The Draft Design Report/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DDR/DEIS) documents the social, economic, and environmental effects of the Interstate 81 Viaduct Project and contains analysis to support a finding by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) pursuant to the Section 4(f) of the U.S. DOT Act. The purpose of the I-81 Viaduct Project is to address the structural deficiencies and non-standard highway features while creating an improved corridor through the City of Syracuse that meets the transportation needs and provides the transportation infrastructure to support long-range planning efforts. The project alternatives consist of the No Build Alternative, the Viaduct Alternative, and the Community Grid Alternative. FHWA and the New York State Department of Transportation will consider all comments received on this DDR/DEIS.

S.1 INTRODUCTION

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has prepared this Draft Design Report/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DDR/DEIS) for the Interstate 81 (I-81) Viaduct Project (the “Project”) in accordance with the requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality’s regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 CFR §1500-1508), the FHWA’s Environmental Impact and Related Procedures: Final Rule (23 CFR §771), the NYSDOT Procedures for Implementation of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (17 NYCRR Part 15), and the NYSDOT Project Development Manual.

The Project is classified as a NEPA Class I project in accordance with 23 CFR 771. NEPA Class I projects require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to determine the impact that project alternatives would have on the environment. FHWA, serving as the Federal Lead Agency, and NYSDOT, serving as Joint Lead Agency, are progressing the development of the EIS. In accordance with NYSDOT’s State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) regulations, the Project is classified as a “non-Type II” action, indicating that it has the potential for significant environmental impacts or substantial controversy on environmental grounds. In accordance with 17 NYCCR Part 15, given that a Federal EIS is being prepared, NYSDOT and other New York State agencies undertaking a discretionary action for the Project have no obligation to prepare a separate EIS under SEQRA. NYSDOT will give full consideration to the Federal Final EIS and will prepare a Record of Decision (ROD) in accordance with Section 15.9 of 17 NYCRR Part 15.
S.2 PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Project is to address the structural deficiencies and non-standard highway features while creating an improved transportation corridor through the City of Syracuse that meets transportation needs and provides the infrastructure to support long-range transportation planning efforts.

To meet the Project’s purpose, five project objectives were established:

- Address the transportation network structural deficiencies, particularly associated with aging bridge structures and non-standard/non-conforming design features within the project limits along I-81 and I-690.
- Address vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle geometric and operational deficiencies within the project limits.
- Maintain or enhance vehicle access to the interstate highway network and key destinations (i.e., business districts, hospitals, and institutions) within neighborhoods within and near Downtown Syracuse.
- Maintain or enhance the vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connections in the local street network within the project limits in and near Downtown Syracuse to allow for connectivity between neighborhoods, business districts, and other key destinations.
- Maintain access to existing local bus service and enhance transit amenities\(^1\) within the project limits in and near Downtown Syracuse.

S.3 PROJECT AREA

I-81 is an approximately 850-mile-long highway in the eastern United States. It begins at Interstate 40 in Dandridge, Tennessee, and extends northeasterly through Tennessee, Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York, terminating at Highway 401 in Ontario, Canada. It is the primary north-south highway through Central New York, serving Binghamton, Cortland, Syracuse, and Watertown, and provides an international crossing into Canada at the Thousand Islands Bridge.

The Project is located in Onondaga County, New York. The Project Area is within the City of Syracuse and the Towns of DeWitt, Salina, and Cicero. The Project Area is shown on Figure S-1. It includes the southern and northern interchanges of I-81 with I-481 (Exits 16A and 29, respectively); the portion of I-81 between Colvin Street and Hiawatha Boulevard, including the I-81 viaduct and the I-81/I-690 interchange in Downtown Syracuse; I-690 between Leavenworth Avenue and Beech Street; and I-481 between I-690 and the New York State Thruway (I-90). It also includes some local roads in proximity to I-81 and I-690 in Downtown Syracuse, as shown on Figure S-1.

