Avoid traffic and/or parking
- ☐ To save money
- ☐ Transit is the fastest and/or most convenient option
- ☐ Employer or school helps me pay for transit
- ☐ Better for the environment
- ☐ Other (please specify):

_____

How often do you have a household vehicle (e.g., car, van, motorcycle) available for your personal transportation needs?

- ○ Always
- ○ Often
- ○ Sometimes
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Never

Where are you most often going when using RTD's services? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ Work
- ☐ School
- ☐ Run household errands (e.g., bank, groceries)
- ☐ Attend special events (e.g., a concert)
- ☐ Medical, dental, mental, or other health-related appointments
- ☐ Social or recreational activities (e.g., place of worship, club, play sports, dine out)
- ☐ Take a child or family member to a destination (e.g., school, medical appointments)

How do you get information about RTD's services? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ RTD Customer Care at 303.299.6000 or via email
- ☐ RTD website (www.rtd-denver.com)
- ☐ RTD Next Ride trip planning app (app.rtd-denver.com/nextride)
- ☐ At an RTD sales outlet (e.g., Union Station, Civic Center Station)
- ☐ RTD's social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- ☐ Signs at bus/train stops
- ☐ Signs on board RTD buses/trains
- ☐ Local news (e.g., radio, website, newspaper)
- ☐ Word of mouth (e.g., family or friends)
- ☐ From a place of worship, community-based organization, or social service
- ☐ I do not get information regarding RTD's services
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

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Please rate how useful you think the following language assistance services would be, from *Not at all useful* to *Extremely useful*. Mark an "X" where applicable.

	Not at all useful	Slightly useful	Very useful	Extremely useful
Access to an interpreter (e.g., over the phone, in person)				
Translations of websites, apps, and other digital tools				
Translated audio announcements on RTD vehicles (e.g., buses, trains)				
Translated audio announcements at stops/stations				
Translated signage on RTD vehicles (e.g., buses, trains)				
Translated signage at RTD stops/stations				
Translated brochures, flyers, and other documents				
Bilingual/Multilingual staff (e.g., drivers, sales outlet staff)				

Please rate how important it is to get information about each of the following from RTD in your language(s), from *Not at all important* to *Extremely important*. Mark an "X" where applicable.

	Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
RTD fares/How to buy an RTD ticket or pass				
RTD schedules				
Directions/Trip planning				
Service and schedule changes				
How to use RTD ticket vending machines				
How to file a complaint				
Report a safety concern/crime to RTD				
How to apply for RTD discounts				
How to access RTD language assistance (e.g., translation, verbal interpretation)				
RTD Access-a-Ride service for people with disabilities				
RTD FlexRide service				
How to apply for an RTD job				
How to attend RTD events				

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Do you know how to do the following? Mark an "X" under Yes or No.

	Yes	No
Find information on the cost of RTD fares		
Purchase an RTD ticket or pass		
Sign up for and use RTD MyRide		
Find information on schedules and service changes		
Use Next Ride for trip planning		
Make a customer service complaint to RTD		
Make a civil rights/discrimination complaint to RTD		
Apply for RTD discounts (e.g., LiVE income-based program, senior special discount)		
Report a safety concern/crime to RTD		
Access language assistance (e.g., translation, verbal interpretation)		
Become eligible for the Access-a-Ride paratransit service (for people with disabilities)		
Make an Access-a-Ride reservation		
Make a FlexRide reservation		
Contact RTD Customer Care		
Apply for an RTD job		
Attend RTD events		

Please enter your zip code: _____

What is your gender?
- ◯ Man
- ◯ Woman
- ◯ Non-binary or gender-diverse
- ◯ Other (please specify): _____
- ◯ Prefer not to say

How old are you?
- ◯ 19 or under
- ◯ 20-24
- ◯ 25-34
- ◯ 35-44
- ◯ 45-54
- ◯ 54-64
- ◯ 65 or older
- ◯ Prefer not to say

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Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic <u>origins</u>? (Select all that apply.)

- ○ Hispanic or Latino/a/e
  - o Mexican
  - o Puerto Rican
  - o Venezuelan
  - o _____
- ○ American Indian or Alaska Native
  - o Ute
  - o Arapahoe
  - o Cheyenne
  - o _____
- ○ Asian
  - o Chinese
  - o Vietnamese
  - o Indian
  - o _____
- ○ Black or African American
  - o Somali
  - o Ethiopia
  - o Jamaica
  - o _____

- ○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - o Native Hawaiian
  - o Samoa
  - o Chamorro
  - o _____
- ○ Middle Eastern or North African
  - o Syria
  - o Lebanon
  - o Egypt
  - o _____
- ○ White
  - o German
  - o French
  - o Italian
  - o _____
- ○ Not listed here (Please specify):
  _____
- ○ Prefer not to say

Please provide suggestions to improve the language accessibility of RTD's services and programs.

Thank you for completing our survey! **Enter your email or phone number for a chance to win one of 20 $25 King Soopers gift cards. Must be 18 or older or have parental consent to participate. <u>Please write clearly</u>.**

We sincerely appreciate your time.

RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Appendix E: Examples of Translated Materials

Figure 8. Decal for Rail Vehicles Advertising Availability of Language Assistance

Hello
Language assistance is available at no cost. Call 303.299.6000. For Spanish, press 2. For other languages, press 8. Then, tell the agent what language you speak and stay on the phone.

Hola
Se ofrece asistencia lingüística sin ningún costo. Llame al 303.299.6000. Oprima 2 y permanezca en la línea.

rtd-denver.com/language-access

Xin chào
Dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ được cung cấp miễn phí. Vui lòng gọi số 303.299.6000 và nhấn phím 8. Sau đó, cho nhân viên biết ngôn ngữ mà quý vị muốn nói và chờ máy.

