

# METRO IAF ORGANIZING LEADS TO \$15 BILLION VICTORY FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT

Organizing from the ground up was key to winning funding for the Washington Metro Area Transit Authority (WMATA) for the first time in history. This \$500 million/year victory is slated to create \$15 billion in improvements. Without this funding, deferred maintenance left the 40-year-old WMATA system teetering on what transit experts called a 'death spiral': poor services causing declining ridership, thus causing even worse service.

The crisis threatened the ability of 1.7 million riders a day to get to work and school, threatened good, middle-class transit jobs, and threatened the economic vitality of the entire region. Some cynics argued it would be impossible to achieve a deal without slashing worker benefits and handing our public transit over to multi-national corporations. Metro IAF leaders were not going to stand on the sidelines, so they stood up with riders and workers and got results.

## STRENGTHENING THE BASE

Metro IAF engaged the power base of our five DMV-region organizations and our 200 member institutions to call for **good transit** and **good jobs**. We held dozens of actions with hundreds and at times thousands of residents and elected officials across all three jurisdictions. We allied with the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), which has 18,000 members in the region and a 100-year organizing history. The ATU brought the power and voices of bus and train operators, maintenance personnel, and mechanics.

Metro IAF affiliates held actions in DC, Maryland, and Virginia to call for public officials' support. "Because of your energy and what you did last year," said VA Gov. Northam at a 1,300+ person Metro IAF action in VA, "Metro now has a dedicated source of revenue. Virginia put \$154 million a year on the table. Washington and Maryland followed suit. That is because of you."



600+ person Metro IAF transit action in Washington, DC



Deacon Daniels reunites with ATU Leader JC Campbell at an action. Daniels is a WIN leader with Holy Redeemer and ATU member who taught Ms. Campbell how to operate a bus

# PRIVATIZATION = POVERTY

Nearly 2 million private sector employees working for federal government contractors make \$12 or less per hour, earning wages too low to support a family. That's more than the number of low-wage workers at Walmart and McDonald's combined.

DATA FROM DEMOS REPORT  
"UNDERWRITING BAD JOBS"

## FIGHTING PRIVATIZATION

In the WMATA funding deal, some powerful business leaders and members of congress called for a federal control board to pave the way for privatization. Under the guise of "efficiency" and "savings," they began a race to the bottom, with companies competing to save money by lowering wages and benefits and cutting corners on safety and service. Metro IAF stood in solidarity with the ATU when they blew the whistle on the private company at the DC Circulator and unearthed an internal DC Government report finding that 95% of buses were unsafe.

## VICTORIES

Together the ATU-Metro IAF coalition resulted in:

- WMATA funding deal without the threatened mandates of a federal control board, privatization, or destruction of frontline workers' retirement security
- Raised wages for DC Street Car and DC Circulator workers from poverty to living wages
- Standing with Metro Access workers as ATU organized to raise benefits and starting wages from poverty level to \$16+/hour
- Improved wages/benefits of hundreds of workers



1200+ person Metro IAF transit action in Montgomery County, Maryland



**There is still work to be done** as the WMATA General Manager has moved to contract out some core bus services. He is also exploring privatization of rail for the first time in the history of any US public transit system. Metro IAF will continue to bring its history of organizing victories—from rebuilding neglected neighborhoods with Nehemiah housing to historic investments in public transit—to prioritize the fight against privatization.