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 I-81
- The I-81 Challenge
- The Alternatives
- The Community Grid
I-81 Viaduct Today

Project Area

To Canada

To Tennessee
I-81 Viaduct Today

Interstate 81 Engineering Issues

Infrastructure Deficiencies

Safety

Mobility

Geometrics
The 15th Ward – Urban Renewal and I-81

- 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
- 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
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
Historical Impacts

The 15th Ward – Urban Renewal and I81
The 15th Ward – Urban Renewal and I81

1967 I-81 in Syracuse, NY

Looking South
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](http://www.thei81challenge.org)

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 Challenge
Planning Process & Alternatives

PUBLIC + TECHNICAL INPUT
Generate a wide range of options for the future of I-81 as well as a set of criteria to narrow down options based on broad public participation and technical analysis.

VIABLE OPTIONS
Narrow the options through more public involvement and technical analysis.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
Establish a set of viable options for formal environmental review required by federal and New York State law.

REFINING ALTERNATIVES
Further refine options through a formal environmental review process—ultimately leading to a decision and a project or projects that can be implemented.
The I-81 Challenge

Planning Process & Alternatives

Public involvement for The I-81 Challenge

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**
  - Featuring detailed project maps and public input opportunities
  - More than 1,500 people have participated in 12 workshops across the region

- **Community Events**
  - The project team hosted events to gather public input on the project
  - More than 350 people attended these events

- **Small Groups**
  - More than 1,000 people have participated in small group meetings

Your visions for I-81

Tell us what you think

Is there anything missing from this strategy?
The I-81 Challenge

Community Consensus

Jobs

Pedestrian/Bicycle/Transit

Central New York Rising
A regional plan to generate robust economic growth and community development in Central New York.

Economic Growth

Sustainability/Livability
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
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Community Grid</th>
<th>Viaduct</th>
<th>Tunnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost</strong></td>
<td>$2.25 billion</td>
<td>$2.4 billion</td>
<td>$4.9 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Duration</strong></td>
<td>6 Years</td>
<td>7 Years</td>
<td>11 years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Building Takings</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reconnects Community/Facilitates Economic Development</strong></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enhances Safety</strong></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supports Health Across All Policies</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Operating/Maintenance Costs</strong></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
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The Alternatives
The Community Grid

- Reconstruct interchange to direct I-81 traffic to the new I-81 (former I-481)
- Existing I-81 between I-690 and existing I-481 would be renamed BL I-81
- The new I-81 (former I-481) would vary from four to seven lanes in this section to accommodate traffic demand
- Make improvements to re-routed I-81, as needed
- Traffic calming measures such as narrow shoulders, curbs, and landscaping would be introduced between Calvin Street and MLK Jr. East to encourage motorists to reduce speeds from 55 mph to 30 mph
- Reconstruct interchange to direct I-81 traffic to the new I-81 (former I-481)
- Add new I-81 signage and number interchanges as needed
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
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract Number</th>
<th>Construction Work</th>
<th>Years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>BL 81-81 Northern Interchange and BL 81 Noise Barrier from I-690 to Exit Ramp to Route 11</td>
<td>Late 2022 to late 2025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>BL 81-81 Southern Interchange and Routes 5/92 Interchange</td>
<td>Mid-2023 to late 2025</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lyndon Corners, I-81-I-690 to Kirkville Road</td>
<td>Mid-2023 to late 2025</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Northside Local Streets, Rehabilitate Bear Street, I-690 to BL 81</td>
<td>Mid-2023 to late 2025</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>I-690 Reconstruction, Forman Avenue to Beech Street</td>
<td>Mid-2023 to late 2025</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>New I-690 Interchange at Crouse and Irving Avenues</td>
<td>Mid-2023 to late 2025</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Irving Avenue Extension and Improvements</td>
<td>Mid-2023 to late 2025</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>BL 81, E. Brighton Avenue to Burt Street</td>
<td>Mid-2023 to late 2025</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>New Northbound Exit to Colvin Street</td>
<td>Mid-2023 to late 2025</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Traffic Calming to Transition Freeway to City Street</td>
<td>Late 2023 to late 2025</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Replacement of Rail Bridge over Ranwick Avenue</td>
<td>Late 2023 to late 2025</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Reconstruct West Street Interchange</td>
<td>Late 2023 to late 2025</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Improvements to West and Genesee Streets</td>
<td>Late 2023 to late 2025</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>BL 81, I-690 to Hiawatha Boulevard</td>
<td>Late 2023 to late 2025</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>New Bear Street Interchange</td>
<td>Late 2023 to late 2025</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Almond Street, Burt Street to Burnet Avenue</td>
<td>Late 2023 to late 2025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Improvements to Adams and Harrison Streets</td>
<td>Late 2023 to late 2025</td>
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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