

2023 NYSAMPO Conference

I-81 Viaduct: Where We've Been and Where We're Going



May 9, 2023

The I-81 Viaduct: Where We've Been and Where We're Going

- ❑ The I-81 Viaduct Today
- ❑ The 15th Ward – Urban Renewal and I81
- ❑ The I-81 Challenge
- ❑ The Alternatives
- ❑ The Community Grid



I-81 Viaduct Today

Project Area



I-81 Viaduct Today



I-81 Viaduct Today

Interstate 81 Engineering Issues

Infrastructure Deficiencies



Safety



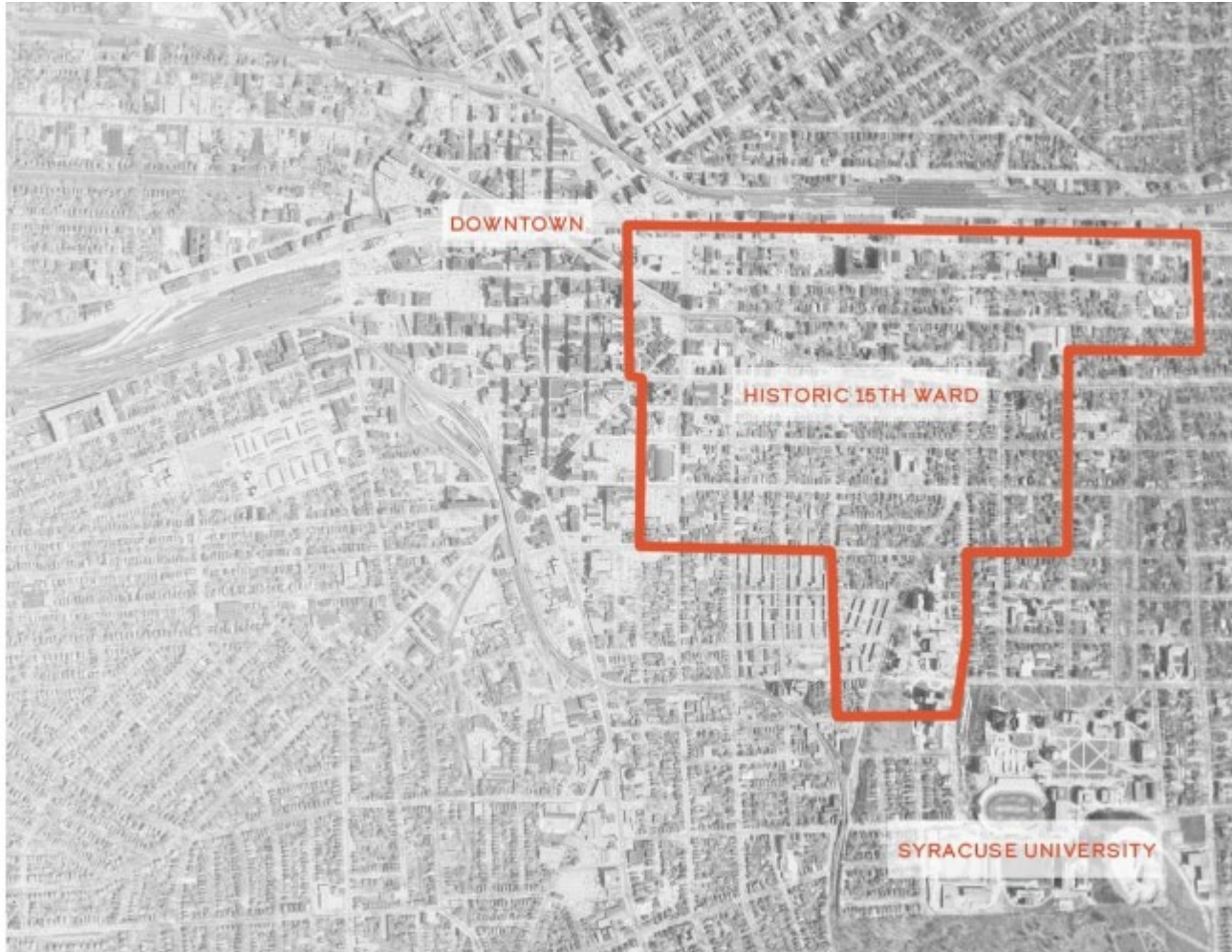
Geometrics



Mobility



The 15th Ward – Urban Renewal and I81



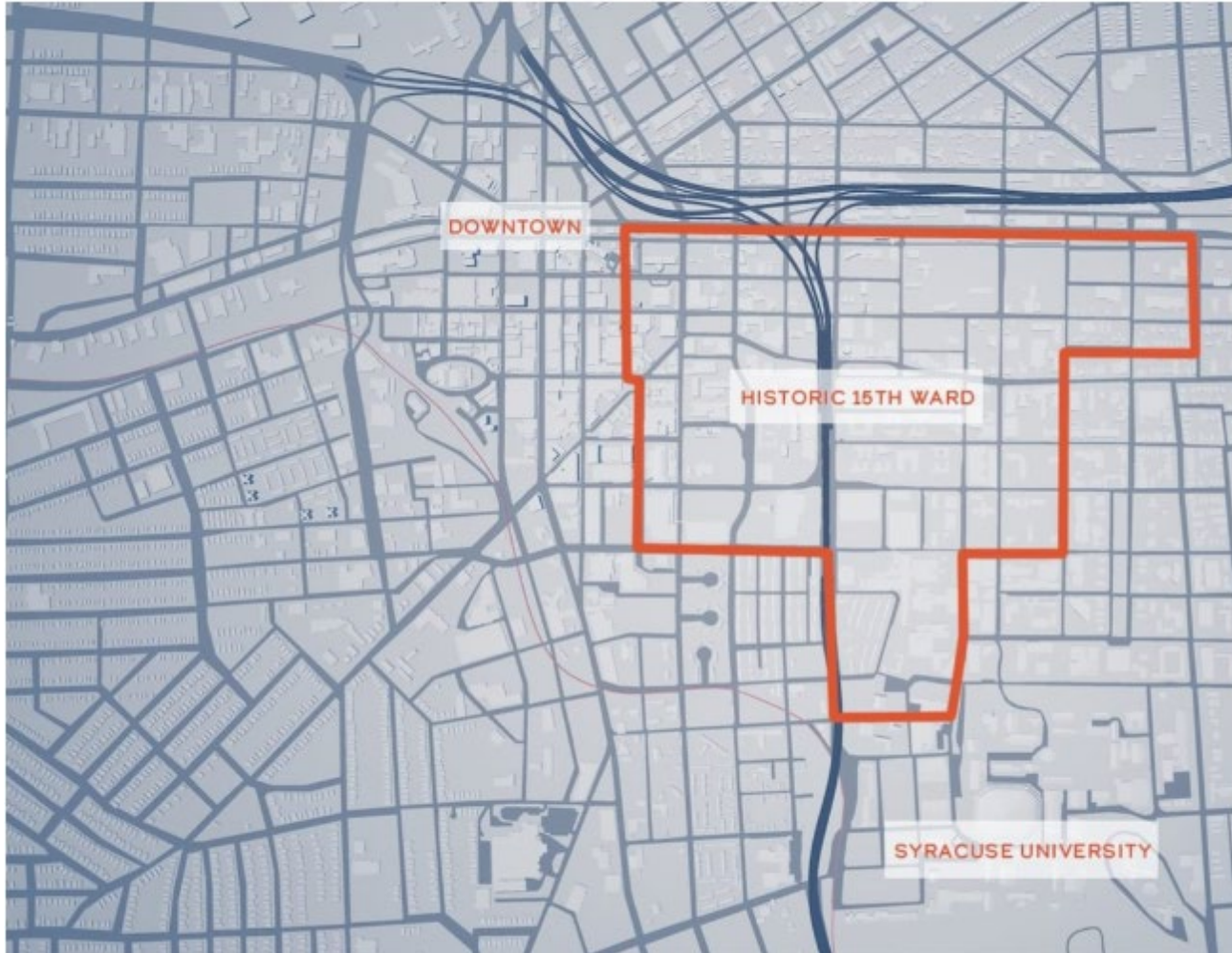
- Half-square-mile area where the city’s Black and Jewish people built a thriving community
- Placed here after racially focused housing policies implemented – “redlining”
- Pioneer Homes – built in 1937, first public housing project in New York State
- By 1950 – eight of every nine black residents in Syracuse lived in the 15th Ward
- Close knit community with thriving businesses such as restaurants, taverns, hotels, beauty parlors, barber shops, night clubs.

