


<p><b>Study Recommends: MTA Should Make Effort to Provide Transit Facts to Asian Pacific Islanders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MTA brochure, "How to Take The Bus," is printed in both English and the Khmer language and distributed to members of the Cambodian community.</li></ul>	
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By BILL HEARD, Editor

(March 27) The MTA should make a concerted effort to provide transit information to Los Angeles County's fast-growing Asian Pacific Islander community, a recently completed study of the multi-ethnic group recommends.

The county's Asian Pacific Islander (API) community, which numbers more than one million, is divided among citizens of Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, Chinese and Cambodian heritage, as well as residents from a number of Pacific islands. Together, they speak at least 18 separate languages.

Recent API immigrants, in particular, have the potential of becoming a sizeable segment of public transit commuters.

#### **Reaching a diverse group**

The \$350,000 study, funded by the Federal Transit Administration and the MTA, found that communicating regularly with such a diverse group would require more than media announcements and distribution of brochures and posters.

A pilot project among the Cambodian community, with a population of some 30,000, confirmed that many types of communication efforts would be required for this hard-to-reach ethnic group.

The study recommended that the MTA designate a liaison officer who would maintain regular communication with API leaders. Community organizations should be trained to help members access transit information, which should be provided in the various languages. Recommendations included telephone hotlines with operators who speak API languages and cultural awareness training for transit operators.

#### **New funding needed**

"The API community played a key role in obtaining the federal grant for the study followed the Cambodian project closely, anticipating that the MTA would expand the program to other segments of the community,"



said Andrea Burnside, RTP&D transportation planning manager. "We want to do it, but we must identify new local sources of funding."

In researching the Cambodian community, which currently is concentrated in the Long Beach area, consultants found that 72 percent don't speak English well and others don't speak the language at all. As many as 33 percent don't have vehicles available to them - three times the county average of 11 percent.

Despite the lack of personal transportation, poor English skills, lack of familiarity with the transit system and fear of the unknown keep many Cambodians from using transit.

#### **Range of communication efforts**

In a bid to familiarize Cambodians with local transit services, the pilot project's consultants provided special brochures, conducted a door-to-door information campaign, operated a Cambodian-language hotline, held transit familiarization events, worked with the API leaders and media, and made presentations to community groups.

Results of those efforts were difficult to quantify, but Burnside said the project showed that improving transit ridership among Cambodians and other members of the Asian Pacific Islander community will require a continual and consistent grass-roots approach to communication.

[Back to article](#)