你好
我们免费提供语言协助。请致电 303.299.6000，并按数字键 8。然后告诉接线员您会说的语言，并继续留在线上。

303.299.6000

Figure 9. Title VI Bus Interior Card in Four Languages

RTD Respects Civil Rights
The Regional Transportation District (RTD) operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, national origin or any other characteristic protected by law. For more information on RTD's nondiscrimination requirements, the complaint procedures, or for information in another language, contact **303.299.6000**; email **titlevicomplaints@rtd-denver.com**; or visit **rtd-denver.com/titlevi**.

RTD respeta los derechos civiles
El Distrito de Transporte Regional (RTD) opera sus programas y servicios sin tener en cuenta la raza, el color, el origen nacional o cualquier otra característica protegida por la ley. Para obtener más información sobre los requisitos de no discriminación de RTD, los procedimientos de reclamación o para obtener información en otro idioma, llame al **303.299.6000**; envíe un correo electrónico a **titlevicomplaints@rtd-denver.com**; o visite **rtd-denver.com/titlevi**.

RTD尊重民权
Regional Transportation District（RTD）在执行计划和提供服务时不考虑种族、肤色、原国籍或受法律保护的任何其他特征。有关RTD的非歧视要求和投诉程序的更多信息，或其他语言的信息，请联系**303.299.6000**；电子邮箱为 **titlevicomplaints@rtd-denver.com**；或访问**rtd-denver.com/titlevi**。

RTD Tôn Trọng Các Quyền Dân Sự
Khu Giao Thông Khu Vực (RTD) điều hành các chương trình và dịch vụ của mình không liên quan đến chủng tộc, màu da , nguồn gốc quốc gia hoặc bất kỳ đặc điểm nào khác được pháp luật bảo vệ. Để biết thêm thông tin về các yêu cầu không phân biệt đối xử của RTD, các thủ tục khiếu nại hoặc để biết thông tin bằng một ngôn ngữ khác, hãy liên hệ **303.299.6000**; gửi email đến **titlevicomplaints@rtd-denver.com**; hoặc truy cập **rtd-denver.com/titlevi**.

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Figure 10. Front Cover of RTD's Inaugural "I Speak" Card (8.5-by-11-Inch Version)

Language Identification Card

How to Use this Card

Use this card to identify the language spoken by a non-English-speaking customer. Show the customer the card and indicate that they should point to the language they speak. If you are unable to assist the customer in their preferred language using the options available to you, please have the customer call Customer Care at 303.299.6000 to access free interpretation services.

Hablo español I speak Spanish.	**Tôi nói tiếng Việt** I speak Vietnamese.	**我讲中文** I speak Chinese.
አማርኛ እናገራለሁ I speak Amharic.	**أنا أتحدث العربية** I speak Arabic.	**من به زبان فارسی صحبت می‌کنم** I speak Farsi.
Je parle français I speak French.	**Ich spreche Deutsch** I speak German.	**मैं हिंदी बोलते हैं** I speak Hindi.
Kuv hais lus Hmoob I speak Hmong.	**私は日本語を話します** I speak Japanese.	**ខ្ញុំនិយាយភាសាខ្មែរ** I speak Khmer.
저는 한국어를 합니다 I speak Korean.	**ຂ້ອຍປາກພາສາລາວ** I speak Laotian.	**म नेपाली बोल्छु** I speak Nepali.
Я говорю на русском языке I speak Russian.	**Waxaan ku hadlaa SOOMAALI** I speak Somali.	**Mimi nasema Kiswahili** I speak Swahili.
Tagalog ang wika ko I speak Tagalog.	**నేను తెలుగు మాట్లాడతాను** I speak Telugu.	**ฉันพูดภาษาไทย** I speak Thai.

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Figure 11. Proposed May 2025 Service Changes Rack Card

Figure 12. Poster Advertising Language Access Survey in Nepali

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Figure 13. Zero Fare for Youth Program Fact Sheet in Vietnamese

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Appendix F: Website and Next Ride Translated Sessions (2024)

Website: Translated Sessions

Spanish Español

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
10,871	11,046	11,478	11,589	13,360	13,770	21,333	34,201	32,079	29,985	22,205	21,952	**233,869**

Chinese 中文

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
937	1,089	1,084	1,085	1,245	1,766	2,622	3,905	3,081	2,597	2,247	2,034	**23,692**

Vietnamese Tiếng Việt

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
---	77	135	251	89	141	108	319	310	209	179	168	**1,986**

Launched: February 2024

Russian Русский

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
---	---	---	97	421	368	593	799	1093	962	704	489	**5,526**

Launched: April 2024

Korean 한국어

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	440	972	**1,412**

Launched: November 2024

Customer and Community Engagement Report
January – December 2024
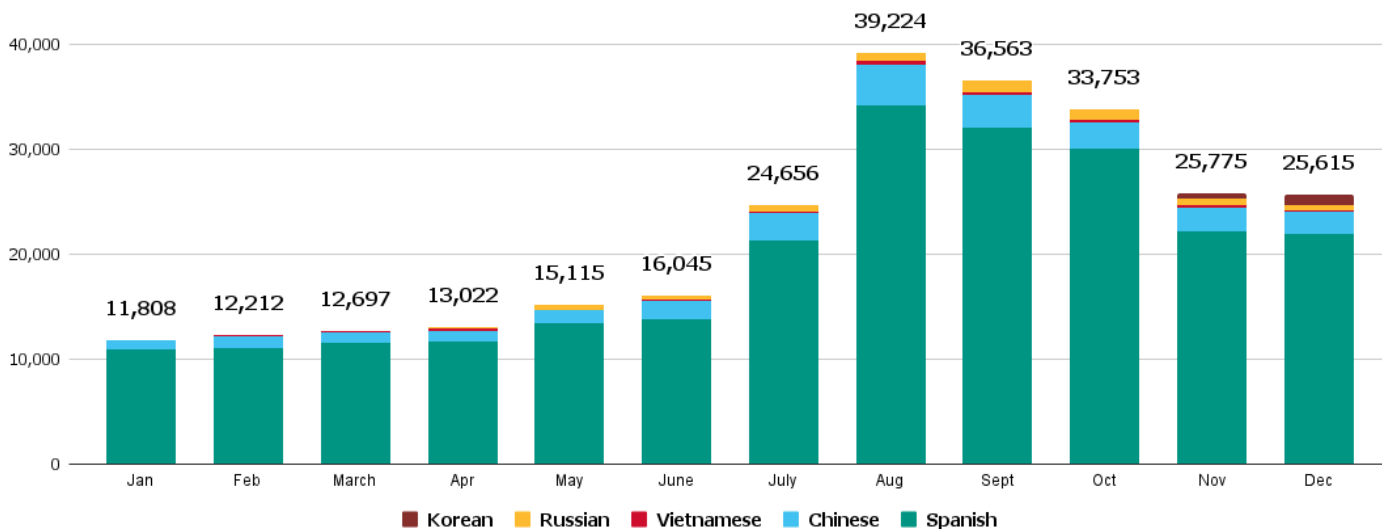
Next Ride Application: Translated Sessions