\(^1\) Transit amenities that may be explored could include bus stops and shelters, bus turnouts, and layover and turnaround places.
S.4 NEED FOR THE PROJECT

I-81 and I-690 are elevated through Downtown Syracuse. Each interstate comprises multiple highway bridges, and many of their components, which were constructed primarily in the 1960s, are nearing the end of their design service life. Over time, these structures have experienced varying levels of deterioration from exposure to weather, de-icing salts, and heavy vehicle use. Bridges are particularly susceptible to wear and tear because many of their structural elements are directly exposed to weather conditions. The I-81 and I-690 corridors are characterized by high traffic volumes and reduced travel speeds; notable delays and queues are common in some sections near the I-81 and I-690 interchange.

Specifically, the Project would address the following identified needs:

- The need to improve traffic flow and safety;
- The need to address aging infrastructure;
- The need for transportation infrastructure to support long-range planning efforts; and
- The need to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

S.5 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

As described in Chapter 3, Alternatives, numerous potential alternatives for the I-81 Viaduct Project were evaluated to determine whether they would meet the project purpose and need, objectives, and screening criteria. As a result of this process, two build alternatives have been progressed for detailed evaluation in the DDR/DEIS—the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives—in addition to the No Build Alternative.

S.5.1 NO BUILD ALTERNATIVE

NEPA requires the evaluation of a No Build Alternative. The No Build Alternative serves as the baseline against which the build alternatives are compared. The No Build Alternative for the I-81 Viaduct Project would maintain the highway in its existing configuration, although ongoing maintenance and repairs to ensure the safety of the traveling public will continue. The No Build Alternative would not meet the objectives that were developed to address the purpose and need for the Project.

S.5.2 VIADUCT ALTERNATIVE

The Viaduct Alternative would involve a full reconstruction of I-81 between approximately Colvin Street and Hiawatha Boulevard and the portion of I-690 from Leavenworth Avenue to Lodi Street. Figures S-2a through S-2c identify the key features of the Viaduct Alternative. The new viaduct would provide four to six, 12-foot travel lanes (a minimum of two in each direction), as well as inside shoulders (a minimum of four feet in two-lane sections and 10 feet in three-lane sections) and outside shoulders (a minimum of 10 feet in each direction). The new viaduct would be approximately 10 to 15 feet higher than the existing one at some locations. South of Harrison Street, the new viaduct generally would be approximately 10 to 20 feet wider than the 66-foot wide existing viaduct. The Viaduct Alternative would reconstruct I-690 and the existing I-81/I-690 interchange; address nonstandard and nonconforming design features; provide new interchange connections at I-690 and I-81 where
West St. overpass would be removed. The interchange would be reconstructed and reconfigured.

West St. would be lowered to meet Genesee St., creating a two-way street. West St. would be removed.

Intersection with a single off-ramp at Clinton St. would be lowered to 55 mph (currently posted at 45 mph).

New path would be built along west bank of Onondaga Creek. New partial interchange at MLK, Jr. East.

New partial interchange at NC. Jr. East.

Speed limit would be 55 mph (currently posted at 45 mph) at MLK, Jr. East.

New ramp connecting southbound I-81 to westbound I-690 would replace existing connection on Townsend St. Ramp from northbound I-81 to eastbound I-690 would change from a weaving movement for traffic to a two-way street between Genesee St. and Adams St.

Almond St. would be reconstructed with bicycle and pedestrian improvements. Almond St. would be converted from a one-way to a two-way street between Genesee St. and Adams St.

Crouse Ave. would be reconstructed with bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

New interchange posted.

Reconstruct Harrison St. Harrison St. off-ramp would be reconstructed with two lanes.

New ramp connecting southbound I-81 to I-690 would replace existing connection on Townsend St.

New off-ramp at Catherine St. connecting westbound I-690 to Downtown/University Hill would replace existing connection on Townsend St.

New on-ramp at Almond St. Ramp from northbound I-81 to right-side to left-side exit, eliminating a weaving movement for traffic.

No connections between Almond St. and Cedar or Madison St.

Additional bike and pedestrian enhancements.

Viaduct Alternative Overview:
Colvin Street to Butternut Street

Figure S-2a
Service road would be realigned opposite N. Clinton St.

N. Clinton would be widened here from one lane in each direction to three lanes (one southbound lane, one northbound lane, and turn lane in the middle)

Section of Genant Dr. south of Bear St. would be removed to make way for new southbound I-81 ramps

New location of southbound I-81 on- and off-ramps connecting to N. Clinton St.