The 15th Ward – Urban Renewal and I81

- ❑ The Federal Highway Act of 1944
- ❑ The Federal-Aid Highway Acts of 1954 & 1956
- ❑ I-81 Original Construction in Syracuse, NY
 - 1958- decision made to locate a proposed interstate highway on an elevated structure along Almond Street
 - I-81 was constructed in 3 stages, opening between 1959 & 1969



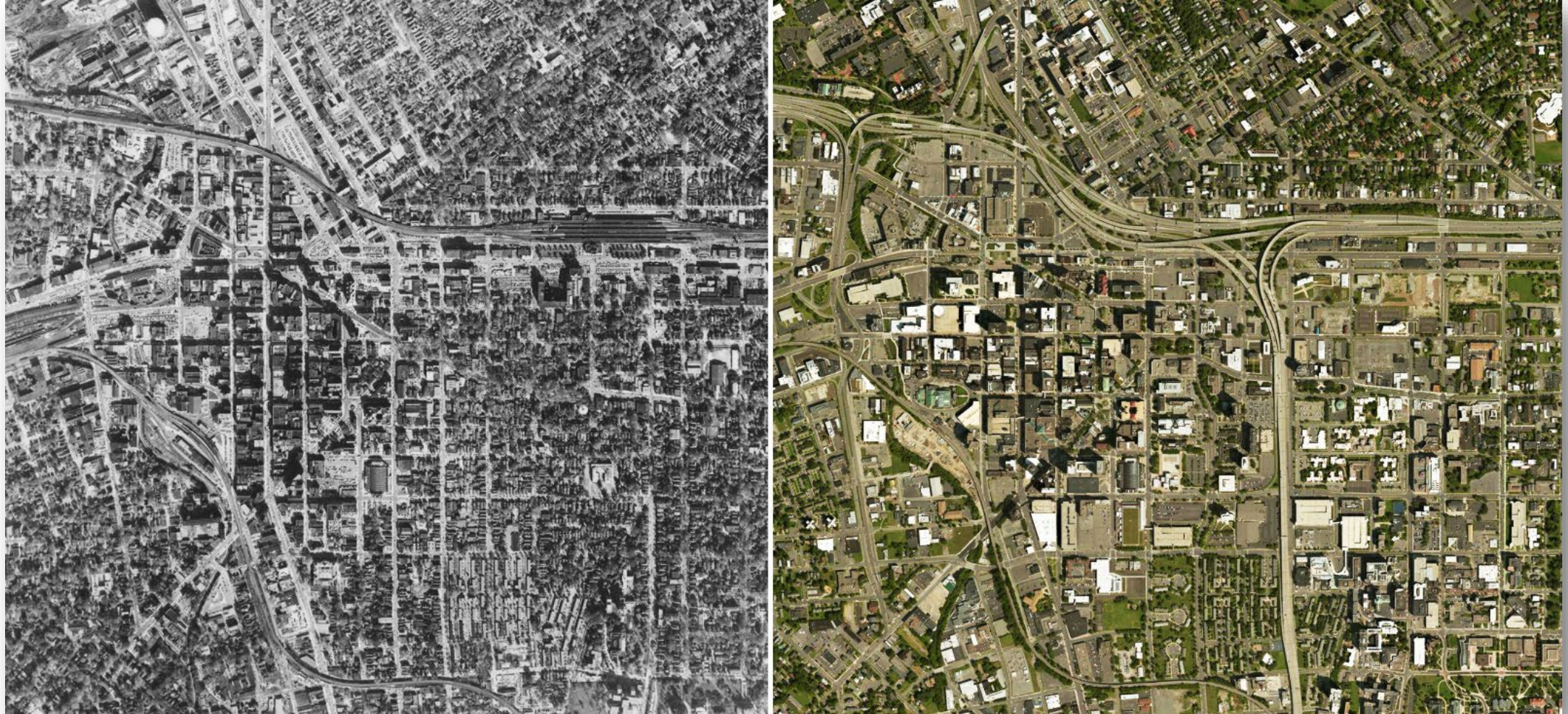
The 15th Ward – Urban Renewal and I81



- During urban renewal efforts – many parts of the 15th ward demolished for expanded central business district
- In 1964 city began to bulldoze neighborhood to make way for I81
 - “twin in justices” – forced to live there, then forced to leave
- 400-500 businesses torn down from I81 and urban renewal
- Pocket of concentrated poverty
- Syracuse is 186th largest city and ranks as one of highest poverty rates in nation

The 15th Ward – Urban Renewal and I81

Historical Impacts



The 15th Ward – Urban Renewal and I81

1967 I-81 in Syracuse, NY



Gallery Search Results - General Highway History - Highway History - Federal Highway Administration (dot.gov)

Looking South



Department of
Transportation

The I-81 Challenge



The official decision-making process, *The I-81 Challenge*, is being led by two entities, the New York State Department of Transportation and the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC), the region's metropolitan planning organization (MPO). Together, these two entities are trying to engage a broad cross-section of community members in developing and evaluating options for the future of this vital corridor.

