Local decision-makers across the U.S. have expressed the need to immediately and sustainably address rising unemployment and the expanding social, economic, and racial inequality in their communities. To accelerate the economic recovery, the New Partnership on Infrastructure (NPI) recommends that Congress 1) **establish a national training center for workforce development and apprenticeship programs for infrastructure**, 2) **declare in any economic stimulus bill that federal competition rules do not prohibit innovative job creation incentives such U.S. Employment Plan (USEP) and local hire in procurements for all infrastructure projects**, and 3) **incentivize state and local agencies to hire growing small and medium sized businesses**. These policy recommendations, will enable local innovation to thrive, and if adopted will:

» Foster economic recovery from the pandemic and strengthen local economies overall;
» Prepare America’s workforce for the future through training and skills development programs,
» Create good infrastructure jobs in communities across the country;
» Advance the growth of small and minority-owned businesses that have been battered by the current economic crisis; and
» Reduce social, economic, racial, and gender inequality.

**THE PROBLEM**

Local officials across the country are contending with how to build a sustained recovery that includes the entire community, including how to get residents back to work into well-paying jobs. Mayors and local infrastructure sector leaders have expressed the need to 1) create good jobs, 2) prepare their workforce for future job opportunities by providing them the needed training for skills development, and 3) support the advancement of local small, and minority- and women-owned businesses in their communities.

“Recovery must include everyone. We need to make sure opportunities and access are available to all.”

**Mayor Quentin Hart**

Waterloo, Iowa
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1:

Establish a national training center for workforce development and apprenticeship programs for infrastructure

Outcome(s): Cultivate a skilled labor force, develop a labor pipeline for infrastructure projects

“If we’re really trying to do something on a big scale, we would stand up centers of learning all over the country and put real monies into infrastructure for it.”

Phil Washington, CEO, LA Metro

Cities need federal leadership and meaningful funding for workforce development and apprenticeship programs to prepare workers for stable well-paying jobs. To date, federal workforce development programs have not successfully met local needs. For example, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Innovative Workforce Development (IWD) grant program is under-funded, issued at irregular intervals, and lacks a clear set of goals. Limited federal training funds should be used to create a national training center for infrastructure, like the National Transit Institute, to set clear national objectives and establish a holistic strategy by providing resources, thought leadership, and training standards. Innovative local training models, like Valley Transit Authority’s (VTA) bus operator apprenticeship program, have proven that good training has a high return on investment. VTA partnered experienced operators with new drivers to provide insights and advice at the start of their career and nearly 100% of program participants were still driving for VTA 18 months later.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #2:

Declare in any economic stimulus bill that federal competition rules do not prohibit innovative job creation incentives such as USEP and local hire in procurements for all infrastructure projects

Outcome(s): Strengthen recovery, create good U.S. jobs, address social, economic, and racial inequality

Local Innovation: Amtrak

In 2014, Amtrak used USEP for a $2 billion procurement for a new set of high-speed trains. The awarded contractor created 400 new jobs in upstate New York at a facility to manufacture the rail cars. Further, the contractor used U.S. manufactured parts from more than 30 states to build the trains, creating an additional 1,000 jobs across the country.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #3:

Incentivize state and local agencies to hire growing small and medium sized businesses

Outcome(s): Advance the growth of small and minority-owned businesses

Small businesses need support to grow and remain competitive, especially post-pandemic. Current federal regulations require that agencies receiving federal funds have a disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) program, which can incentivize small businesses that meet Small Business Administration (SBA) standards to stay small rather than mature into medium-sized businesses. In response to this concern, LA Metro established two local innovations, a Medium-Sized Business Program and a Small Business Prime Program, to support small businesses with tools to “get certified and grow”. The federal government can support scaling these types of local innovations by 1) creating a national Medium Business Size Standard to compliment the Small Business Size Standard and 2) through stimulus dollars, provide start-up capital to stand up 15 (to start) similar local small business prime and medium-sized business programs in agencies across the country in localities most impacted by COVID-19. The country needs and will continue to need a dramatic increase in small business activity and growth, and this is a robust and equitable way to do so.

REFERENCES

Angela Castro, Chief Strategy, Policy & Marketing Officer, Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada; Mayor Kate Gallego, City of Phoenix, AZ; Phil Washington, CEO, Los Angeles Metro; Mayor Quentin Hart, Waterloo, IA; Stephanie Wiggins, CEO, Metrolink; Jobs to Move America; AFL-CIO; Transportation Learning Center; Brandon Neal, Former Director, USDOT Office of Small Business

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