Spanish Español

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
15,148	18,153	19,011	20,407	18,821	14,819	14,833	18,058	14,548	13,804	12,125	12,247	**191,974**

Chinese 中文

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
676	887	1,058	657	1,159	1,077	977	868	593	768	554	2,990	**12,264**

Vietnamese Tiếng Việt

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
---	---	17	351	122	253	112	153	548	778	426	365	**3,125**

Launched: February 2024

Russian Русский

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
---	---	---	67	628	1,422	2,040	1,802	2,284	2,164	1,408	1,505	**13,320**

Launched: April 2024

Korean 한국어

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	82	173	**255**

Launched: November 2024
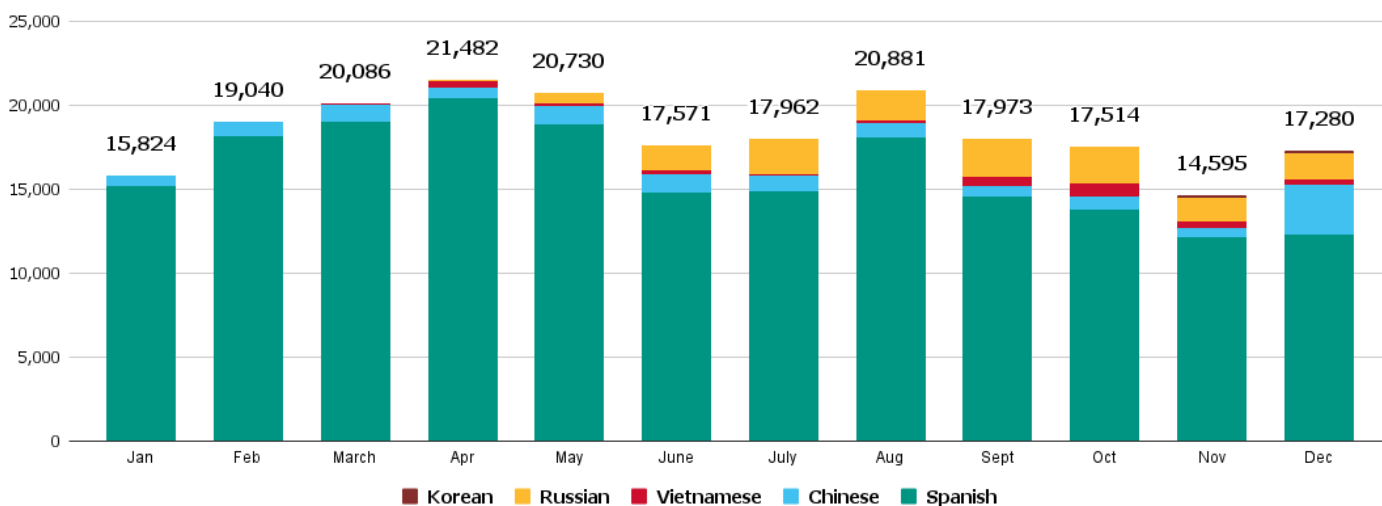
RTD 2025-2028 Language Access Plan

Appendix G: Copy of Serving Non-English-Speaking Customers Training Slide Deck

We Make Lives Better Through Connections.

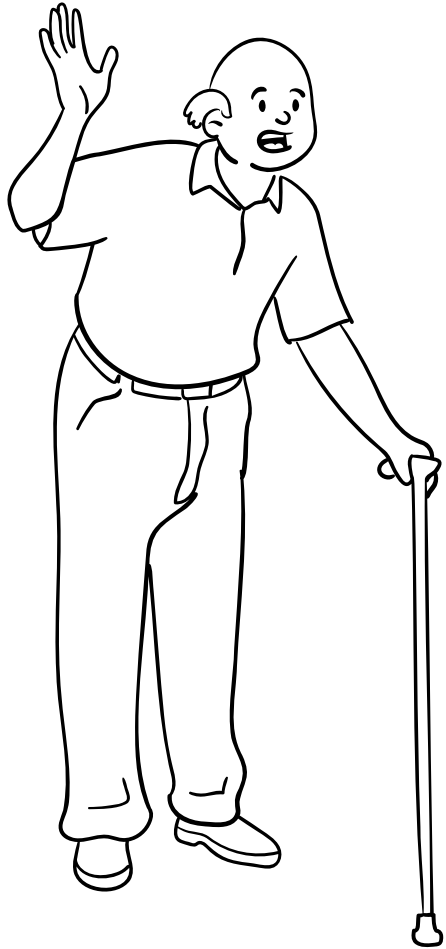# Serving Non-English-Speaking Customers

Transit Equity Office
Civil Rights Division

Pair-and-Share

- Have you ever experienced a language/communication barrier with another person or other people?

- What was the situation?