<http://www.thei81challenge.org>

The I-81 Challenge

The timeline...

☐ 2010

- SMTC releases “Case Studies for Urban Freeways:
- I-81 Challenge website launched – www.thei81challenge.org
- WCNY hosts a 3-part series on the I-81 Challenge – “The History”, “The Plan”, “the People Speak”

☐ 2011

- Community Liaison Committee & Municipal Liaison Committees are formed
- NYSDOT issues first technical document “Physical Condition Analysis”
- Public workshops held – in person and virtual
- Newsletters released, Facebook page started, blog launched
- SMTC releases videos
- Community input is published by SMTC and NYSDOT

☐ 2012

- Public Meetings held (in-person & virtual)

☐ 2013

- Public Meeting held (in-person & virtual)
- NYSDOT publishes I-81 Corridor Study
- Technical Document #2 – Strategy Development and Evaluation Issued

The I-81 Corridor Study



Prepared by New York State Department of Transportation

In partnership with the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council and Federal Highway Administration

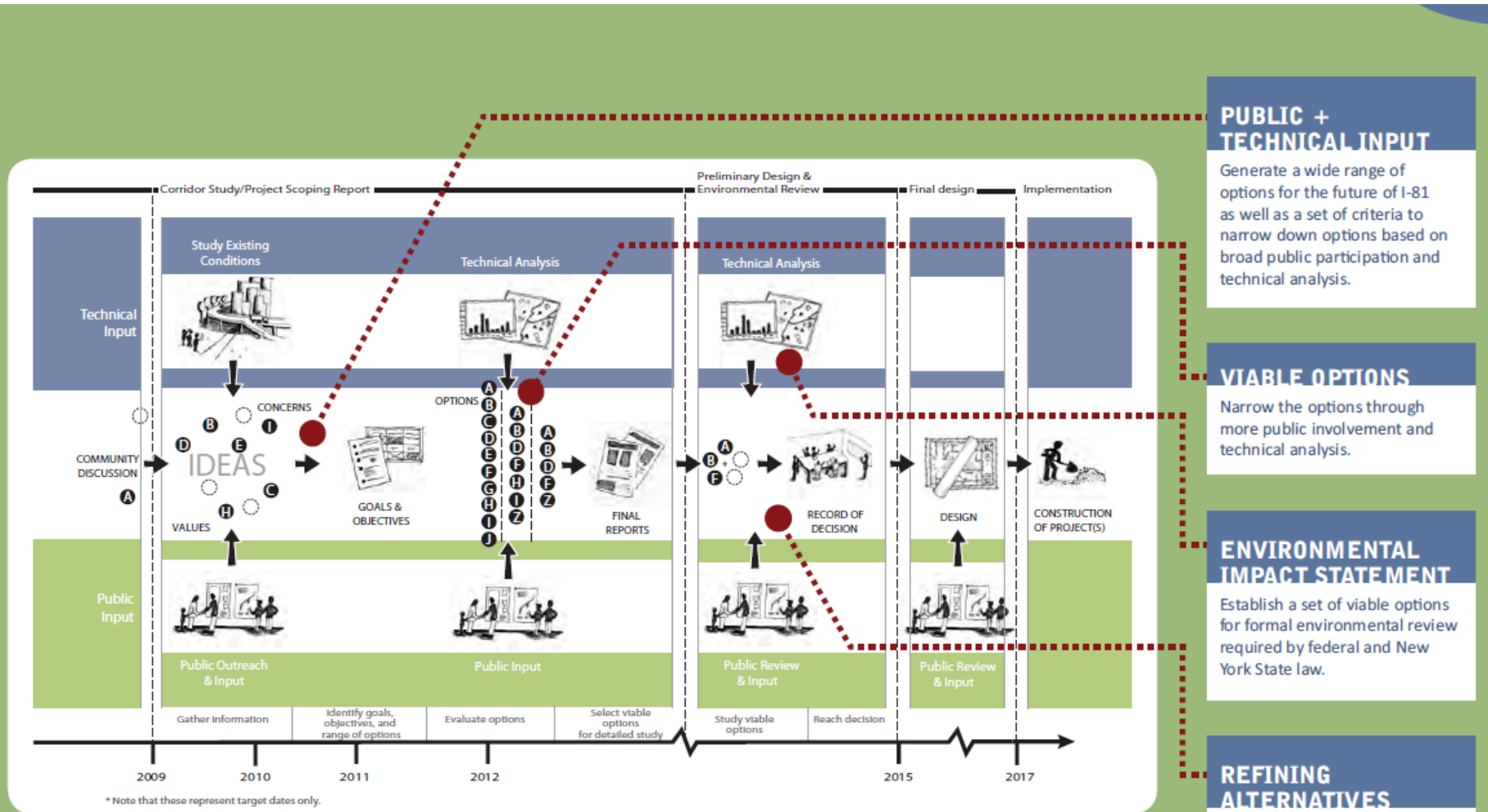
July 2013



Department of
Transportation

The I-81 Challenge

Planning Process & Alternatives

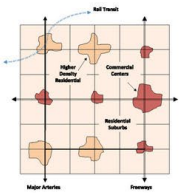


The I-81 Challenge

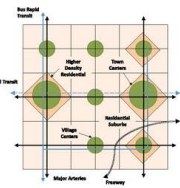
Planning Process & Alternatives

Transportation modeling

You've probably seen or heard about models throughout your life – whether physical models such as a train or a building or more abstract models like those used to give us weather forecasts. What they have in common is that they represent real world objects or processes.



We also use models in transportation planning. These models are a series of complex mathematical equations that represent the choices, decisions, and behavior of thousands (or millions) of individual travelers.



HOW DO THINGS

Ever heard that new road will take X number of minutes? Or that building will cut travel time by Y%? Ever wondered how they know that?

It all comes from a model.

