

MAJOR VICTORY FOR GENESIS: CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINT SAVES \$70 MILLION IN STIMULUS FUNDS FOR TRANSIT

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GENESIS, the California Bay Area regional affiliate of the Gamaliel Foundation, turned out hundreds of members to the meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) last February to demand that \$225 million in stimulus money be used for existing transit service instead of for an unnecessary airport connector. Transit in the Bay Area has been reduced by more than 30% in the past ten years. This has had a severe impact on low-income, minority and transit dependent communities.

As a result of an effective organizing campaign, GENESIS and its allies successfully won a commitment to return \$155 million back to transit but the MTC gave the remaining \$70 million to a projected half-billion dollar connector between BART and the airport.

After failing to gain the attention of the MTC, Genesis and two allied organizations – TransForm and Urban Habit - filed a Title VI Civil Rights complaint with the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) last September. Public Advocates, a successful California public law and advocacy firm filed this complaint on our behalf and represented us in it. The complaint asserted that this decision violated the Civil Rights requirements of the law and the rights of low-income and minority residents.

As a result of the FTA's investigation, they issued a strong and unprecedented letter to both MTC and BART agreeing with our position and stating that the MTC has failed to show the impact of this connector to low-income and minority residents. They further informed the MTC that they must reassign the \$70 million by March 5, 2010 or lose it.

On Wednesday, January 27, 2010, GENESIS will turn out their members once again to the MTC meeting to demand the \$70 million be assigned to transit, as it was initially intended.

Rev. Scott Denman, Chairperson of GENESIS, stated, "We have repeatedly told the MTC and BART that building an airport connector at the expense of the poor is immoral. To take \$70 million in federal stimulus money away from existing transit options to build what critics have called "star trek to the airport" lacks basic common sense. The faith community and their allies are outraged that money would be taken away from those who have trouble affording bus tickets and given to those who have no trouble affording airline tickets. Fortunately the FTA is paying attention to this affront to Civil Rights and holding BART and the MTC accountable. We want those funds to be returned to support existing transit."

Next, GENESIS will ask the MTC to invest in free bus passes for all students to get to school, the library, the park and after school programs. Our "Get Aboard With Out Youth" Summit will be held on Sunday afternoon, February 28, 2010 from 3-5 p.m. at Corpus Christi Catholic Church, 322 St. James Drive, Piedmont (AC Transit bus line #18).