



Courses to Employment: Sectoral Approaches to Community College-Nonprofit Partnerships

Initial Education and Employment Outcomes Findings for Students Enrolled In the Bus Operator Bridge Program (2006-2010)

**Los Angeles Valley College, Community Career Development, Los Angeles
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Introduction

This document describes initial findings from research on the training and employment outcomes of 651 participants who enrolled in a two-week Bus Operator Bridge training program in Los Angeles, CA between 2006 and 2010. The program is a partnership between the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), Community Career Development (CCD), and Los Angeles Valley College (LAVC). Community Career Development, a workforce development non-profit organization that operates a one-stop WorkSource Center in the Mid-Wilshire District in the City of Los Angeles, recruits and screens participants for the training, provides participant non-academic supports, and provides staff to manage the program. Importantly, CCD staff serves as a single point-of-contact for students. LAVC, part of the Los Angeles Community College District, provides the training and instructors for the Bridge training, which is on-site at MTA's main office.

After completing this 2-week bridge program, trainees who pass a criminal background check advance into paid On-the-Job Training (OJT) at the MTA (temporary employment). Successful graduates of MTA's OJT program are hired by MTA and receive an extensive benefits package. Bus Operators who continue their education and perform well are eligible for a number of promotions to supervisory and administrative positions within MTA. The Bridge program is offered quarterly and has been a major factor in helping MTA to address a long-standing bus operator vacancy problem, to increase the number of OJT participants who are ultimately hired (thereby reducing the cost of that training to MTA), and to expand recruitment and employment to include larger numbers of low-income Los Angelenos than MTA was able to reach effectively in the past. For additional information about the structure of the Metro Transit Authority, Los Angeles Valley College, and Community Career Development partnership please see AspenWSI profiles that are available for free download at <http://aspenwsi.org/CTEprofiles/LosAngeles.pdf>.¹

¹ For information about CCD, please see <http://www.communitycareer.org>, for more information on LAVC please go to <http://www.lavc.edu>

Courses to Employment

Community Career Development, Los Angeles Valley College, East Los Angeles Community College, and Los Angeles City College have participated in a range of research and learning activities as part of the *Courses to Employment (CTE)* project. *CTE* is a three-year demonstration (2008-2010), funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and conducted by The Aspen Institute's Workforce Strategies Initiative (AspenWSI). *CTE* is designed to learn about how partnerships between community colleges and non-profit organizations can help low-income adults achieve greater success in post-secondary education and, ultimately, the workforce. *CTE* builds upon what has been learned through AspenWSI's research and evaluation conducted over the past decade—research that has identified the promise of sectoral approaches for improving low-income adults' employment outcomes.

A range of capacities and resources are needed for workforce development programming to effectively serve both business and low-income participants. Partnerships between community colleges and non-profit organizations are a promising approach to improving the effectiveness and scale of services for low-income populations. In many communities and for many industries, no one single education or community-based organization has all of the necessary capacities and resources in-house to implement a sectoral employment development strategy that is both effective at learning about and responding to the needs of industry and/or of sufficient scale to meet the needs of the large numbers of low-income adults who need quality workforce development services. We define a sectoral strategy as a systems approach to workforce development—typically on behalf of low-income individuals—that:

- **Targets a specific industry or cluster of occupations**, developing a deep understanding of the interrelationships between business competitiveness and the workforce needs of the targeted industry;
- **Intervenes through a credible organization, or set of organizations**, crafting workforce solutions tailored to that industry and its region;
- **Supports workers in improving their range of employment-related skills**, improving their ability to compete for work opportunities of higher quality;
- **Meets the needs of employers**, improving their ability to compete within the marketplace; and
- **Creates lasting change in the labor market system to the benefit of both workers and employers.**