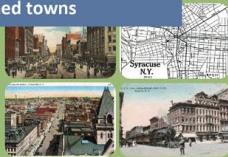


MODELS HELP

- Know where, when, and how people are traveling
- Understand what transportation needs are and in the future
- Evaluate different investments to meet those needs
- Determine the impacts of different strategies and investment system performance, travel time, and land use

How we got here

Transportation often defined towns



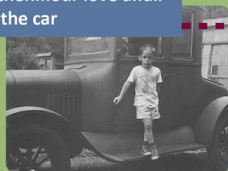
Streetcars helped turn towns to cities



Transit fueled larger cities' growth



And then...our love affair with the car



GROWTH AND TRANSIT

- The American dream in the early 20th century
- Transportation development
- Transportation form - of development

Unprecedented

And the Post-World War II Interstate System

Cities began to feel the effects

What should the solution for I-81 accomplish?

The first step in identifying what should ultimately happen with I-81 is determining what is important for us as a region and the role we want I-81 to play in our future.

In the many conversations we have had with communities, elected officials, and other stakeholders, certain key goals have emerged.



The study goals that we have heard far include:

- Improve public safety
- Enhance the transportation network
- Enhance region-wide mobility
- Maintain or improve economic opportunities
- Support community quality of life
- Preserve or enhance environmental health
- Exercise fiscal responsibility
- Share the burdens and benefits of any solution equitably

What do these goals really mean?

Here are some initial thoughts, but we need your input, too!

IMPROVE PUBLIC SAFETY

- Reduce accident occurrences to at or below the statewide average for similar facilities
- Improve the safety of alternative modes of transportation (pedestrian, bicycle, transit)

SUPPORT COMMUNITY QUALITY OF LIFE

- Encourage sustainable land use patterns within the city and county
- Enhance local connectivity (such as linking University Hill with downtown)
- Encourage smart growth: sustainable regional land use patterns that minimize suburban sprawl which increases demand for infrastructure and services
- Improve the visual built environment through context sensitive design that contributes to roadside/street ambience, community character and public safety
- Promote other planning and development visions and initiatives (county, city, and region)

ENHANCE THE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

- Eliminate structural deficiencies
- Improve existing geometric design
- Identify alternative mode improvement in the vicinity of I-81

PRESERVE OR ENHANCE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

- Support local, regional and state environmental initiatives
- Maintain or improve air quality (overall emissions and odor)
- Minimize air quality and noise impacts on adjacent neighbors
- Minimize impacts on designated community landmarks and historic resources
- Minimize storm water impacts and improve water quality

ENHANCE REGION-WIDE MOBILITY

- Improve peak period mobility and reduce delay on the highway system (primary, secondary and city streets)
- Preserve regional mobility by maintaining travel times
- Improve access to key destinations (i.e. the airport, hospitals, and downtown businesses)
- Improve connectivity of alternative modes of transportation (pedestrian, bicycle, transit)

EXERCISE FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Minimize capital costs by ensuring that transportation system investments are cost effective
- Minimize long-term operation and maintenance costs

MAINTAIN OR IMPROVE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- Maintain or improve economic opportunities by addressing multi-modal access
- Improve transportation system efficiency, reliability and reduce travel costs

SHARE THE BURDENS AND BENEFITS OF ANY SOLUTION EQUITABLY

- Share the burdens of impacts during construction and long-term across stakeholders (e.g. suburbs, adjacent neighborhoods, low-income communities, Onondaga Nation)
- Share the benefits across stakeholders (e.g. suburbs, adjacent neighborhoods, low-income communities, Onondaga Nation)

The I-81 Challenge

Planning Process & Alternatives

Public involvement for The I-81 Challenge

[Back to TOC](#)

Input directly from the public has also been critical for the progress of *The I-81 Challenge*. More than 2,000 people have directly participated through the various public participation activities. To date, our work has included:



PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

- In May 2011, the SMTC and NYSDOT hosted the first series of public workshops
- More than 700 people participated in person, and more than 250 participated in the "virtual" workshop on the project website
- The workshop summary is available on the project website: <http://www.thei81challenge.org/>

FOCUS GROUPS

- The SMTC and the NYSDOT convened 23 focus groups throughout our region
- A total of 176 stakeholders participated



COMMUNITY EVENTS

- The SMTC and the NYSDOT have presented or distributed project information at community events throughout the region

SMALL GROUPS, COMMUNITY MEETINGS

- 21 organizations accepted the SMTC's offer to discuss *The I-81 Challenge* at community meetings

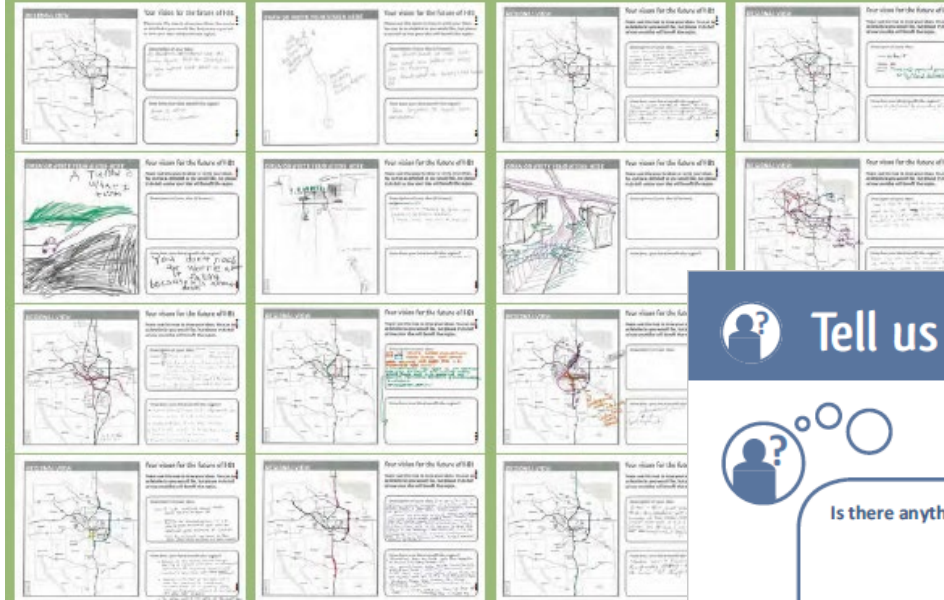


QUESTIONNAIRES

- Two questionnaires allowed more than 1,000 people to answer questions about numerous topics, including their use of I-81 and desired goals for the future of the highway
- The questionnaire summary is available on the project website: <http://www.thei81challenge.org/>

Your visions for I-81

[Back to TOC](#)



Tell us what you think

[Back to TOC](#)



Is there anything missing from this strategy?

