

# 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.