- What was the experience like, and how did it feel?

- Were you able to successfully communicate with the other person/people? If so, how?

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize the importance of Title VI protections for non-English-speaking customers

2. Apply verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to effectively interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds

3. Demonstrate use of language assistance tools and techniques to communicate with non-English-speaking customers

Training Expectations

Respect

Curiosity

Active Participation
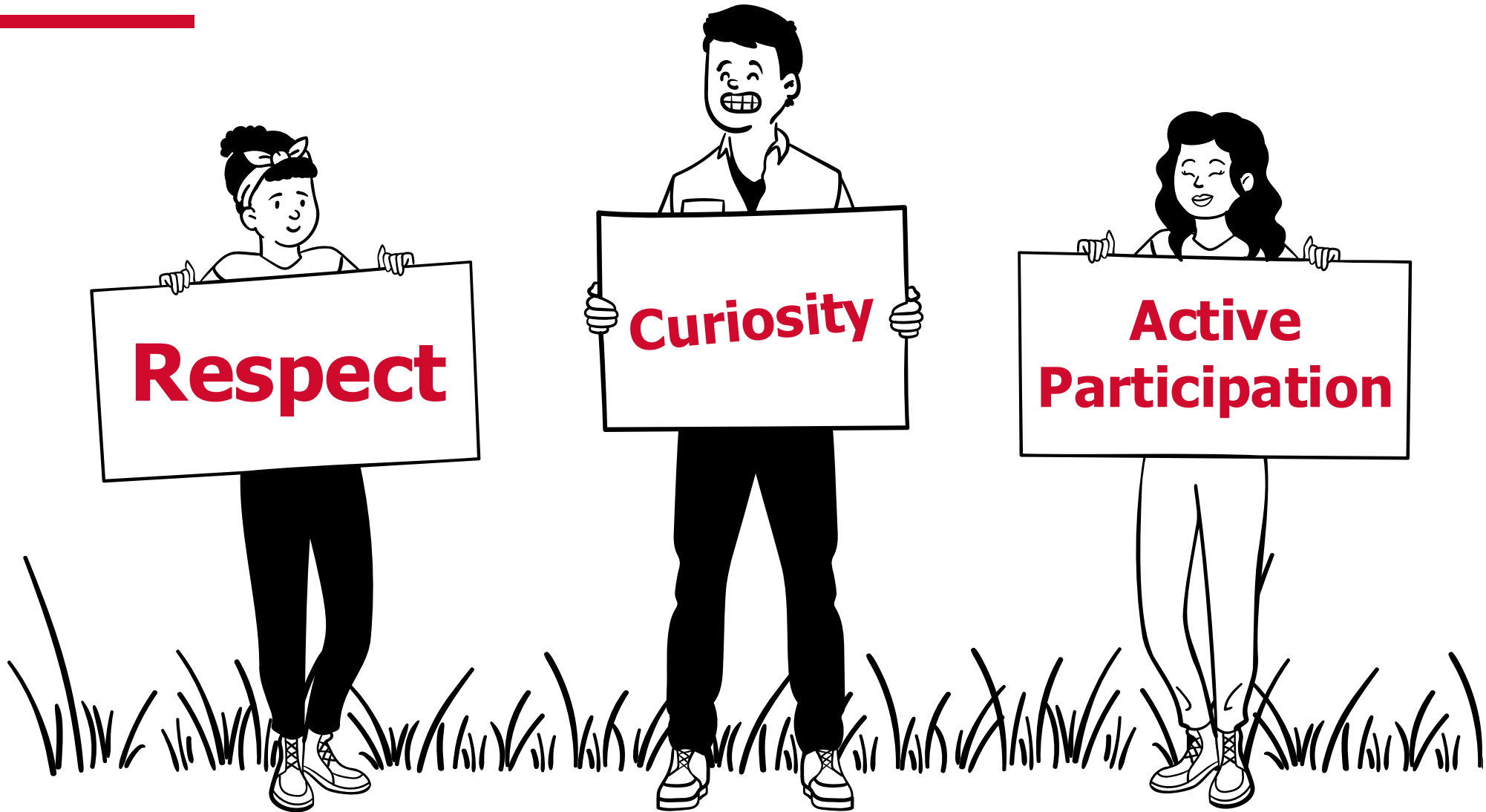
Title VI and Non-English-Speaking Customers

Top Languages in Service Area (US Census)

- The total number of non-English speakers in the Denver metro area is approximately 206,254, or 6.7% of 3.1 million people (or 1 in every 15 people)

1 Spanish

2 Vietnamese

3 Chinese

4 Russian

5 Korean

And 16 more "safe harbor" languages!

Who are "Non-English Speakers?"

- The U.S. Census describes "limited English proficient" (LEP) persons as those who speak English "less than very well"

- A customer may be non-English-speaking if:
  - English is not their primary language
  - They cannot read, speak, write or understand English
  - Their language status **poses barriers**