Section of Genant Dr. would become a dead end

Existing southbound I-81 off-ramp at Genant Dr. would be removed

New Spencer St. bridge with sidewalks on each side

Northbound I-81 off-ramp would be made longer, making it easier for traffic to merge

New on-road bike lanes on Spencer St.

Northbound I-81 on-ramp would be made longer, making it easier for traffic to merge

New Court St. bridge with new sidewalks on each side

Section of Genant Dr. south of Spencer St. would be removed

 Existing southbound I-81 on-ramp from Genant Dr. would be removed

N. Clinton St. would be reconstructed from Bear St. to new Butternut St. bridge with new pavement, sidewalks on each side, curbside parking where possible, street trees, and curb bump-outs to shorten pedestrian crossing distances. Shared lanes for bicycles and vehicles would be provided from Spencer St. south to the N. Franklin St. intersection

New narrower Butternut St. bridge, carrying one lane in each direction with sidewalks and on-road bike lanes on each side

The existing southbound I-81 on-ramp from Genant Dr. would be removed

Genant Dr. between Spencer St. and the new Butternut St. bridge would be removed to accommodate the widened I-81. Access to properties along Genant Dr. would be maintained from N. Clinton St.

Existing Butternut St. bridge would be removed, existing Butternut St. would be removed from N. State St. to N. Franklin St.

N. State St. from Ash St. to Butternut St. would be reduced from three lanes to two lanes, with new sidewalk along its west side and parking and street trees where possible

Existing State St. ramp to northbound I-81 would be removed

New, narrower Butternut St. bridge, carrying one lane in each direction with sidewalks and on-road bike lanes on each side

Existing Butternut St. bridge would be removed, existing Butternut St. would be removed from N. State St. to N. Franklin St.

N. Clinton would be widened here from one lane in each direction to three lanes (one southbound lane, one northbound lane, and turn lane in the middle)

Inner Harbor

N. Clinton St. would be widened here from one lane in each direction to three lanes (one southbound lane, one northbound lane, and turn lane in the middle)
I-81 Viaduct Project

Viaduct Alternative Overview: Bear Street to Hiawatha Boulevard

From I-690 to Hiawatha Blvd., I-81 would be widened from three to four lanes in each direction.

N. Clinton would be widened here from one lane in each direction to three lanes (one southbound lane, one northbound lane, and turn lane in the middle).

Section of Genant Dr. south of Bear St. would be removed to make way for new southbound I-81 ramps.

New location of southbound I-81 on- and off-ramps would connect to N. Clinton St.

The two ramps from Onondaga Lake Parkway and Old Liverpool Rd. would be combined into a single southbound I-81 on-ramp.

New overlook, new shared use path, and new sidewalks.

New Bear St. bridge with sidewalks on each side.

Service road would be realigned opposite N. Clinton St.

The two ramps from Onondaga Lake Parkway and Old Liverpool Rd. would be combined into a single southbound I-81 on-ramp.

New Bear St. bridge with sidewalks on each side.

Service road would be realigned opposite N. Clinton St.
these connections do not currently exist; improve connections to local streets; and implement traffic, bicycle, and pedestrian enhancements. A detailed description of the Viaduct Alternative is presented in Chapter 3, Alternatives.

S.5.3 COMMUNITY GRID ALTERNATIVE / PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Based on a balanced consideration of the need for safe and efficient transportation; the social, economic, and environmental effects of the project alternatives; and national, state, and local environmental protection goals, the Community Grid Alternative would be selected as the preferred alternative. FHWA and NYSDOT will consider all comments received on this DDR/DEIS.