The I-81 Challenge

Community Consensus

Jobs



Pedestrian/
Bicycle/
Transit



Economic Growth



Sustainability/Livability



Department of
Transportation

The I-81 Challenge

Corridor Study- July 2013

Initial Strategies – vision from the public

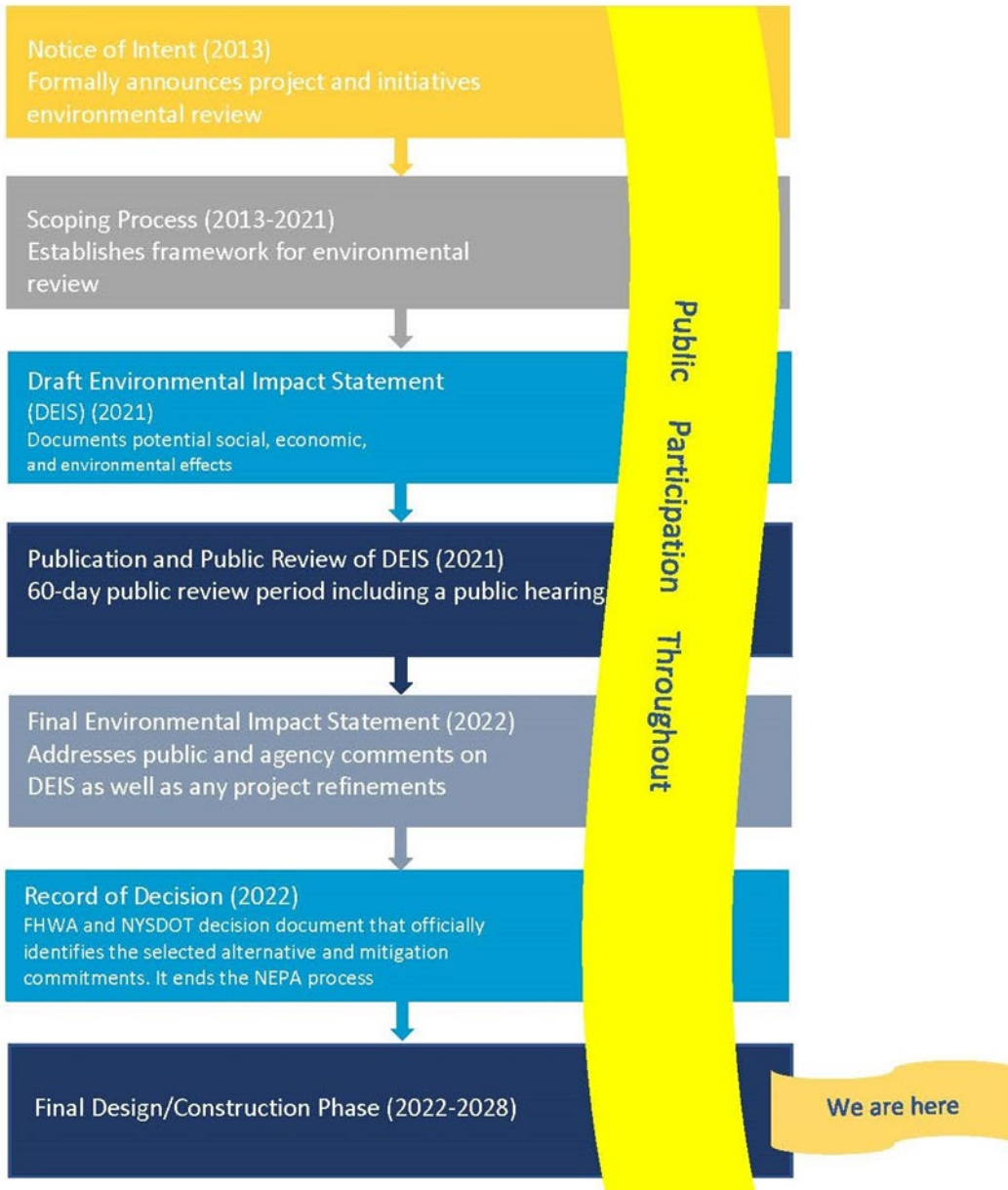
- Rebuild the viaduct
- Remove the Viaduct
- Replace the Viaduct

Strategies Evaluated

- No Build Strategy
- Rehabilitation Strategy – restores bridges and pavement to “state of good repair” for 30+ years
- Reconstruction Strategy – new viaduct and interchanges to current highway standards
- Boulevard Strategy – removes the viaduct, changes to I81/I481 interchanges
- Tunnel Strategy – removes viaduct and lowers I81 to below grade
- Depressed Highway Strategy - removes viaduct and buries I81



The I-81 Challenge



NEPA Process Timeline

August 2013 – FHWA issued NOI to prepare an EIS

November 2013 – FHWA & NYSDOT prepared Scoping Initiation Package

2013 & 2014 – FHWA and NYSDOT held public scoping meetings

June 2014 – FHWA & NYSDOT prepared Draft Scoping Report

April 2015 – FHWA & NYSDOT issued Final Scoping Report

July 2021 – FHWA & NYSDOT published DDR/DEIS → Public comment period of 90 days included both virtual & in-person meetings. More than 8,000 comments received.