- Non-English-speaking customers can be anybody!
  - Foreign-born or U.S. citizens
  - Tourists or other international businesspeople
  - Refugees, immigrants or asylum seekers
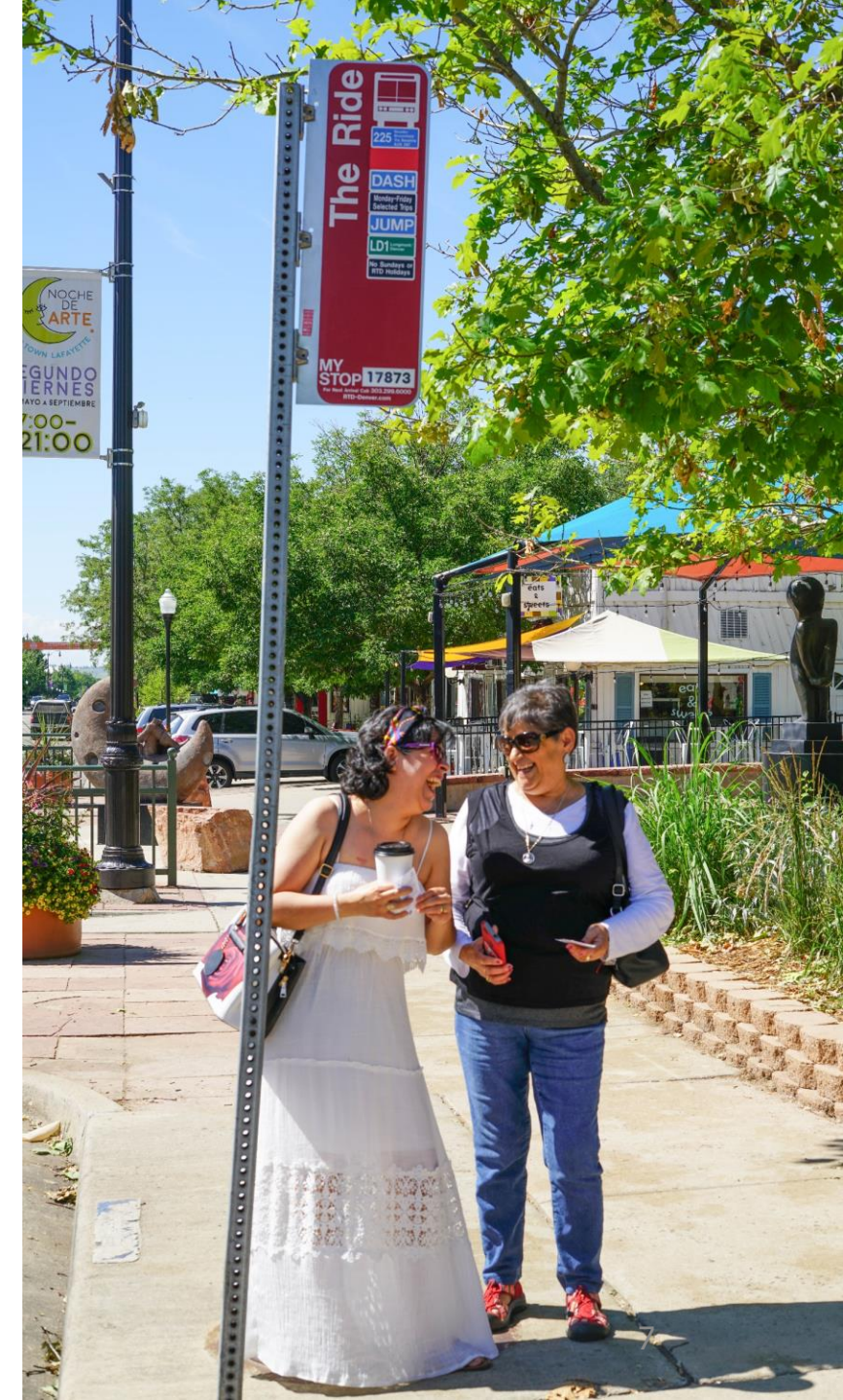
Why the Focus on English Proficiency?

- RTD receives funds from the Federal Transit Administration

- This requires us to comply with Civil Rights law, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VI")

- Title VI **prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin**

- Lau v. Nichols of 1974: national origin includes language

- RTD must **ensure that non-English speakers can access programs and services**

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Why is Compliance Important?

■ Violation of Title VI can result in:

- Legal consequences

- Loss of federal funding

- Negative impact on RTD's public image

- Decrease in customer satisfaction

- Loss of employee morale

Remember: to be compliant with federal law, RTD must take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to non-English-speaking customers.

It's Not Just Compliance...It's the Right Thing to Do!

Knowledge Check

▪ True or false: Title VI requires recipients of federal fund to provide non-English-speaking customers with meaningful access to their programs and services.

A. True

B. False

▪ Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of:

A. Race, sex and disability

B. Race, color and national origin

C. National origin, sex and disability

D. Disability, color and national origin

Cross-Cultural Communication

Staff, Contractors and Customers are a Mix of Cultures

Pair-and-Share

- Introduce yourself (where you were born, what you like to do, whatever you'd like!)

- What's a part of your culture that is important to you?

- Examples: a holiday, ritual or tradition; dish; clothing item or hairstyle

Case Study: Doing Business in Japan

Stop video at 3:18

Ineffective Cross-Cultural Communication Can...

- Create discomfort

- Lead to misunderstandings

- Be disrespectful (even if unintentional)

- Produce hostility/conflict

- Can be perceived as discriminatory

RTD staff are rude!

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Effective Cross-Cultural Communication Can...

- Help you learn about your own and others' cultural backgrounds

- Foster mutual understanding and respect

- Contribute to an inclusive RTD environment

- Help customers better use our services

I feel that RTD staff respect me!

Cross-Cultural Communication Skills

Practice Active Listening

- Listen to understand, not to respond

- Be fully present

- Practice good eye contact if appropriate

- Paraphrase and reflect back what has been said

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Use Simple Words and Avoid Slang or Jargon

- "Local fare costs three bucks."

- "It's raining cats and dogs!"

- "Break a leg!"