Figures S-3a through S-3h identify the key features of the Community Grid Alternative. The alternative would involve demolition of the existing viaduct between the New York Susquehanna & Western Railway (NYS&W) bridge near Renwick Avenue and the I-81/I-690 interchange. The section of I-81 between the southern I-81/I-481 interchange (Interchange 16A) and the I-81/I-481 northern interchange (Interchange 29) in Cicero would be de-designated as an interstate, and existing I-481 would be re-designated as the new I-81. A portion of existing I-81 between its northern and southern intersections with I-481 would be re-designated as a business loop of I-81 (BL 81). BL 81 would be a limited access highway from the southern interchange with the new I-81 to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. East (MLK, Jr. East, formerly East Castle Street) and from I-690 to the northern interchange with the new I-81. The BL 81 designation would continue along Almond Street north to Erie Boulevard and along Erie Boulevard from Almond Street to Oswego Boulevard. A portion of Pearl Street, between Erie Boulevard and the northbound Pearl Street on-ramp, and a portion of Oswego Boulevard, between Erie Boulevard and East Willow Street, also would be part of BL 81.

The existing I-81 viaduct would be removed between the NYS&W Railway bridge and I-690, and Almond Street, which runs beneath the existing viaduct, would be reconstructed. The Community Grid Alternative would also involve new or modified interchanges on I-690 and BL 81 as well as the reconstruction and reconfiguration of local streets in Downtown Syracuse.

The Community Grid Alternative would disperse traffic throughout the city grid, using the existing street network. Access points to and from I-690 and BL 81 would be available at West Street, and Crouse and Irving Avenues (to and from I-690), as well as at Clinton Street, Oswego Boulevard, and Pearl Street (to and from northern BL 81), and numerous at grade intersections along Almond Street between MLK, Jr. East and Erie Boulevard (to and from southern BL 81). North-south vehicular traffic would be channeled through Almond Street and along parallel corridors, such as Crouse Avenue, Irving Avenue, State Street, and Townsend Street, as well as other local streets that would have the capacity to accommodate this traffic. East-west traffic routes would include Erie Boulevard, Harrison Street, and Adams Street. North of I-690, North Clinton Street would be reconstructed and extended to serve as an alternative north-south route to Downtown, with new on- and off-ramps connecting to southbound BL 81 located south of Bear Street. New interchanges would be constructed from I-690 at Crouse Avenue and Irving Avenue, as well as new entrance and exit ramps to/from the BL 81 connecting with East Willow Street, James Street, and Erie Boulevard. West Street would be lowered to intersect with Genesee Street at grade. Streets incorporated into the
Existing I-81 north of I-690 would be re-designed as Business Loop 81 (BL 81).

Existing West St./Franklin St. and Clinton St./Salina St. on-ramps would be replaced with a two-lane off-ramp, one lane leading to Oswego Blvd. and one lane leading to Clinton St. with a spur off the Clinton St. ramp providing access to Franklin St. via Walworth's Landing.

West St. overpass would be reconstructed and reconfigured.

West St. would be lowered to meet Genesee St., creating a normalized intersection.

New path would be built along west bank of Onondaga Creek between Erie Blvd. and James St.

Proposed canal-themed district, bordered by Salina St. to the west, Erie Blvd. to the south, State St. to the east, and Willow St. to the north, centered on the historic confluence of the Oswego and Erie Canals.

New city blocks: Oswego Blvd. from Willow to James Sts.; Pearl St. from Willow St. to Erie Blvd.

New entrance ramp to northbound BL 81 connecting to Erie Blvd., James St., and E. Willow St.

New exit ramp from southbound BL 81 connecting to Erie Blvd., James St., and E. Willow St.

Harrison St. and Adams St. west of Almond St. would be converted from one-way to two-way streets.

Because of a continuous median, only right turn possible to Madison St., and to and from Monroe St., which would not be signalized; no pedestrian crossings.

Existing I-81 north of I-690 would be re-designated as Business Loop 81 (BL 81).

Existing on-ramps at Pearl St. and Butterfield St. would be replaced with a single on-ramp at Pearl St.

Butternut Street Bridge would be reconstructed.

Posted speed limit for I-690 would be 55 mph (currently posted at 45 mph).

New I-690 interchange at Crouse and Irving Aves. would provide direct connection to University Hill.

I-690 interchange at Crouse and Irving Aves. would provide direct connection to University Hill.

Ivy Ave. extension to I-690.

Almond St. would be reconstructed as a boulevard with bicycle and pedestrian enhancements, as well as a plantings, median about 18 to 20 feet wide.

Crouse Ave. would be converted from a one-way to a two-way street between Geneve St. and Adams St.

West St. would be lowered to meet Genesee St., creating a normalized intersection.

