

One Million Good Jobs

By Ronald G. Trimmer and Laura Barrett

This is a story of how the Gamaliel Foundation and the Transportation Equity Network (TEN) took to heart author Jim Collins' (*Good to Great*) prescriptions and set about realizing a 'Big Hairy Audacious Goal' of moving one million unemployed, underemployed, people of color, women, and poor people into construction jobs with good pay.

Gamaliel and TEN fought for and won a workforce development amendment to the nation's second biggest spending bill ever, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU), which became law in August of 2005. SAFETEA-LU funds more than \$286 billion in highway and transit spending over six years. The workforce amendment treats highway and transit projects as economic development projects, in addition to being transportation initiatives, and creates job and training opportunities on highway and transit construction for local residents.

The successful workforce development amendment campaign was led by United Congregations of Metro-East (UCM), an affiliate of Gamaliel based in East St. Louis and Illinois, and supported by three key lawmakers—Senators Barack Obama (D-IL) and Kit Bond (R-MO), and Rep. Jerry Costello (D-IL).

Using the ACJC Success Story

The workforce development amendment was based on an earlier ground-breaking program developed by the Alameda Corridor Jobs Coalition, a grassroots organization in California, which won an agreement that guaranteed 1,000 job-training slots for low-income people and reserved 30 percent of the work hours for low-income residents on a \$2.4 billion Rapid Rail project. The program was a tremendous success and put more people to work than projected, saving the state over half-a-billion dollars in welfare, incarceration, and childcare costs.

Using the SAFETEA-LU budget on highways,

SAFETEA-LU Sec. 1920 Transportation and Local Workforce Investment

It is the sense of Congress that Federal transportation projects should facilitate and encourage the collaboration between interested persons, including Federal, State, and local governments, community colleges, apprentice programs, local high schools, and other community-based organizations that have an interest in improving the job skills of low-income individuals, to help leverage scarce training and community resources, and to help ensure local participation in the building of transportation projects.

\$244.1 billion with the ACJC projections, the potential impacts are enormous. One billion in highway expenditures generates 47,500 work years (jobs), so \$244.1 billion should generate 11.6 million jobs. About five million of the jobs will be in supporting industries, such as manufacturing I-beams and steel cables, but at least six million jobs will be in the construction field, and it is not unreasonable to expect that one to two million of them can be set aside for apprenticeship positions to move the unemployed and underemployed into construction careers.

A Shared Platform

Aware that in the past, low-income people, women, and minorities had been left out of highway construction opportunities, TEN came up with the following innovative platform—later adopted by the

A Growing Coalition

At least 17 grassroots groups—also Gamaliel affiliates and TEN members—are working on their own workforce development campaigns. They are:

- **Ohio:** AMOS in Cincinnati, NOAH in Cleveland, and ACTION in Youngstown
- **New York:** ARISE in Albany and NOAH in the Niagara region
- **Missouri:** MCU in St. Louis and MORE2 in Kansas City
- **Illinois:** UCM in East St. Louis and Granite City SSAC in Chicago
- **Indiana:** Interfaith Federation in Gary
- **Michigan:** MIVOICE (statewide), MOSES in Detroit, EZEKIEL in Saginaw, ISAAC in Kalamazoo, and JONAH in Battle Creek
- **Minnesota:** ISALAH in Minneapolis

To join the conference calls, get supportive materials, and bring this campaign to your community, contact: Dr. Ron Trimmer, (618) 604-6216, trimmer@charter.net; or Laura Barrett, (314) 443-5915, laurabarrett@gamaliel.org; or visit www.gamaliel.org.

rest of the TEN network—for city and county ordinances, project agreements, and state policies regarding highway construction:

- Thirty percent of all work hours will be reserved for low-income, women, and minority construction apprentices.
- Half-a-percent of the project budget (or in the case of state policy, federal highway funds) will be used for job training programs and contractor incentives that will include recruitment, mentoring, support services, and pre-apprentice programs.

How to Raise Hell with DOTs

Exactly 50 years after Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of the bus, the ground work for the workforce development program was laid at Gamaliel's 2005 National Leadership Assembly in St. Louis, where 1,200 concerned members rallied to support it. They secured a commitment from a top official at the Missouri Department of Transportation (MODOT) to work with local Gamaliel affiliates to use a pending \$500 million interstate highway construction project to generate as many jobs as possible for low-income people, women, and minorities.

Assembly attendees went home to their states with a mandate to form their own workforce development task forces and, this recommendation from Professor Todd Swanstrom of St. Louis University: "Go and

raise all sorts of hell with DOTs!" These efforts, supported by a monthly TEN conference call for sharing ideas and materials, seemed to be paying off.

In Michigan, Governor Jennifer Granholm has publicly pledged to direct \$4 million in federal highway funds per year towards workforce development. Gamaliel affiliate and statewide TEN member MIVOICE is currently working on fleshing out the policy agreement with Michigan DOT and other stakeholders.

In May 2006, Metropolitan Congregations United, Gamaliel's St. Louis affiliate, worked out an agreement with MODOT that reserved 30 percent of all work hours for low-income, women, and minority apprentices. MODOT will also invest half of one percent of the project budget (\$2.5 million) in incentives, support services, and training to promote workforce development. MODOT has pledged to follow this policy on a project-by-project basis and also to consider a state policy that encapsulates the workforce platform. Currently, MODOT is in negotiations with Gamaliel's Kansas City affiliate on a \$250 million Kansas City project.

Father Richard Creason, past president of Metropolitan Congregations United, characterized the experience this way: "Going into this campaign felt like David against Goliath. By the end of Friday's negotiations, it felt more like the chosen people walking together into the Promised Land. A feeling that we accomplished something unique!" ■

Laura Barrett is the associate director of the Gamaliel Foundation's Metro Equity Department.

Ronald Trimmer is the National Leadership Assembly issues chair at Gamaliel.

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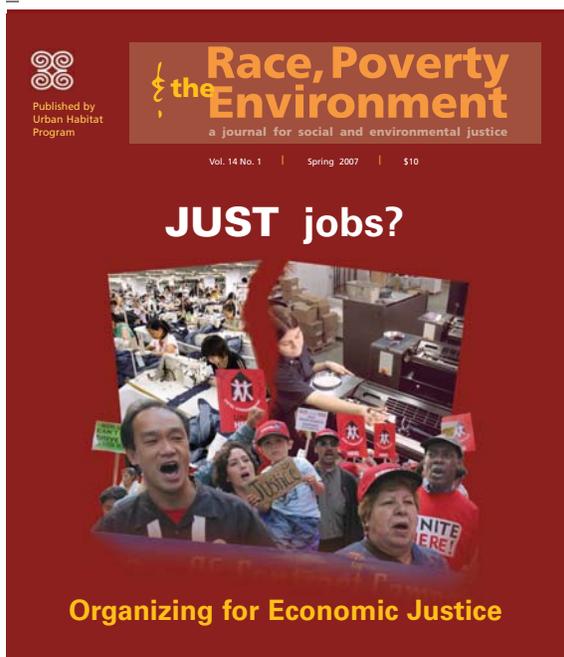
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