



THE UPSTATE MINORITY ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

OUR MISSION: HARNESSING THE ECONOMIC POWER OF THE MINORITY COMMUNITY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE REGION.

Me'Shae Brooks-Rolling
Executive Director

Essence Britt
Membership Services Specialist

Calvin L. Corriders
President
Regional President,
Syracuse Market
Pathfinder Bank

Juanita Perez-Williams
Vice-President
Regional Director, NYS Upstate Workers'
Compensation

Laura Cueva
Treasurer
President/CEO
Interior Innovations

Bishop Ronald Dewberry
Founder & CEO
Center of Hope International, Inc.

Windell Gray
President & CEO
Landon & Rian Enterprises Inc.

Natasha Newbury
Audit & Accounting Manager
Dermody, Burke & Brown, CPAs, LLC

Tim Penix
Vice President
SUNY Educational Opportunity Center

Dr. Emad Rahim PHD, DM, PMP
Kotouc Family Endowed Professor and Chair,
Bellevue University

Laiza Semidey
Syracuse Surge Workforce Manager
CenterState CEO

Tai Ngo Shaw
President
CNY Uniforms Plus

Rob Simpson
President & CEO
CenterState CEO

Sheena Solomon
Executive Director
The Gifford Foundation

Hasan Stephens
Founder & Executive Director
Good Life Philanthropic
Youth Foundation

October 14, 2021

Mr. Mark Frechette, P.E.
Project Director
New York State Department of Transportation, Region 3
333 East Washington Street
Syracuse, NY 13202

Mr. Rick Marquis
Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration Leo W. O'Brien Federal Building 11A
Clinton Avenue, Suite 719
Albany, NY 12207

Dear Mr. Frechette and Mr. Marquis:

The Upstate Minority Economic Alliance is the only minority chamber of commerce in the 16-county region of Central and Upstate New York. Our primary interest in I-81 is advocating on behalf of minority construction contractors. The Community Grid alone is an estimated \$2 billion-dollar proposition. Just one fraction of this magnanimous project will benefit minority entrepreneurs and business owners in general and minority contractors specifically.

Notwithstanding workforce development, UMEA implores the NYS Dept. of Transportation to ensure a fair and equitable process whereby DBEs (federally-certified disadvantaged business enterprises) have an equal opportunity to bid as a subcontractor to the prime contractors. These sub-primes will require support services, and UMEA has members—many of whom are MWBE-Certified—who stand ready to assist; thereby recycling revenues circulated in the community and further boosting the local economy.

It has been historically documented that I-81 adversely affected Black and LatinX communities when the highway was built through public housing. Let's not make the same mistake again. Provide these contractors with an opportunity to build generational wealth as an antidote to generational poverty and contribute to the local and regional economies as they rebuild the highway for the betterment of the *entire* community.

Sincerely,

Me'Shae Rolling
Executive Director

115 WEST FAYETTE STREET | SYRACUSE, NY 13202 | 315.314.8074
WWW.UPSTATEMEA.COM | INFO@UPSTATEMEA.COM