West St. overpass would be removed. The interchange would be reconstructed and reconfigured.

New path would be built along west bank of Onondaga Creek between Erie Blvd. and James St.

Proposed canal-themed district, bordered by Salina St. to the west, Erie Blvd. to the south, State St. to the east, and Willow St. to the north, centered on the historic confluence of the Oswego and Erie Canals.

New city blocks: Oswego Blvd. from Willow to James Sts.; Pearl St. from Willow St. to Erie Blvd.

New entrance ramp to northbound BL 81 connecting to Erie Blvd., James St., and E. Willow St.

New exit ramp from southbound BL 81 connecting to Willow St., James St., and Erie Blvd.

Butternut Street Bridge would be reconstructed.

Proposed canal-themed district, bordered by Salina St. to the west, Erie Blvd. to the south, State St. to the east, and Willow St. to the north, centered on the historic confluence of the Oswego and Erie Canals.

New city blocks: Oswego Blvd. from Willow to James Sts.; Pearl St. from Willow St. to Erie Blvd.

New entrance ramp to northbound BL 81 connecting to Erie Blvd., James St., and E. Willow St.

New exit ramp from southbound BL 81 connecting to Willow St., James St., and Erie Blvd.

Because of a continuous median, only right turn possible to Madison St., and to and from Monroe St., which would not be signalized; no pedestrian crossings.

Existing I-81 south of I-690 would be designated as Business Loop 81 (BL 81).

Community Grid Alternative: Colvin Street to Butternut Street

Figure S-3a
Existing southbound I-81 off-ramp at Genant Dr. would be removed

New Spencer St. bridge with sidewalks on each side

Existing southbound I-81 on-ramp from Genant Dr. would be removed

New on-road bike lanes on Spencer St. between N. Clinton St. and N. Salina St.

Section of Genant Dr. south of Bear St. would be removed to make way for new southbound BL 81 ramps

Section of Genant Dr. south of Bear St. would be removed to make way for new southbound BL 81 ramps

New location of southbound BL 81 on- and off-ramps connecting to N. Clinton St.

Section of Genant Dr. would become a dead end street

Existing southbound I-81 off-ramp at Genant Dr. would be removed

Existing southbound I-81 on-ramp from Genant Dr. would be removed

N. Clinton St. would be extended to Butternut St.

N. Clinton St. would be extended to Butternut St.

N. Clinton St. would be reconstructed from Bear St. to new Butternut St. bridge with new pavement, sidewalks on each side, curbside parking where possible, street trees, and curb bump-outs to shorten pedestrian crossing distances. Shared lanes for bicycles and vehicles would be provided from Spencer St. south to the N. Franklin St. intersection

Service road would be realigned opposite N. Clinton St.

N. Clinton would be widened here from one lane in each direction to three lanes (one southbound lane, one northbound lane, and turn lane in the middle)

Section of Genant Dr. south of Bear St. would be removed to make way for new southbound BL 81 ramps

Northbound BL 81 on-ramp would be made longer, making it easier for traffic to merge

Northbound BL 81 off-ramp would be made longer, making it easier for traffic to merge

New Court St. bridge with new sidewalks on each side

N. Clinton would be widened here from one lane in each direction to three lanes (one southbound lane, one northbound lane, and turn lane in the middle)

Section of Genant Dr. south of Bear St. would be removed to make way for new southbound BL 81 ramps

N. Clinton St. would be extended to Butternut St.

N. Clinton St. would be extended to Butternut St.

New on-road bike lanes on Spencer St. between N. Clinton St. and N. Salina St.

N. State St. from Ash St. to Butternut St. would be reduced from three lanes to two lanes, with new sidewalk along its west side and parking and street trees where possible

New, narrower Butternut St. bridge would be built directly north of the existing bridge, carrying one lane in each direction with sidewalks and on-road bike lanes on each side

N. Clinton St. would be extended to Butternut St.

New Court St. bridge with new sidewalks on each side

New Spencer St. bridge with sidewalks on each side

N. State St. from Ash St. to Butternut St. would be reduced from three lanes to two lanes, with new sidewalk along its west side and parking and street trees where possible

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N. State St. from Ash St. to Butternut St. would be reduced from three lanes to two lanes, with new sidewalk along its west side and parking and street trees where possible

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N. State St. from Ash St. to Butternut St. would be reduced from three lanes to two lanes, with new sidewalk along its west side and parking and street trees where possible

New, narrower Butternut St. bridge would be built directly north of the existing bridge, carrying one lane in each direction with sidewalks and on-road bike lanes on each side

N. Clinton St. would be extended to Butternut St.
The two ramps from Onondaga Lake Pkwy. and Old Liverpool Rd. would be combined into a single southbound BL 81 on-ramp.