- "Don't beat around the bush."
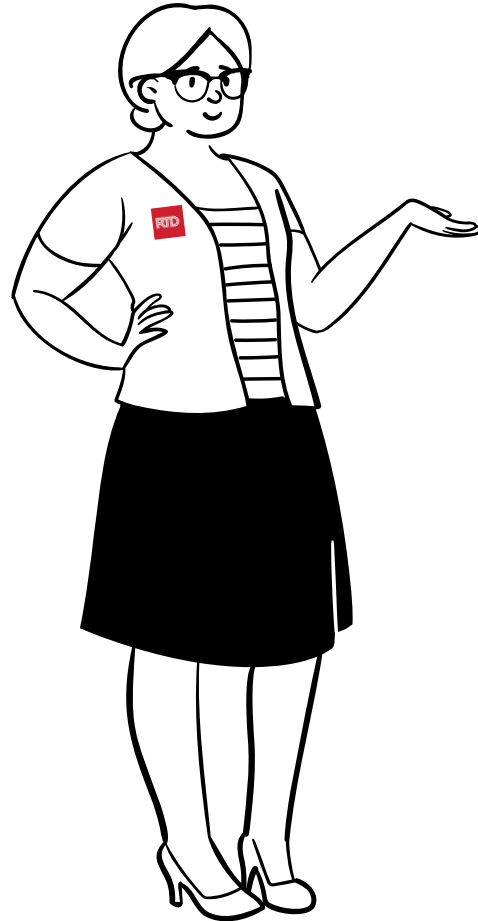
- "Local fare costs three dollars."

- "It's raining a lot!"

- "Good luck!"

- "Get to the point."

Use Body Language (but Avoid Some Gestures)

- Use facial expressions (e.g., smile, frown) — facial expressions are almost all universal!

- Avoid these hand gestures, which are rude or obscene in many cultures:

- Avoid pointing. Instead, extend your right arm out with an open palm

Respect Others' Personal Space

- Some cultures prefer closer physical contact where others prefer more distant physical contact

- The "personal space bubble" is influenced by the relationship with the other person (e.g., are they a friend or stranger?) as well as gender

- Generally, keep a minimum distance of 3-4 feet when possible and avoid touching them (or their mobility device) without permission

- Watch for non-verbal cues (e.g., shifting away)
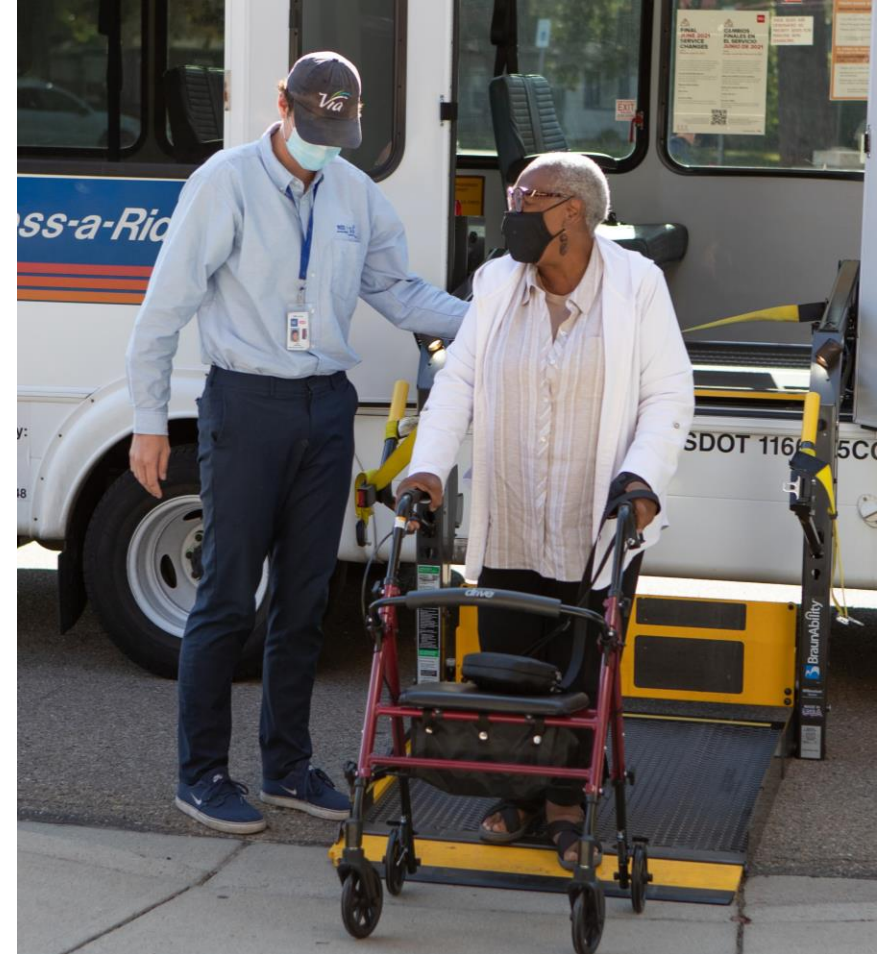
Knowledge Check

- True or false: Body language is universal.

  A. True

  B. False

- True or false: To be an effective cross-cultural communicator, you must know *everything* about everyone else's cultures.

  A. True

  B. False

Language Assistance Tools and Techniques

Case Study: MTA Bus Operator

Never Demand that Someone Speak English

❌ **"You speak (any) English?"**

If someone speaks to you in another language, assume they don't speak English. Asking can be condescending (but tone is important!).

❌ **"This is America! Speak English!"**

English is not a requirement to access RTD services.