Courses to Employment research and learning activities have been designed to learn in-depth about how, using a sectoral approach to education and employment development, six different partnerships between community colleges and non-profit organizations, working in a range of different industries and with a diverse set of community college-based education and training approaches, meet the needs of low-income adult learners and job-seekers. The six community college-non-profit partnerships were selected competitively from a pool of 89 applicants in late 2007.² AspenWSI has been conducting formative evaluations of the six partnership's activities as well as participant outcome assessments for each site. Grantees have been engaged extensively in research activities designed to promote learning throughout the demonstration. Specifically, the *CTE* project is working to inform the following learning questions:

- What are the roles, responsibilities, tasks and services involved in collaboration to better serve low-income adults? Which are taken on by colleges and which by non-profits?
- How do policies, funding, governing and capacity issues enable (or restrict) the college or non-profit organization in serving different roles or providing specific services? What institutional variables affect flexibility, authority, efficiency or other aspects of successful collaboration?
- How are the non-academic needs of low-income adults met, and how does this relate to education and employment persistence and success? What are the costs of non-academic support services and how are these funded?
- What are the education, employment and income experiences of participants? How do these relate to outcomes of similar groups outside this demonstration?
- What does a successful collaboration cost? What are the elements of these costs, and how are they financed? What financial and other benefits accrue over time, to the college, the non-profit, business, worker and other stakeholders? How are these benefits measured?
- Does this type of collaboration offer opportunities for "scaling up" to address a community-wide need in a more systemic way? Can collaboration between a college and non-profit strengthen the ability of partner organizations to address systemic problems? What types of problems? In what ways?

²Profiles of all six partnerships are available at <http://www.aspenwsi.org/WSIwork-HigherEd.asp>.

- Can collaboration impact how intensive and extensive relationships with businesses are managed and leveraged? How are the needs, interests, and outcomes for business balanced relative to those of low-income adult students?

Participant Outcomes Study Methodology

An important goal of *CTE* research activities is to not only inform key learning questions about the partnerships' activities and outcomes but also to help build capacity within each partnership for ongoing learning independent of AspenWSI. Toward this end, each of the six participant outcomes studies was designed based on the existing data management systems in use by the six partnerships. Having said this, each site received substantial technical assistance from AspenWSI researchers in assessing their existing systems, and all made significant modifications in response to specific input. In most cases, outside data sources were needed to inform key learning questions. In particular, gathering information about education progress and employment outcomes proved to be particularly challenging at each site. Each site implemented different processes and used a variety of different data sources to obtain the data needed to inform questions about outcomes. In no case did either the non-profit organization or the community college partner have all of the information needed to answer relevant questions about outcomes. Thus on a case-by-case basis, AspenWSI researchers worked with the different partners and outside data providers to build the datasets needed to answer questions both about education and employment outcomes.

In Los Angeles, Community Career Development (CCD) staff collected Bridge participants' demographic information and employment histories during registration for the Bridge training for all 651 participants. CCD staff worked closely with Human Resources staff at MTA to track employment, wage and job retention data for participants who entered and completed on-the-job training with MTA. For students who started but did not complete OJT, CCD staff attempted to obtain post-training employment information through follow-up phone calls and other direct communications with these participants. Because the bridge program itself was extremely short-term, resources were not used to collect employment information for participants who either dropped out during the 2-week program or who failed

background checks and did not advance to OJT. All of the information was collected and stored in a spreadsheet by CCD, which was forwarded to AspenWSI researchers.

Before analysis, AspenWSI researchers, in cooperation with CCD staff, conducted an extensive review to address data inconsistencies in the spreadsheet forwarded by CCD. The resulting dataset formed the basis for analysis and findings reported in this document.

The following charts and tables offer a detailed examination of the demographics and pre-training employment experiences of all Bridge participants. The post-training employment experiences and demographics for those who entered On-the-Job training are also detailed. We have summarized a great deal of information in charts and tables, and provide a wide range of summary highlights, but we also present information in more raw formats. Our hope is that by providing as much information as possible in different formats, this document will serve as a helpful resource for policymakers, college and research communities, and practitioners.

