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## The road to wheel \$ecurity

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It's a tale of two bus drivers -- one with a full tank of pay and benefits, the other running on fumes.

MTA bus driver Glenroy Connor, 52, earned \$72,445 last year with hardly any overtime. He enjoys 11 paid holidays a year, including his birthday. In seven years, he can retire with a pension and health benefits.

Classic Coach tour-bus driver Ken Adams, 64, loves his job, even though the private company pays him \$26,500 less than his MTA counterpart. He gets only eight paid holidays and no pension contributions from his employer.

In the midst of the great recession, the gulf between private employees and government employees grows wider.

While the overall unemployment rate is 9.3 percent, and 9.6 percent in New York City, the rate for public-sector employees is about half that, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

That's because most of the \$787 billion federal stimulus funds was used to save the jobs of public-school teachers and other city employees. President Obama is now asking Congress to pass another \$50 billion to preserve jobs in city and state government.

The increased job protection -- not to mention the better benefits -- isn't lost on bus driver Adams.

"I get more gratification than money, but if I was a young man raising a family, I'd run to the MTA," he said.

His boss, Classic Coach owner Bill Schoolman, is livid that he must fork over an MTA bailout tax of 34 cents for every \$100 of his payroll to subsidize the public agency: "They make it impossible for guys like me to compete," he said.

The difference isn't limited to buses.

Metro-area data compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics show private elementary-school teachers make an average \$34.63 per hour compared to \$49.41 for public school teachers. Private child-care workers make an average \$9.73 per hour, compared to \$13.08 for public workers.

Nurses earn a little more in the private sector, but don't get generous pension benefits, said a nurse at the city's Bellevue Hospital.

"There are two Americas, one for government insiders with gold-plated compensation, and one for the rest of us who survive in the competitive economy," said Cato Institute economist Chris Edwards.

A recent study by Edwards found that workers in the private sector nationwide earned an average \$50,000 salary in 2008, less than the \$59,000 for state and local government workers in similar jobs.

The public employees received an average \$15,700 in fringe benefits, while the private-sector workers' benefits averaged \$9,800.

Public workers also work fewer hours and retire earlier, the study found.

### Private VS. Public

#### PRIVATE

Ken Adams, 64, on the job eight years

**Salary for 2009:** \$46,000

**Paid vacation:** Three weeks

**Paid sick days:** Five a year

**Years before retirement:** Needs to work as long as he's able

**Pension:** None; company offers 401(k)

**Health insurance:** Company pays 25 percent of policy; Uses VA benefits instead

**Paid Holidays:** Eight

**Extras:** \$50 tip on a tour; freebies

#### PUBLIC

Glenroy Connor, 52, on the job 18 years

**Salary for 2009:** \$71,445

**Paid vacation:** Five weeks

**Paid sick days:** 12 a year; unused rolled over

**Years before retirement:** Seven

**Pension:** Half the average of last three years' pay

**Health Insurance:** Contributes 1.5% of salary to MTA-paid plan

**Paid Holidays:** 11, including his birthday

**Extras:** Up to 2 years off with pay if assaulted; free transit pass

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