❌ **"You want me to help you? Gotta speak English."**

Title VI requires RTD staff to provide customers with equal access to services regardless of their preferred language.
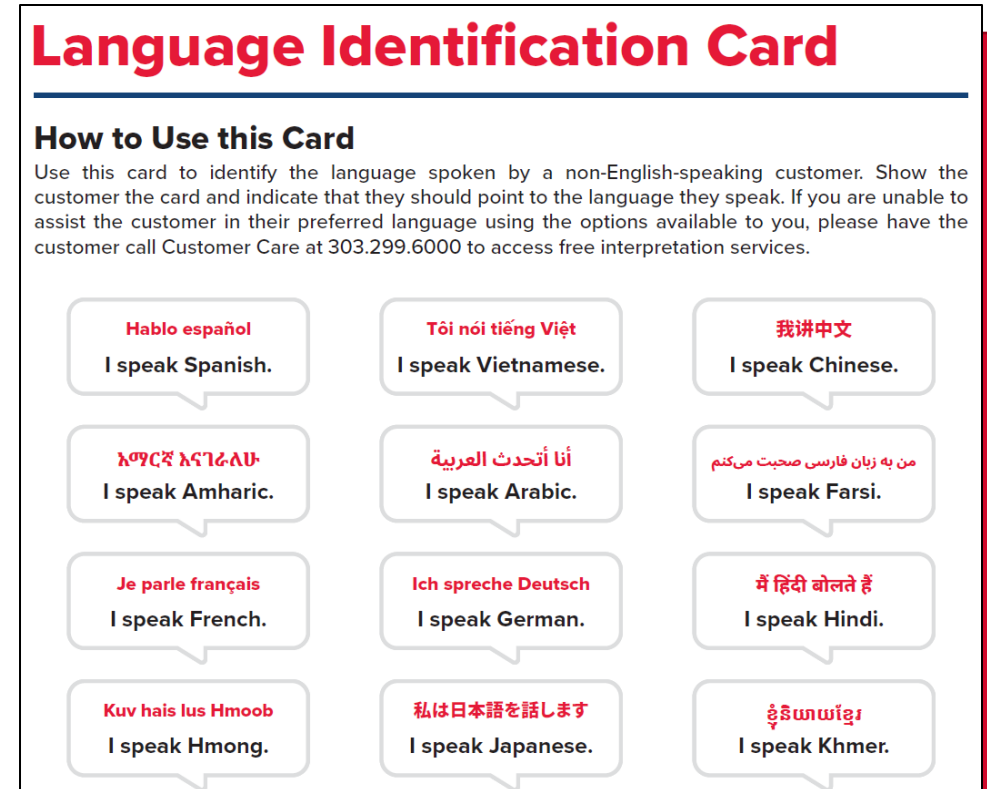
Try English First — with Different Approaches

- Use body language and other general cross-cultural communication skills

- Speak slowly and avoid raising your voice

- Use fewer or more simple words

- Point to signs and documents where available

- Count with your fingers to convey numbers

- Write it down, as reading may be easier than listening

Identify the Customer's Preferred Language

- If you do not recognize the language, ask:
  - "Would you prefer English or a different language?"
  - "What language do you speak?"

- Gesturing to your mouth may help

- If in person, use the "I Speak" card (screenshot to the right)
  - Printed version is only available to certain roles
  - Digital version is available to RTD staff on the Hub (if you are contracted without access to the Hub, please contact your trainer for access)

Language Identification Card

How to Use this Card

Use this card to identify the language spoken by a non-English-speaking customer. Show the customer the card and indicate that they should point to the language they speak. If you are unable to assist the customer in their preferred language using the options available to you, please have the customer call Customer Care at 303.299.6000 to access free interpretation services.

Hablo español	Tôi nói tiếng Việt	我讲中文
I speak Spanish.	I speak Vietnamese.	I speak Chinese.
አማርኛ እናገራለሁ	أنا أتحدث العربية	من به زبان فارسی صحبت می‌کنم
I speak Amharic.	I speak Arabic.	I speak Farsi.
Je parle français	Ich spreche Deutsch	मैं हिंदी बोलते हैं
I speak French.	I speak German.	I speak Hindi.
Kuv hais lus Hmoob	私は日本語を話します	ខ្ញុំនិយាយខ្មែរ
I speak Hmong.	I speak Japanese.	I speak Khmer.

Ask a Coworker for Help

Top languages spoken as a percentage of multilingual staff:

1. Spanish, 53%
2. Amharic, 13%
3. French, 7%
4. Arabic, 7%
5. Oromo, 4%
6. Swahili, 3%
7. Italian, 3%
8. Nepali, 3%
9. German, 2%

30% (almost **1 in 3)** respondents to a 2024 staff survey speak a language other than English fluently.

Most bilingual staff speak English and Spanish.

Ask Another Customer for Help

- Ask someone in the vehicle, **"Is there anyone here that can speak [language]?"**

- Use your judgment: a customer may say they speak a different language, but that does not mean they are a reliable interpreter!

- Avoid asking anyone under the age of 18 to act as an interpreter except for simple topics (e.g., ticket purchase, route schedule) or if urgent (e.g., medical emergency)
  - You may also ask the child to tell the accompanying adult that interpretation is available at no cost by calling Customer Care at 303.299.6000
  - If a crime has taken place, responding law enforcement should provide an interpreter

Use Your Smartphone

- **Per RTD policy, do not use a phone when operating a vehicle!**

- If not operating a vehicle, use Google Translate on your phone's web browser

- Consider downloading a live translation app such as Google Translate, Microsoft Translator or Deepl directly on your phone for quick access and offline translations

- Alternatively, be receptive to a customer using their smartphone to communicate with you

DeepL

Connect the Customer to Customer Care

- The customer can access **interpretation services at no cost** via Customer Care: 303.299.6000

- Write the phone number down or point to signage with the phone number listed *and* say it out loud

- **For Spanish**, the customer presses 2 and connects with an RTD's bilingual information specialist

- **For 300+ other languages**, information specialists will connect to interpretation services

- If the customer seems abnormally stressed, scared, faint or confused, it could be an emergency; follow normal emergency procedures

Pro Tip:

Make one of these phone call hand gestures next to your face, imitating a phone.

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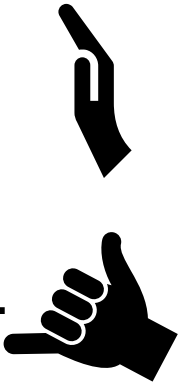
Language Assistance Interior Card

Hello

Language assistance is available at no cost. Call 303.299.6000. For Spanish, press 2. For other languages, tell the agent what language you speak and stay on the phone.

Hola

Se ofrece asistencia de idiomas sin ningún costo. Llame al 303.299.6000. Oprima 2 y permanezca en la línea.

rtd-denver.com/language-access

Xin chào

Có hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí. Gọi 303.299.6000. Xin vui lòng cho nhân viên biết ngôn ngữ của quý vị và giữ máy để duy trì cuộc gọi.

