Last month, HIRE Minnesota delivered a Missing Persons Report to the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to remind the agency that women and people of color are missing from highway construction sites around our state. They are still missing.

A delegation of 20 leaders from HIRE Minnesota entered a Minnesota Department of Transportation highway construction site to search for women and people of color.

“I have sent word for the superintendent of the site to come out so we can speak to him personally,” said Louis King, co-chair of HIRE Minnesota and president and CEO of Summit Academy. “We want to ask him, ‘Where are the people? Where is the representation? And where is the fair opportunity?’”

When the site superintendent did not emerge to answer the delegation’s questions, HIRE Minnesota leaders began inspecting the site for themselves. They did not find any people of color or women working at the job site.

Chaplain Thomas Van Leer said, “Highway construction is going on using federal dollars, but there is no visible change in hiring on federal construction sites. People are still missing. And we’re still looking for those who should be here – and that’s women and people of color.”

Each year, MnDOT gives hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money to private contractors to build and repair our roads, bridges and transitways. MnDOT has set its own goal for 11 percent of its metro-area workforce to be comprised of people of color, yet the agency has repeatedly failed to meet its own goals. In fact, in 2007 MnDOT’s workforce was only 6.9 percent people of color. The agency performed even worse in 2008, only hiring 6.4 percent people of color. According to the last U.S. Census taken in 2000, Minnesota’s population is now comprised of at least 14 percent people of color.

HIRE Minnesota is a coalition of more than 70 community organization that is seeking public investments that grow our economy, provide living wages and pro¬mote healthy communities. As our government makes decisions about how to spend millions of dollars of public funds, HIRE Minnesota is asking that those investments create jobs that benefit low-income communities and communities of color. In addition, HIRE Minnesota is demanding that our government be transparent and accountable in meeting its obligations to our communities. To see a list of organizations involved in HIRE Minnesota, please visit http://www.hiremn.org .