Findings and Highlights

Demographics

- 651 participants enrolled in the Bridge program between 2006 and February 2010.
- Participants' median age was 43.
- 67% of participants were men.
- 53% of the participants were African-American, and 32.7% were Hispanic.
- 23.5% of participants reported having a criminal background at enrollment.
- 89.6% were classified as low-income based on their earnings in the six months prior to enrolling in the Bridge.

Enrollment and Training Completion

- From 2006 to February 2010, the two-week MTA Bus Operator Bridge Class was conducted 20 times and enrolled 651 participants.
 - The median number of participants in each class was 30.
 - 362 or 55.6% of the 651 participants passed both the required criminal and driving record background check and the MTA Bridge Operator Class.
- Out of 362 eligible participants who passed the background checks, 360 were hired by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) for the six-week On the Job Training (OJT) program.
 - Students earned a median hourly wage of \$11.09 while in OJT.
- 217 or 60.3% of the 360 students completed the MTA's OJT program.

Post-Training Employment and Retention

- 217 or 60.3% of the 360 students who were hired temporarily for the OJT program subsequently completed the training and were hired as permanent employees by MTA as Bus Operators.
 - This compares very favorably with MTA's own data on overall OJT completion and subsequent permanent hires for operators who do not go through the bridge program. MTA management reports that 40-50% of trainees who enter OJT without going through the Bridge program typically complete OJT and are hired (compared with 60.3% of bridge completers). In past years the Bridge program has played an important role

- in helping MTA to fill a large number of bus operator vacancies. Bus operator vacancy represents a large expense for MTA. Vacancies must be filled with drivers who work over-time and are paid over-time wages.
- MTA management also reports that they get better-qualified employees from the bridge program than from other hiring sources. Management indicates that Bridge graduates are well-prepared vis a vis knowledge about the nature of the work and are more likely to be a better match in terms of the level of education and experience required for the work. In recent months, as the employment environment in the Los Angeles region has experienced dramatic declines, applicants have tended to have much higher education levels and more employment experience than is required for a Bus Operator. While these individuals can successfully complete OJT and qualify for employment, MTA management reports that job retention in this group is lower than for applicants who are a better match in terms of education and experience required.
 - The 217 participants hired by MTA earned a median hourly wage of \$14.38, a 30.7% increase in hourly wages for those who had worked in the six months prior to entering the Bridge Class. 73 of the 217 participants who were hired had been unemployed in the six months prior to entering the Bridge Class.
 - 100% of the 217 employees received benefits at the start of permanent employment.
 - 96.3% of the 217 participants hired by MTA between 2006 and February 2010 were still employed by MTA in March 2010. Only eight of the 217 employees had ceased employment with MTA.
 - 143 participants who enrolled in OJT did not complete the training and were not hired by MTA. CCD was able to obtain post-training employment for 39 of these 143 participants.
 - After OJT, these 39 participants earned a median wage of \$12.00 per hour.
 - 17 of the 39 participants were employed in a driving or transportation-related position with another public or private transportation provider. These 17 participants also earned a median of \$12.00 per hour.
 - The remaining 22 participants were employed in a variety of sectors including customer service, security, and warehousing.