April/May 2022 – FHWA & NYSDOT published FDR/FEIS, ROD

The Alternatives



No Build



Viaduct






Community Grid



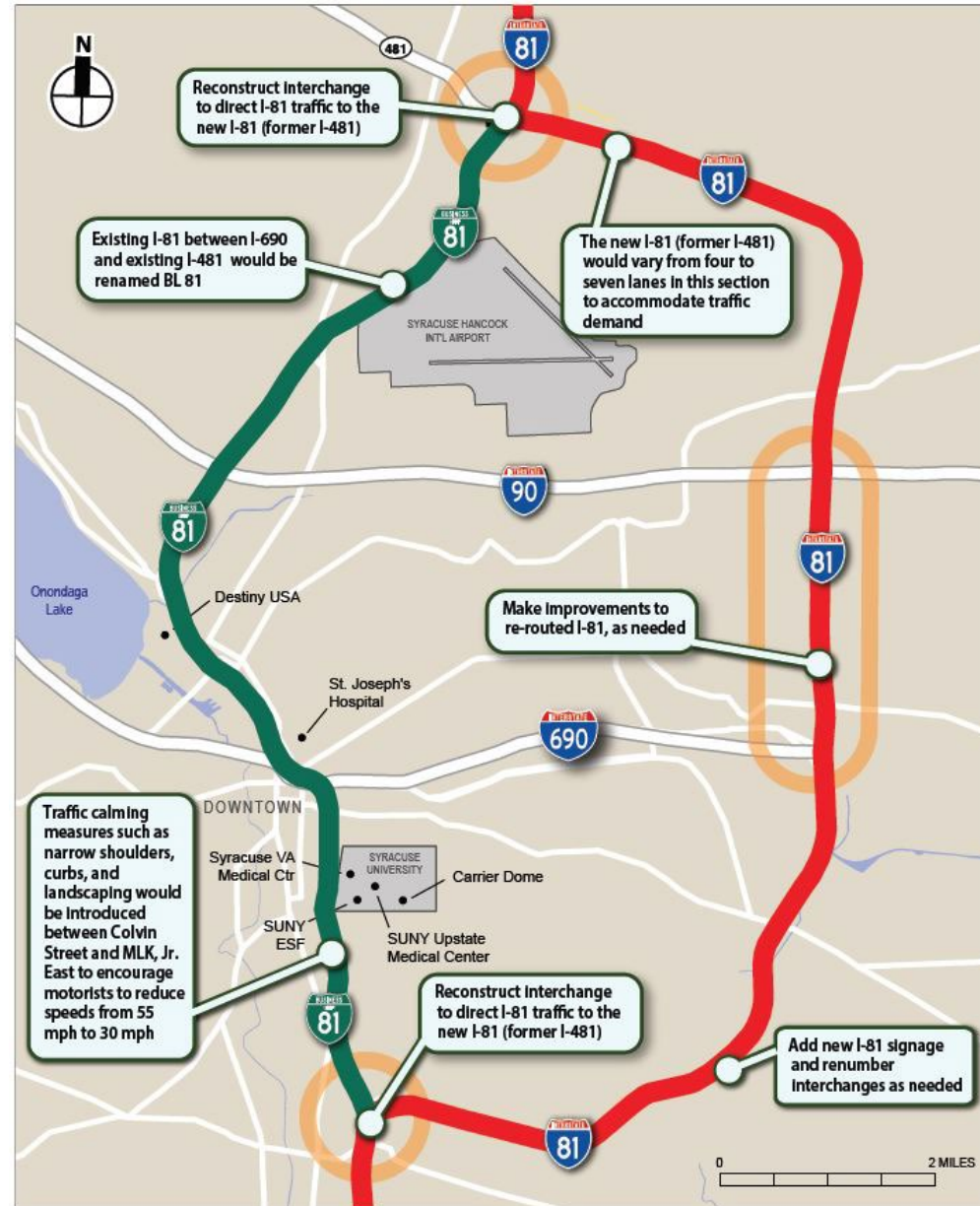
Tunnel

The Alternatives

Summary of Build Alternatives

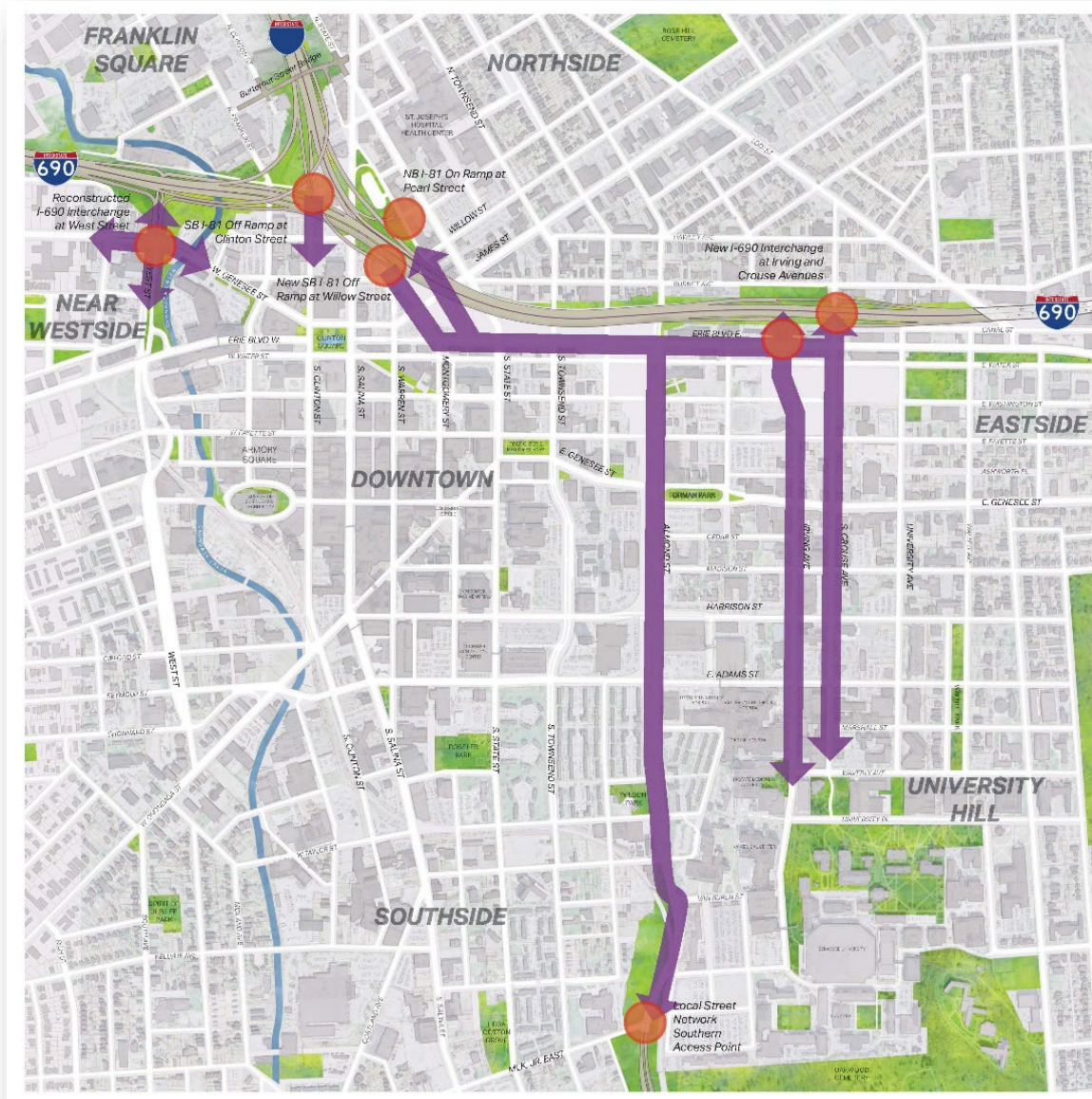
	Community Grid	Viaduct	Tunnel
Cost	\$2.25 billion	\$2.4 billion	\$4.9 billion
Project Duration	6 Years	7 Years	11 years
Building Takings	4	24	22
Reconnects Community/ Facilitates Economic Development	High	Low	Medium
Enhances Safety	High	Medium	Medium
Supports Health Across All Policies	Yes	No	No
Annual Operating/ Maintenance Costs	Average	Average	High
			

