

Bienvenidos a Metro Program

Background:

On March 24, 2022, a motion was submitted by Directors Garcetti, Solis, Mitchell, Dutra, and Hahn to hire individuals with English as a Second Language. The motion requests Metro to offer flexibility with existing applicant requirements and expand language opportunities beyond the current applicant pool to fight the current Bus and Rail Operator shortage through the Bienvenidos a Metro program.

The Bienvenidos a Metro program will pursue partnerships with external ESL-serving stakeholders and coordinate with Los Angeles County's Internal Services Department to promote hiring opportunities in non-English speaking media and explore opportunities with County agencies, such as the Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) and Office of Immigrant Affairs. In addition, Metro will provide updates and will conduct a feasibility study within the first 12 months of the program launch to expand Bienvenidos a Metro to additional languages to reach the widest Operator applicant pool.

Transit agencies across the board have experienced difficulties in hiring bus operators, but Los Angeles Metro has the opportunity to hire individuals where English is their second language. In Los Angeles County, more than half of the population speaks a language other than English at home, per census data, 38.1% of 18+ adults in Los Angeles County speak Spanish as their first language. According to Census Bureau data, the top five languages spoken at home in LA County other than English are Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Armenian, and Korean. As of July 2022, unemployment rates in LA County are at 4.9%, a slight drop from 5.1% in June 2022, and the difficulty to attract and hire bus operators has increased. We hope to bridge this gap with the Bienvenidos a Metro program, a program that will open Metro to a larger hiring pool. The Bienvenidos a Metro program aims to offer flexibility to expand employment opportunities beyond the current applicant pool to fight the current Bus and Rail Operator shortage.

To better serve the community, Metro is developing a multi-pronged approach to attract candidates with limited English proficiency by providing pathways into a job classification that previously has not been accessible due to the language requirements.

Bienvenidos a Metro:

Through our current application process, most candidates with limited English proficiency do not pass through the interview process and those that are proficient enough to pass the interview process and get hired, struggle to successfully complete our eight-week training program. To address these issues, Metro has partnered with three (3) educational institutions, with pilot programs under development.

LAUSD Adult Learning

LAUSD has an established Integrated Educational Training (IET) that partners a technical (career) instructor with an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher for a hybrid learning experience. Candidates would go through our bus operator training modules along with additional language studies and other soft skills such as note taking and professionalism in the workplace. We are starting the process of developing an MOU with an anticipated start-up between October 2022 and January 2023.

Metro has partnered with workforce centers to inform potential students about Bienvenidos a Metro, where candidates apply through their local workforce center for the LAUSD program and are employed by Metro.

Cerritos College

Cerritos College offers two opportunities. The first is a series of contextualized courses for language learners. Potential trainees would have access to in-person or online courses that support our training program and can assist with more difficult concepts that are not easily translated. Coursework could include subjects such as math and writing skills. This is offered at no cost to the employee.

The second is similar to a work and study apprenticeship program to help the student develop certain basic skills, including language and test-taking skills, needed to be proficient on the job. This program would provide additional support to Metro's bus operator training program.

The college is currently reviewing our curriculum and we will be sending them information on our application process and a list of skill gaps that we are trying to address through these programs.

LA Valley College

LA Valley College has been the long-time host of the bridge (BOTA) program. With the next cohort set to start in late September, we have worked with the college to offer an asynchronous ESL course for candidates that would benefit from the additional assistance.

Internal work:

Internally, the Admin and Development group has worked with Operations Central Instruction (OCI) to interpret learning documents into Spanish to offer as an additional resource to trainees in which Spanish is their native language. The goal is to assist in the learning of concepts and terms that are not easily translatable between English and Spanish. In addition, the new OCI trainee class will be offered to participate in a pilot fast-tracking BAM by introducing bilingual Spanish/English California Driver License (CDL) test preparation. On Tuesday, September 6, 2022, OCI will be piloting this new tool to gauge its effectiveness.