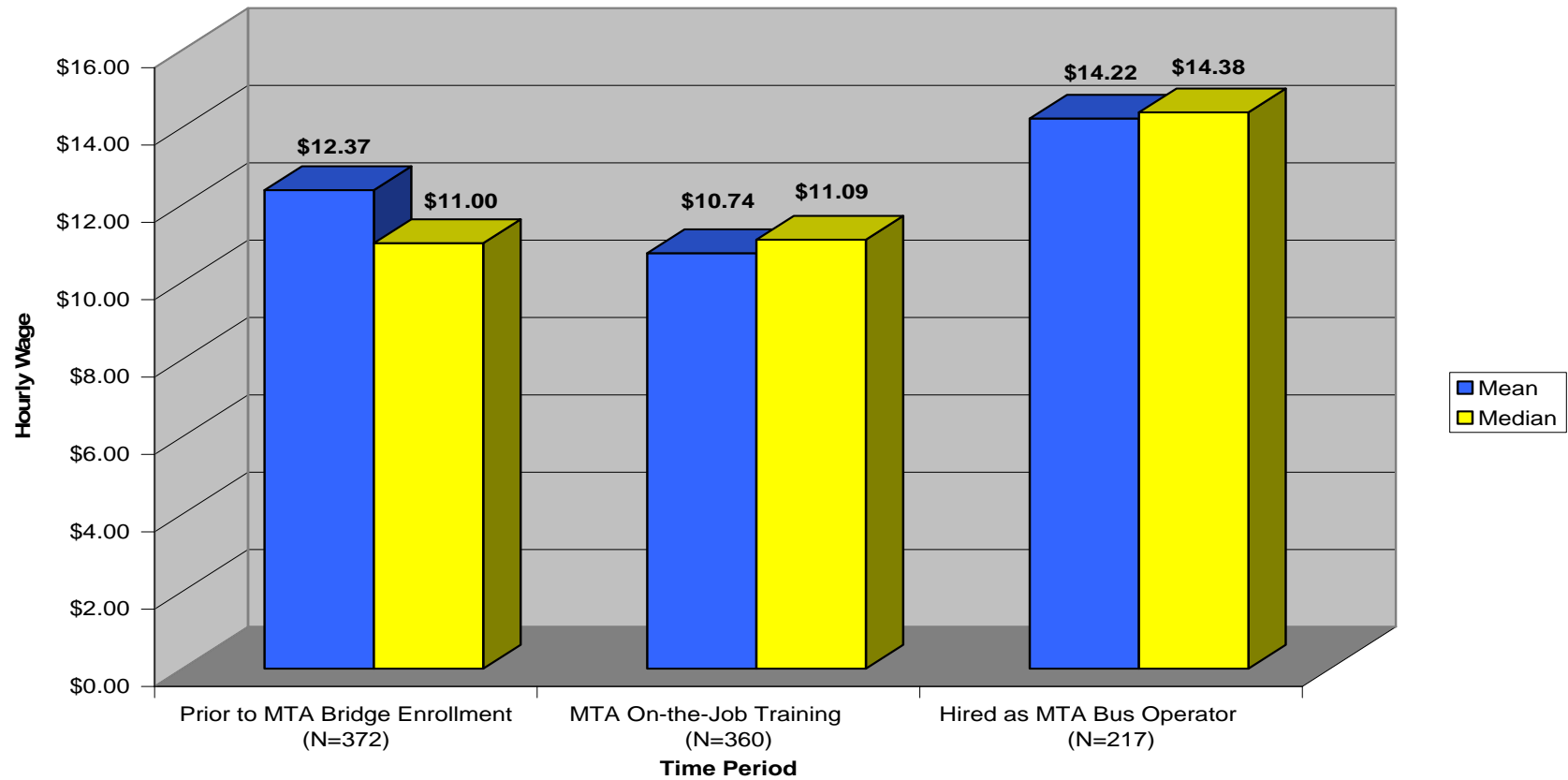
Demographics of MTA Hires

MTA credits the Bridge program with helping expand recruitment and employment to include large numbers of low-income and minority residents who MTA was not able to reach effectively in the past.

