



Urban Jobs Task Force's Recommendations

For

Building Equity in the Construction Trades

Based on the Report

Building Equity in the Construction Trades: A Racial Equity Impact Statement

A. Workforce Program Amendments and Modifications

Our qualitative research clearly demonstrates the existence of “social barriers” (obstacles unrelated to a capacity to learn and perform the work) to the completion of pre-apprenticeship and/or employment in the construction trades, particularly:

- Transportation (lack of access to a vehicle and/or insufficient CENTRO bus lines)
- Child care (affordability)
- Need for an income to survive while completing an unpaid pre-apprenticeship program

Transportation barriers prevent qualified residents from reaching apprenticeship / pre-apprenticeship training sites, or reaching work sites (or both).

The lack of affordable child care for low-income residents makes entry into a good-paying construction trade very difficult for a low-income resident who cannot accumulate the disposable income to afford child care during a job transition.

The low wages garnered by Syracuse residents, and the unpredictable hours that often accompany such low wage work, create great difficulties in attending daily job training that could last up to twelve weeks.

UJTF's Four (4) Recommendations: Workforce Programs

1. *Shuttle Service.* Public and private workforce development programs outside the city of Syracuse (including those outside Onondaga County) should provide shuttle bus service (or other transportation) at designated city locations to/from the training site.
2. *Reconfigure bus routes.* CENTRO bus lines should be re-designed to align with access to workforce development sites County-wide.
3. *Child Care Subsidy.* Access to a child care subsidy for anyone accepted into a four week or longer workforce training program.
4. *Program Stipend.* Construction trades pre-apprenticeship programs should provide paid training at a living wage for all enrollees, freeing low-wage workers to focus on their training.

B. Immediate Commencement of Serious Construction Trades Training for Syracuse Residents

Local construction trades training for impoverished Syracuse residents has serious shortcomings, particularly:

- Lack of depth in preparation for the higher-skilled construction trades (e.g., electrical, pipefitters, welders, iron workers)
- Insufficient networking opportunities between interested City residents and the construction trades union leadership
- Absence of an effective pathway to union apprenticeships after high school, or to long-term, new construction work opportunities
- Absence of an effective pathway between current, non-union construction trades training and access to the unions that may be a party to a Project Labor Agreement with the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT)

Racial equity is about applying justice and a little bit of common sense to a system that's been out of balance. When a system is out of balance, people of color feel the impacts most acutely, but, to be clear, an imbalanced system makes all of us pay.

Glenn Harris
President, Center for Social Inclusion

UJTF'S Four (4) Recommendations: Construction Trades Training

1. *Leadership from Departments of Transportation.* NYSDOT and the U.S. DOT should provide \$450,000 in construction trades funding specifically for Syracuse residents, not only for I-81, but beyond.

This request would be consistent with U.S. DOT's recent workforce development grant related to the Colorado Central 70 project, a project that has a budget similar in size to estimates for I-81. Such training should be coordinated with the union trade apprenticeship programs. Such funding should provide access to both (a) union pre-apprenticeship training, and (b) high-skilled union apprenticeship programs: electrician, iron worker, mason, etc.

2. *Direct Pathway to Higher Skills & Work.* Post-secondary, pre-apprenticeship workforce training programs should be coordinated with **both** union apprenticeships and construction developers to create direct pathways for city graduates from pre-apprenticeship programs either to union apprenticeships or construction jobs.
3. *City-based Municipal Hiring Hall.* This tool could greatly benefit developers and contractors when searching for new recruits on a project. This would increase the chances for continuous employment of local residents, and make them aware of new job opportunities.
4. *Leadership from the Offices of Governor Andrew Cuomo, County Executive Ryan McMahan, and Mayor Ben Walsh.* We call upon Governor Andrew Cuomo to make clear to state level and local political representatives and union leaders that the interests of all New Yorkers are best served by construction trades equity in Central New York.

And that our common interest is served by improving the skills of Syracuse city residents, getting them sufficient work hours on new construction, and reducing the immense burden of highly concentrated poverty upon our families.

We also call upon County Executive Ryan McMahan and Mayor Ben Walsh to make clear to our diverse communities the importance of equity in the local construction trades, and the urgency of the moment.

C. Development of a “Big Table” on the Construction Trades

Cleveland, Ohio’s “tripartite meetings” overseeing work on the University Hospital, and San Francisco’s coordinated efforts around “San Francisco Build” show how a “Big Table” concept can incorporate all relevant “voices” around construction trades training. Big Table meetings in Cleveland and San Francisco tackled on-going challenges in construction workforce training. And their constructive dialogues helped get local residents into the trades and gainfully working.

UJTF calls today for the on-going convening of a “Big Table on the Construction Trades in Syracuse and Central New York.” Frequent, regular meetings would develop viable, enforceable plans around:

- (a) union-ready, pre-apprenticeship training for city residents
- (b) community workforce agreement language for upcoming PLAs
- (c) community outreach for the identification, and recruitment, of qualified, local (i.e., Syracuse) workers and potential workers.

UJTF’s Two (2) Recommendations: A Big Table on the Construction Trades

1. *Include All Relevant Voices.* A Big Table should include trade union leaders, community workforce developers, employment equity advocates from Syracuse, and relevant, supportive state-level and local political leaders.
2. *Agreement from All Parties to a Constructive Program.* Convening parties should be committed to producing positive outcomes on employment equity in the construction trades.

An investment in our physical infrastructure is incomplete without a similar investment in our human capital. Anything less is not only economically unsound, it is immoral.

Mark Ridely-Thomas
Los Angeles County Supervisor