The Community Grid



The Community Grid

Community Grid Alternative: Activating the Street Grid



The Community Grid

I-690/Crouse, Irving & Lodi



The Community Grid

BL 81 Southern Section



MLK Elementary School



Van Buren Street Roundabout

The Community Grid

I-690 at West Street



Existing West & Genesee Street

Community Grid, West & Genesee Street

The Community Grid

Rebuild I-690

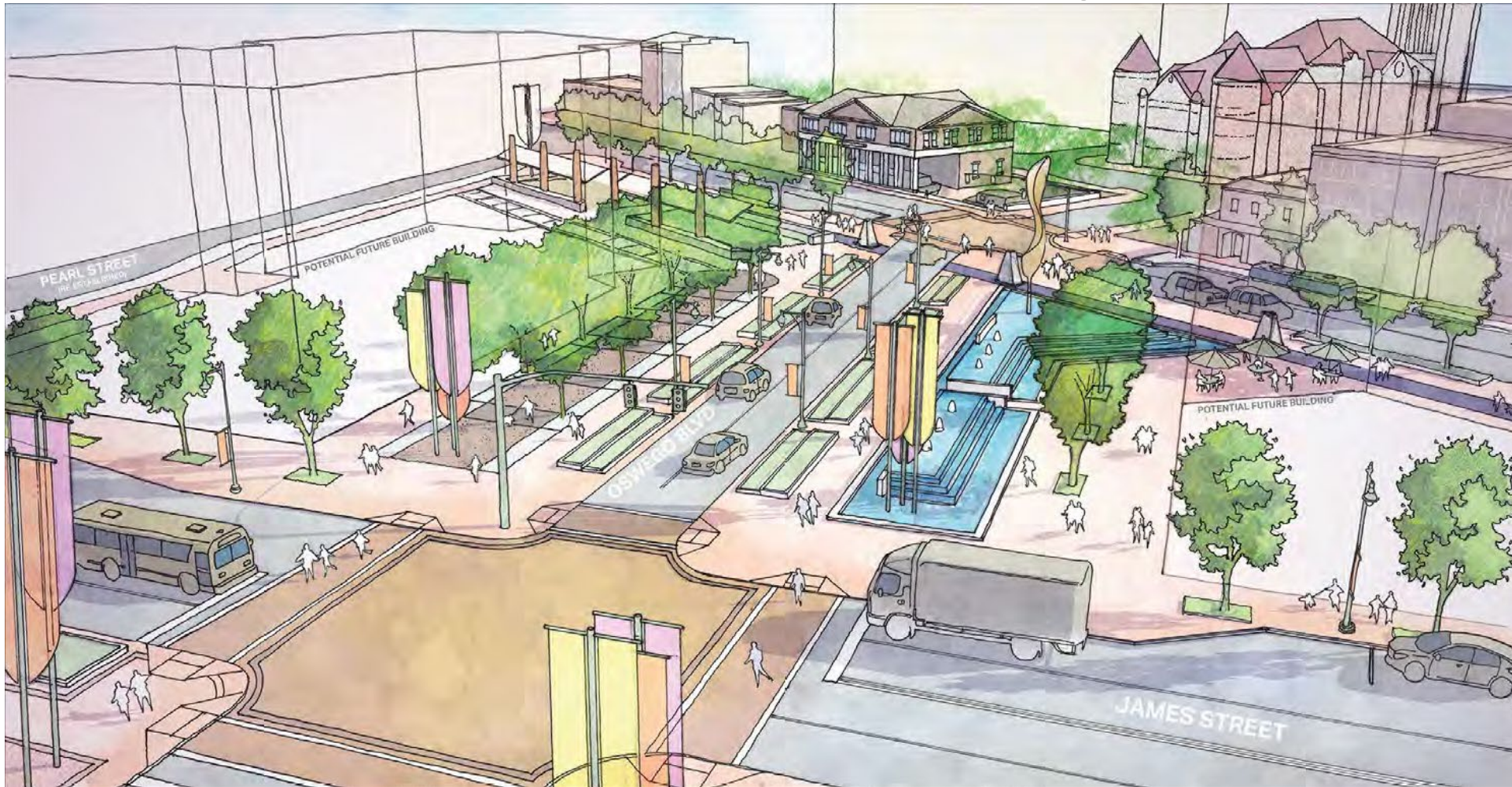


Creekwalk Enhancements



The Community Grid

Northern Business Loop 81



Oswego Boulevard & James Street

Phase 2- Contract 8

Business Loop 81 Southern Section



Existing Pioneer Homes



Community Grid BL 81 Pioneer Homes

The Community Grid

Business Loop 81 Southern Section



Existing Almond & Adams Street



Community Grid BL 81 & Adams Street

The Community Grid

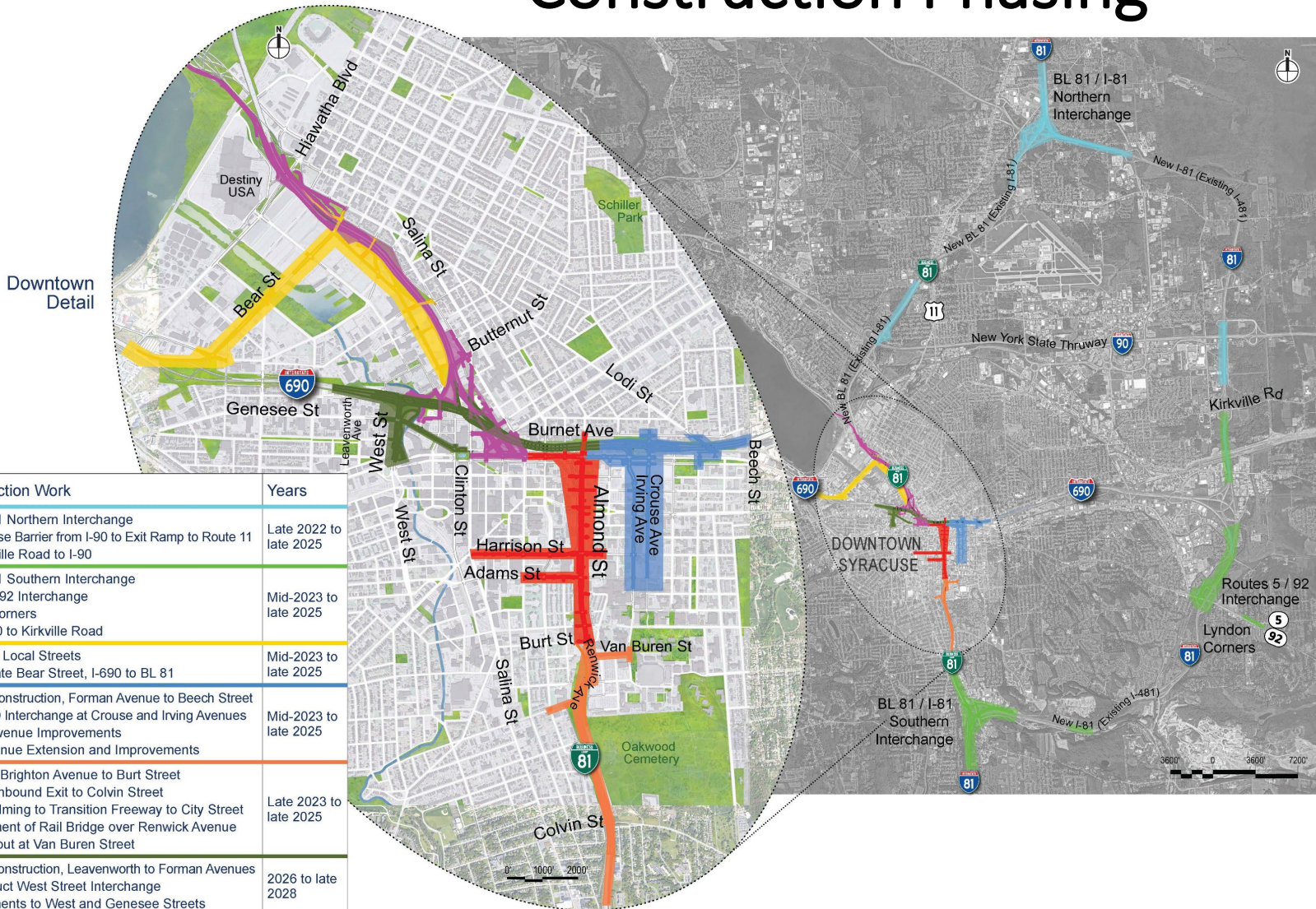
Business Loop 81 Southern Section



Community Grid BL 81 & Harrison Street

The Community Grid

Construction Phasing

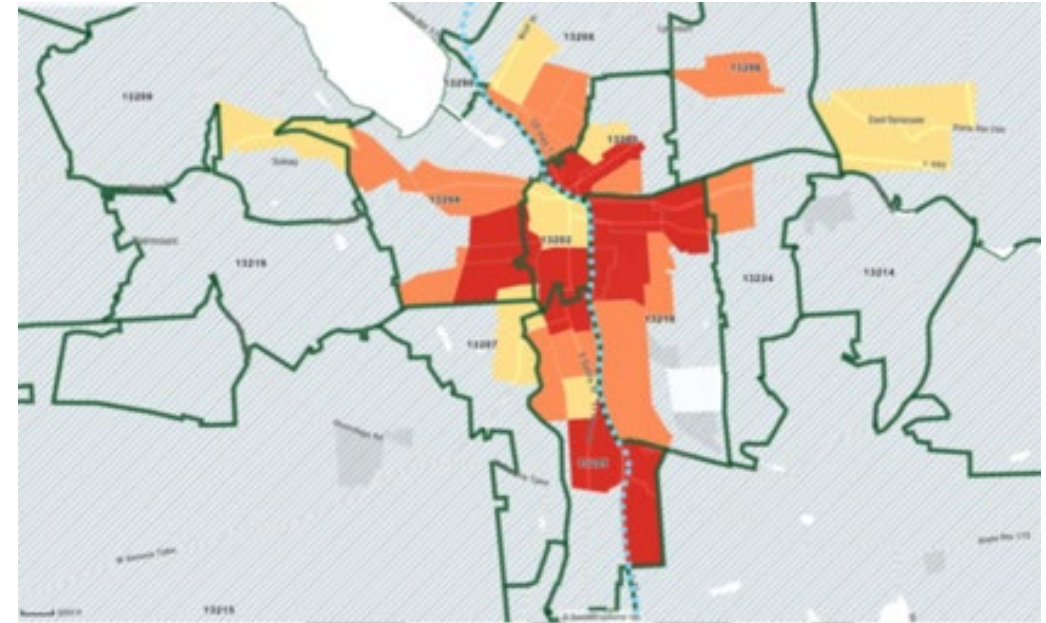


Contract Number	Construction Work	Years
1	BL 81/I-81 Northern Interchange BL 81 Noise Barrier from I-90 to Exit Ramp to Route 11 I-81 Kirkville Road to I-90	Late 2022 to late 2025
2	BL 81/I-81 Southern Interchange Routes 5/92 Interchange Lyndon Corners I-81 I-690 to Kirkville Road	Mid-2023 to late 2025