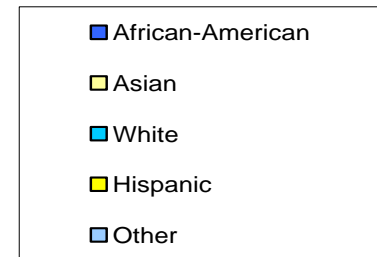
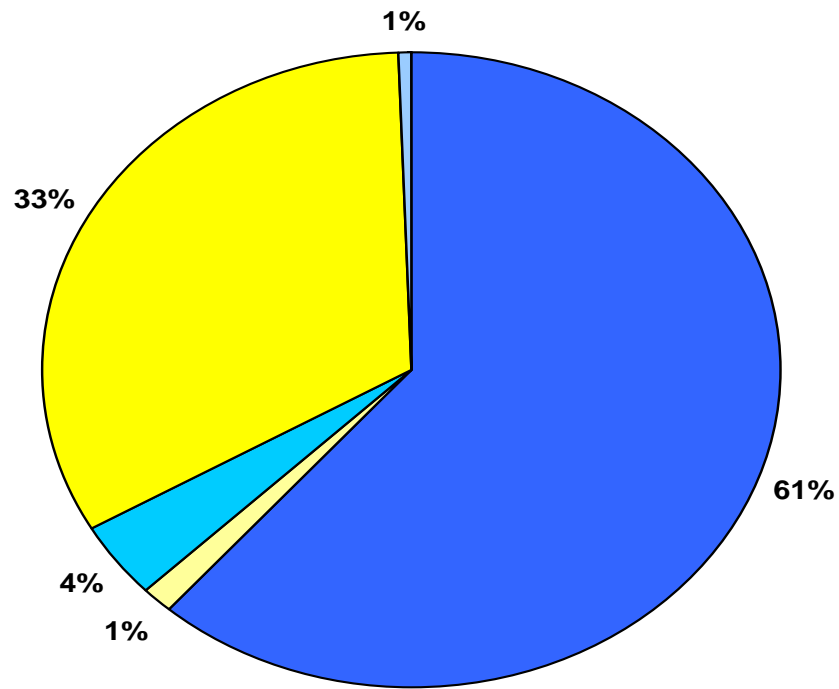
- 89.4% of the 217 students hired by MTA were classified as low-income when they originally enrolled in the Bridge program.
- Women made up 33% of the Bridge training population. But they made up 41.9% of the population who successfully completed OJT and were hired by MTA.

- African-Americans made up 53% of the Bridge training population. But they made up 61.3% of the population who successfully completed OJT and were hired by MTA.
- The Bridge program was completed successfully by both high school graduates and non-graduates. Non-graduates made up 16.4% of the Bridge training population. And they made up 16.1% of the population who successfully completed OJT and were hired by MTA.

