

Citizens and people of faith call upon MnDOT for achieving outcomes in minority hiring and contracts

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ISIAAH, Organizing Apprenticeship Project and PolicyLink released preliminary findings and set of recommendations from a joint report entitled “Equitable Recovery in Minnesota: The Transportation Opportunity.” The report examines how ARRA funds, intended to be invested in communities most impacted by the recession, have actually impacted disadvantaged and low-income people in transportation investments and access to jobs.

At the press conference, Rev. Paul Slack, pastor of New Creation Church and chair of ISIAAH's Jobs and Workforce Development Campaign, challenged legislators to hold MnDOT accountable, “We need to see changed outcomes; the processes that are currently in place are not working. Good intentions are no longer enough for Minnesotans.”

Shireen Malekafzali, Senior Program Associate for PolicyLink presented the preliminary findings and recommendations to the House Transportation and Transit Policy and Oversight Division. She stated, “By distributing ARRA funds through existing formulas and policies, this funding is reproducing the status quo.”

The report revealed:

- Gross underrepresentation of minorities and women in 2900 jobs created by newly funded transit programs.
- Not nearly enough dollars have been allocated for new public transit systems, rather many investments were made in outer ring suburbs.
- Lack of transparent reporting by MNDOT on the goals of achieving minority, and disadvantaged business participation.

Some of the recommendations include:

- Increased investment in affordable and reliable public transportation for low income communities
- Allocating significant resources toward tracking and monitoring or workforce participation—hiring and retention.
- Implement effective consequences for non-compliant contractors
- Allocate ½ of 1% of federal dollars for recruitment, training, placing and retaining minority and women workers.
- Ensure Disadvantaged Business Enterprises are receiving a fair share of the public investment in transportation and infrastructure related business.