你好

免费提供语言协助。请致电303.299.6000。请告诉工作人员您说的语言，不要挂断电话。

303.299.6000 RTD

Knowledge Check

- True or false: I can refuse to help or offer services to someone who doesn't speak English with me.

    A. True

    B. False

- Which of the following are ways that you can help a non-English-speaking customer?

    A. Use Google Translate on your phone while operating the vehicle

    B. Ask an intoxicated customer to interpret for a monolingual customer

    C. Speak really loudly

   D. Connect the Customer to free interpretation services via Customer Care

You Did It!

You should now be able to…

1. Recognize the importance of Title VI protections for non-English-speaking customers

2. Apply verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to effectively interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds

3. Demonstrate use of language assistance tools and techniques to communicate with non-English-speaking customers

Language Access Program

- [Language Access Program](#) was established in 2023 to help RTD better serve non-English-speaking customers

- Key activities
  - Strategy for document and signage translation
  - Training staff and contractors, producing helpful resources and monitoring compliance
  - Expanding engagement with immigrant and refugee communities
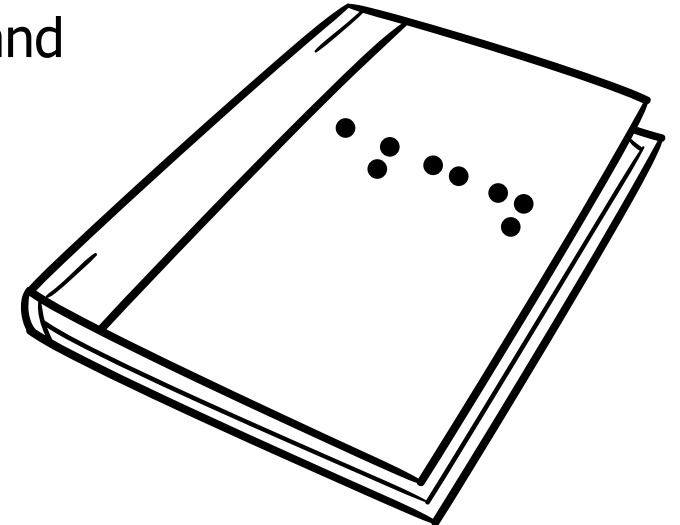
Language Access Resources

- The Hub → Civil Rights → Transit Equity Office (scroll down)
  - Best Practices: Serving Non-English-Speaking Customers
  - Best Practices: Working with an Interpreter
  - "I Speak" Card to identify a customer's preferred language
  - *Basic Spanish for RTD Employees* Digital Handbook

- If you are contracted staff without Hub access, contact your trainer for resources

- RTD website (rtd-denver.com)
  - RTD basic rider information in 10 safe harbor languages
  - New website will offer translations, and people can translate website already using their browser (e.g., Firefox)
  - Next Ride App in Spanish, Chinese (more languages to follow)
  - Language Access Plan 2022-2025
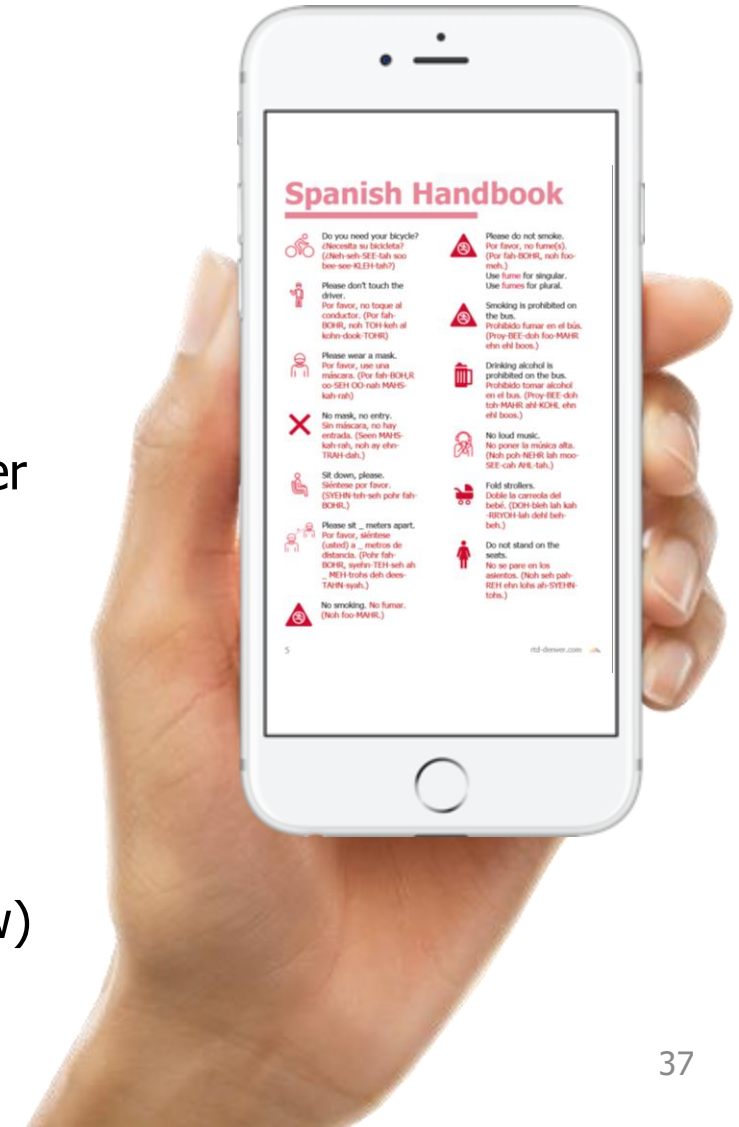
We Make Lives Better Through Connections.

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