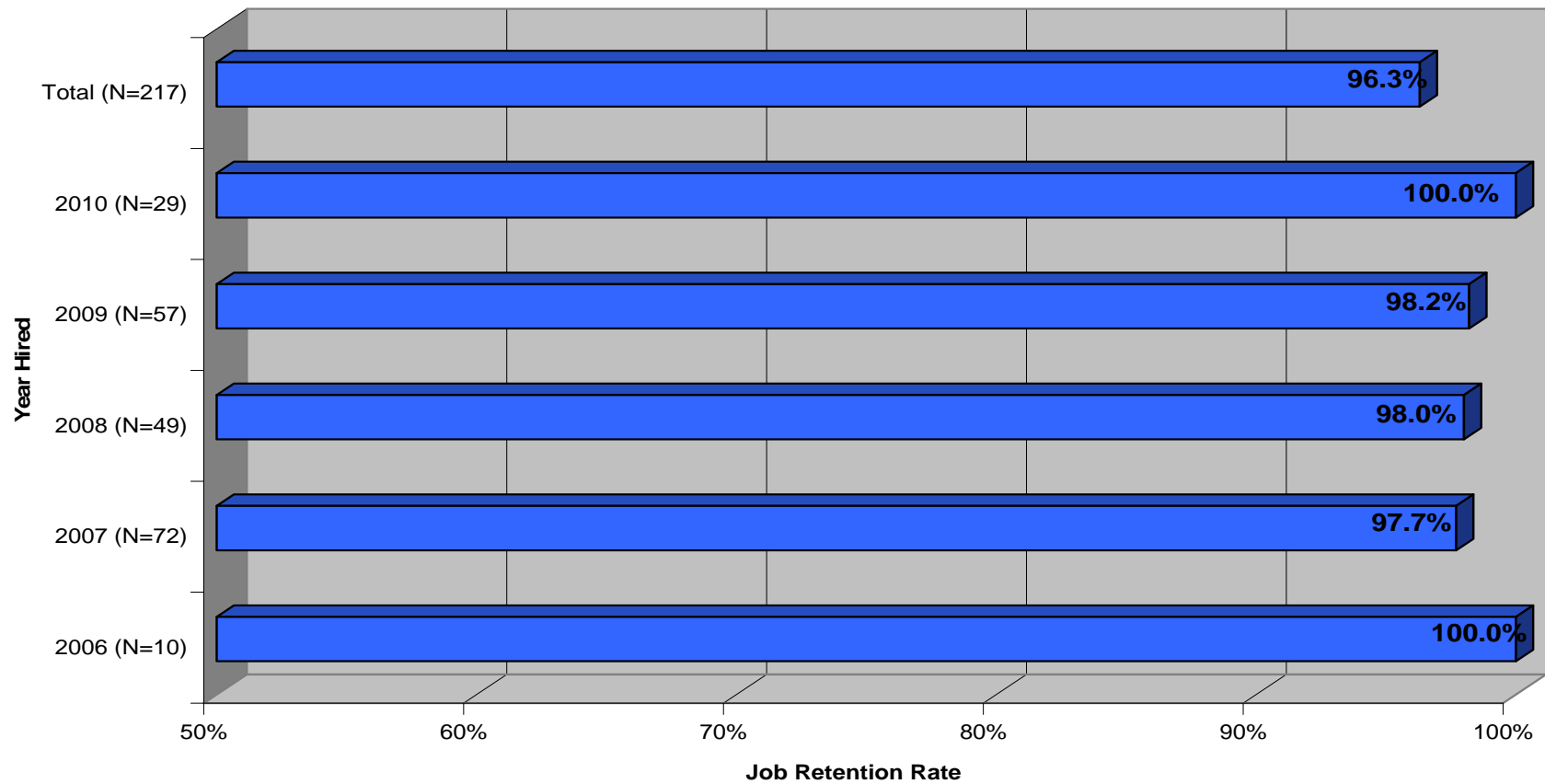
**2006 to 2010 MTA Bridge Participants
Median Hourly Wage Pre-, During-, and Post-Training**



**Ethnicity of 2006 to 2010 MTA Hires
from Bus Operator Bridge Program**



Job Retention of 2006 to 2010 Bridge Participants Hired by MTA
(as of March 2010)



Data Tables

MTA Bus Operator Bridge Program Participant Demographics at Enrollment

GENDER		
	Frequency	Percent
Female	215	33%
Male	436	67%
Total	651	100%

AGE	
Valid	651
Missing	0
Mean	41.9
Median	43

ETHNICITY		
	Frequency	Percent
African-American	345	53%
Asian	42	6.5%
White	43	6.6%
Hispanic	213	32.7%
Multi-race	1	.15%
Other Not Specified	4	.6%
Pacific Islander	3	.4%
Total	651	100%

COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL OR GED		
	Frequency	Percent
No	107	16.4%
Yes	544	83.6%
Total	651	100%

HIGHEST EDUCATION ATTAINED PRIOR TO BRIDGE ENROLLMENT		
	Frequency	Percent
Middle School	13	2%
Some High School	73	11.2%
GED	3	.46%
High School Diploma	464	71.3%
Some College	44	6.8%
Associate's Degree	11	1.7%
Bachelor's Degree	20	3.1%
Master's Degree	2	.31%
No Answer/Missing	21	3.2%
Total	651	100%

REPORTED CRIMINAL HISTORY AT BRIDGE ENROLLMENT		
	Frequency	Percent
No	498	76.5%
Yes	153	23.5%
Total	651	100%

MILITARY VETERAN STATUS		
	Frequency	Percent
NO	599	92.1%
YES	52	7.9%
Total	651	100%