From I-690 to Hiawatha Blvd., northbound BL 81 would be widened from three to four lanes, southbound BL 81 would remain three lanes.

N. Clinton would be widened here from one lane in each direction to three lanes (one southbound lane, one northbound lane, and turn lane in the middle).

Section of Genant Dr. south of Bear St. would be removed to make way for new southbound BL 81 ramps. New location of southbound BL 81 on- and off-ramps, would connect to N. Clinton St.

Service road would be realigned opposite N. Clinton St.

New Bear St. bridge with sidewalks on each side.

New overlook, new shared use path, and new sidewalks.
Onondaga Lake Community Grid Alternative: Destiny USA

SYRACUSE HANCOCK INT’L AIRPORT
St. Joseph’s Hospital
Syracuse VA Medical Ctr
SUNY ESF SUNY Upstate Medical Center
Carrier Dome

Detail enlarged on subsequent figure

Existing I-81, between I-690 and existing I-481 would be renamed BL 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 From I-690 to I-90

Traffic calming measures such as narrow shoulders, curbs and landscaping, would be introduced between Colvin Street entrance ramp to BL 81 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) North Interchange

Reconstruct interchange to direct I-81 traffic to the new I-81 (former I-481) South Interchange

Add new I-81 signage and renumber interchanges as needed

BL 81
I-81
I-81 Viaduct Project

Community Grid Alternative
Figure S-3e
Existing I-81 would be de-designated as an interstate and renamed Business Loop 81 (BL 81).

East Glen Avenue, relocated here, would connect to BL 81 and Brighton Avenue.

Current East Glen Avenue location.

New Brighton Avenue bridge.

Existing I-481 would be re-designated as I-81.

I-81 would be two lanes in each direction, with a 65 mph speed limit.

Ramps to/from Rock Cut Road would remain.

Southbound BL 81 would merge with southbound I-81 here.

Northbound I-81 ramp would be reconfigured to provide access to BL 81 and to Brighton Avenue via the new interchange at East Glen Avenue.

New interchange would provide full access between BL 81 and East Glen Avenue.

New ramps.

Legend:

- Interstate
- Business Loop 81
- New Ramps
- New Road

Community Grid Alternative
South Interchange of the New I-81 (formerly I-481)

Figure S-3f
Business Loop 81 would merge/diverge with I-81 via high speed ramps.

Road would continue to be State Route 481

Existing ramps would remain

Ramp would be reconstructed

Interchange would be reconfigured so that I-81 would be two lanes in each direction. Speed limit would be 65 mph

Existing I-481 would be re-designated as I-81

Existing I-81, south of new I-81, would be re-designated as the Business Loop 81

Community Grid Alternative
North Interchange of the New I-81 (formerly I-481)

Figure S-3g
The new I-81 (former I-481) between the Kirkville Rd and I-90 interchanges would be widened from two lanes to three lanes in the northbound direction; southbound direction would remain two lanes.

The new I-81 (former I-481) between the I-690 and Kirkville Rd interchanges would be widened from two lanes to three lanes in both the northbound and southbound directions (for a total of six lanes).
Community Grid Alternative would be designed to meet Federal, State, and local design
standards consistent with their anticipated function.

The reconstructed Almond Street would consist of two 12-foot-wide travel lanes in each
direction, turning lanes at intersections (where needed), widened sidewalks, a landscaped
median, and bicycle facilities. Bicycle facilities would include bicycle lanes, raised cycle tracks,
and shared use (bicycle and pedestrian) paths in various segments along Almond Street, as well
as some adjacent streets (see Chapter 3, Alternatives for further details). Curbside parking
lanes would be provided, except in the portion between Taylor Street and MLK, Jr. East.