3	Northside Local Streets Rehabilitate Bear Street, I-690 to BL 81	Mid-2023 to late 2025
4	I-690 Reconstruction, Forman Avenue to Beech Street New I-690 Interchange at Crouse and Irving Avenues Crouse Avenue Improvements Irving Avenue Extension and Improvements	Mid-2023 to late 2025
5	BL 81, E. Brighton Avenue to Burt Street New Northbound Exit to Colvin Street Traffic Calming to Transition Freeway to City Street Replacement of Rail Bridge over Renwick Avenue Roundabout at Van Buren Street	Late 2023 to late 2025
6	I-690 Reconstruction, Leavenworth to Forman Avenues Reconstruct West Street Interchange Improvements to West and Genesee Streets	2026 to late 2028
7	BL 81, I-690 to Hiawatha Boulevard New Bear Street Interchange	2026 to late 2028
8	Almond Street, Burt Street to Burnet Avenue Improvements to Adams and Harrison Streets	2026 to late 2028

Local Hiring Preference

WorkSmartNY Syracuse Build Collaborative

- Syracuse Build
- SUNY EOC
- CenterState CEO
- Association General Contractors
- Northern and Central Building Trades
- Urban Jobs Task Force
- CNY Works
- Department of Labor
- City of Syracuse
- Onondaga County
- FHWA
- Onondaga Nation



- Participation Goal – 15%
- Targeted Areas
- Minimum Qualifications
 - Tier 1 & Tier 2
- Incentive Payment Rate
 - Tier 1 - \$20/hour
 - Tier 2 - \$30/hour

The I-81 Viaduct: Where We've Been and Where We're Going



I81.dot.ny.gov