DISABILITY		
	Frequency	Percent
No	649	99.7%
Yes	2	0.3%
Total	651	100%

RECEIVING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AT ENROLLMENT		
	Frequency	Percent
No	554	85.1%
Yes	97	14.9%
Total	651	100%

RECEIVING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS AT BRIDGE ENROLLMENT		
	Frequency	Percent
No	492	75.6%
Yes	157	24.1%
No/UI Benefits Exhausted	2	.31%
Total	651	100%

LOW INCOME <i>(Based on Income in Last Six Months Prior to Bridge Enrollment)</i>		
	Frequency	Percent
No	68	10.4%
Yes	583	89.6%
Total	651	100%

Employment Prior to Bridge Class

The two tables below have information pertaining to Bridge participants' employment status and hourly wage in the six months prior to enrolling in the Bridge program.

EMPLOYED IN LAST SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO BRIDGE ENROLLMENT		
	Frequency	Percent
No	279	42.9%
Yes	372	57.1%
Total	651	100%

HOURLY WAGE IN JOB PRIOR TO BRIDGE ENROLLMENT <i>(Unemployed and \$0 earners not included in calculation)</i>	
Valid—Employed in six months prior to bridge enrollment	372
Not Valid—Unemployed in six months prior to bridge enrollment	279
Mean	\$12.37
Median	\$11.00

Enrollment in MTA Bus Operator Bridge Program and Training Completion

The tables below show the number of participants enrolled in the Bridge program each year as well as the number of participants who passed the background check (making them eligible to enter On-the-Job training).

ENROLLMENT IN BRIDGE BY YEAR		
	Frequency	Percent
2006	175	26.9%
2007	185	28.4%
2008	122	18.7%
2009	135	20.7%
2010*	34	5.2%
Total	651	100%

** Data collection ended in February of 2010. The program ran additional classes in 2010 that are not included in this analysis.*

- **The bridge class was conducted 20 times between 2006 and February 2010.**
- **There was a median of 30 participants in each bridge class.**

FAILED CRIMINAL/DRIVING BACKGROUND CHECK DURING OR AFTER BRIDGE TRAINING		
	Frequency	Percent
No	362*	55.6%
Yes	289	44.4%
Total	651	100%

** These 362 participants, who passed the background check, were eligible for hire into MTA's on-the-job training program.*

Enrollment in OJT, Training Wages, OJT Completion, and Employment with Los Angeles MTA

The tables below show the number of participants entering and completing On-the-Job training with MTA, the wage that participants were paid during this training, the number of participants hired as permanent employees by MTA, the wage they were hired at, and the job retention rates of these employees.

ENROLLED IN ON-THE-JOB TRAINING (OJT) (Includes participants who Passed Bridge Program and Background Check)		
	Frequency	Percent
No	2	0.6%
Yes	360	99.4%
Total	362	100%

OJT HOURLY WAGE			
	Training Wage	Frequency	Percent
	\$10.36	173	48.1%
	\$11.09	187	51.9%
	Total	360	100%
Mean	\$10.74		
Median	\$11.09		

* The OJT wage increased in 2008 from \$10.36 an hour to \$11.09 an hour.

COMPLETED OJT AND HIRED BY MTA (of those enrolled in OJT)		
	Frequency	Percent
No	143	39.7%
Yes	217	60.3%
Total	360	100%

MTA EMPLOYMENT WAGE FOR THOSE HIRED BY MTA			
	Hiring Wage	Frequency	Percent
	\$13.98	98	45.2%
	\$14.38	102	47%
	\$14.59	17	7.8%
	Total	217	100%
Mean	\$14.22		
Median	\$14.38		

- *The hiring wage for Bus Operators increased from \$13.98 to \$14.38 in 2008, and increased from \$14.38 to \$14.59 in 2010.*

MTA HIRING BY YEAR FROM BRIDGE PROGRAM		
	Frequency	Percent
2006	10	4.6%
2007	72	33.2%
2008	49	22.6%
2009	57	26.3%
2010	29	13.4%
Total	217	100%

