

Urban Jobs Task Force Calls on Trade Unions to Recruit Minorities Ahead of I-81 Project

By [SCOTT WILLIS](#) & KEVIN FITZPATRICK · JUN 6, 2018 · [waer.org](#)

The Urban Jobs Task Force of Syracuse is circulating a petition demanding trade unions create recruitment and retention programs for minorities and city residents for the upcoming I-81 project. They ask that until this happens, the State Department of Transportation must deny unions a project labor agreement.

President of the Task Force Deka Dancil led activists Tuesday in front of the State Office Building on Washington Street to announce their demands.

“No longer can we or should we stand idly by while watching multi-million dollar projects and improvements being completed in the 9th most segregated city in the country without them benefitting city residents.”

She says trade unions need to start recruiting now so that city residents and minority workers will have a fair chance when construction commences. Genghis Muhammed is a lifelong Syracuse resident who has struggled to find a job despite his qualifications.

“I’m OSHA certified and have a degree in electronics. Despite my training and experience, I have been unsuccessful in finding a job that I’m qualified to do or even a job that just pays a decent wage. It would be a great benefit to me to secure a position on the I-81 project, and I would like a fair chance to do just that”

Despite the fact that minorities make up 50 percent of the city’s population, Dancil says only 10 percent of workers on the ongoing I-690 construction project identify as a minority.

“We recall that I-81 divided our community in the late 1960’s. Today, by integrating the union workforce, we can unite our community”

The Urban Jobs Task Force hopes to have 5,000 signatures by December. They plan to present the petition, along with a Racial Equity Impact Statement, to the Department of Transportation when the office releases its Environmental Impact Statement on the I-81 viaduct project sometime next year.