WORKING AT MTA IN MARCH 2010 (JOB RETENTION)		
	Frequency	Percent
No	8	3.7%
Yes	209	96.3%
Total	217	100%

JOB RETENTION AT MTA IN MARCH 2010 BY YEAR OF HIRE					
			Did not retain job	Retained job	Total
Year Hired by MTA	2006	Frequency	0	10	10
		Percent	0	100	100
	2007	Frequency	6	66	72
		Percent	8.30%	97.70%	100
	2008	Frequency	1	48	49
		Percent	2.00%	98.00%	100
	2009	Frequency	1	56	57
		Percent	1.80%	98.20%	100
	2010	Frequency	0	29	29
		Percent	0%	100%	100
	Total	Frequency	8	209	217
		Percent	3.70%	96.30%	100

Employment Benefits

- **100% of the 217 Hires Received Employment Benefits**

Post-Training Employment of OJT Participants who Did Not Pass OJT

143 participants who enrolled in OJT did not successfully complete OJT and thus were not hired by MTA. The tables below show the post-training employment information for 39 of the 143 participants for whom data was available.

HOURLY WAGE AFTER OJT	
Valid	39
Missing	0
Mean	\$13.27
Median	\$12.00

TRANSPORTATION OR DRIVING RELATED JOB AFTER OJT		
	Frequency	Percent
No	22	56.4%
Yes	17	43.6%
Total	39	100%

Demographics of OJT Completers/MTA Hires vs. Demographics of Bridge Enrollees

The tables below compare the demographics of the 217 participants who were hired by MTA through the Bridge program versus all 651 Bridge participants.

AGE	OJT Completers/MTA Hires	All Bridge Participants
Mean	39.4	41.9
Median	41	43

GENDER	OJT Completers/MTA Hires	All Bridge Participants
	Percent	Percent
Female	41.9%	33%
Male	58.1%	67%
Total	100%	100%

ETHNICITY	OJT Completers/MTA Hires	All Bridge Participants
	Percent	Percent
African-American	61.3%	53%
Asian	1.4%	6.5%
White	4.1%	6.6%
Hispanic	32.7%	32.7%
Other	0.5%	0.6%
Total	100%	100%

EDUCATION AT ENROLLMENT	OJT Completers/MTA Hires	All Bridge Participants
	Percent	Percent
Middle School	0.9%	2.0%
Some High School	12.4%	11.2%
GED	0.9%	0.5%
High School Diploma	70.5%	71.3%
Some College	8.8%	6.8%
AA DEGREE	1.8%	1.7%
BA/BS DEGREE	1.8%	3.1%
None/Missing	2.8%	3.1%
Total	100%	100%

COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL OR GED	OJT Completers/MTA Hires	All Bridge Participants
	Percent	Percent
No	16.1%	16.4%
Yes	83.9%	83.6%
Total	100%	100%

LOW INCOME <i>(Based on Income in Last Six Months Prior to Bridge Enrollment)</i>	OJT Completers/MTA Hires	All Bridge Participants
	Percent	Percent
No	10.6%	10.4%
Yes	89.4%	89.6%
Total	100%	100%

EMPLOYED IN LAST SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO BRIDGE ENROLLMENT	OJT Completers/MTA Hires	All Bridge Participants
	Percent	Percent
No	33.6%	42.9%
Yes	66.4%	57.1%
Total	100%	100%

REPORTED CRIMINAL HISTORY AT BRIDGE ENROLLMENT	OJT Completers/MTA Hires	All Bridge Participants
	Percent	Percent
No	81.6%	76.5%
Yes	18.4%	23.5%
Total	100%	100%

MILITARY VETERAN STATUS	OJT Completers/MTA Hires	All Bridge Participants
	Frequency	Percent
No	90.3%	92%
Yes	9.7%	8%
Total	100%	100%