The new Almond Street would provide vehicular access to all existing intersections. However,
only right turns would be possible to Madison Street, and to and from Monroe Street. Vehicles
on these streets would be directed to the next available fully controlled intersection, which
would be at Adams Street (375 feet to the north) or Jackson Street (430 feet to the south).

The former I-481, which would be re-designated as I-81, would carry a minimum of four lanes
(two in each direction) of through traffic. Interstate re-designation and associated numbering
must meet American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
protocols and receive approval from FHWA. The change in highway designation and
associated changes in traffic volumes would require modifications to the re-designated I-81.
These modifications would include:

- I-81/I-481 South Interchange (Interchange 16A): Reconstruction of this interchange
  would involve re-routing existing I-81 to connect with existing I-481, which would serve
  as the new I-81. The new I-81 would meet 70 MPH design standards. The existing ramps
  that connect northbound I-81 to northbound I-481 and southbound I-481 to southbound
  I-81 would be demolished, and these movements would be made on the main line of re-
  designated I-81. The East Brighton Avenue bridge over the interchange and East Glen
  Avenue would be reconstructed. The intersection of East Brighton Avenue and Rock Cut
  Road would be maintained.

- I-81/I-481 North Interchange (Interchange 29): This interchange would be reconstructed
to connect the re-designated I-81, which would meet 70 mph design standards, with the
existing I-81. Ramps between the re-designated I-81 and BL 81 and between the re-
  designated I-81 and New York State Route 481 would also be provided. In addition,
  northbound and southbound auxiliary lanes would be constructed along portions of I-481
  in the Project Area (see Chapter 3, Alternatives for further details).

- Signage: I-481 signage would be replaced with I-81 signage, and interchanges would be
  renumbered to correspond to the sequencing of I-81 interchanges south and north of
  Syracuse.

The Community Grid Alternative would entail the removal and withdrawal of a segment of I-
81 from the National Network. Pursuant to 23 CFR 658.11, a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking
(NPRM) is required for the proposed deletion of a Federal-aid interstate from the National
Network.

Appendix A includes plans and profiles of the Community Grid Alternative. Chapter 5,
Transportation and Engineering Considerations, provides an in-depth discussion of the
design criteria and nonstandard features (see Section 5-4) as well as roadway characteristics including vehicular traffic and non-motorized transportation.

Refer to Chapter 3, Alternatives for a description of the other build alternatives considered in this DDR/DEIS. Chapter 8, Summary of Alternatives, briefly describes effects associated with the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives. Table S-1 lists the potential permits and approvals required for implementing the Preferred Alternative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permit or Approval</th>
<th>Approving Agency</th>
<th>Regulatory Authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Removal of Segment from National Network*</td>
<td>FHWA</td>
<td>23 CFR 658.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interstate Highway Designation*</td>
<td>FHWA</td>
<td>23 CFR 103(c)(4)(B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interstate Access Modification</td>
<td>FHWA</td>
<td>23 USC 109 and 111, 23 C.F.R. 625.4, and 49 C.F.R. 1.48(b)(1)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Section 4(f) Finding pursuant to Section 4(f) of the US DOT Act</td>
<td>FHWA in consultation with DOI and SHPO</td>
<td>49 USC § 303; 23 CFR § 774</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section 7 Consultation pursuant to the Endangered Species Act</td>
<td>USFWS</td>
<td>16 USC §§ 1531-1544; 50 CFR Part 402</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York State Endangered Species Act</td>
<td>NYSDEC</td>
<td>ECL Article 1, Title 5 § 11-0535; 6 NYCRR Part 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 106 Effect Finding pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act</td>
<td>FHWA in consultation with ACHP and SHPO</td>
<td>16 USC § 470A; 36 CFR Part 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York State Endangered Species Act</td>
<td>NYSDEC</td>
<td>ECL Article 1, Title 5 § 11-0535; 6 NYCRR Part 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 404 Permit pursuant to the Clean Water Act</td>
<td>USACE</td>
<td>33 USC §§ 1251-1387 and 33 CFR 320-330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 401 Water Quality Certification pursuant to the Clean Water Act</td>
<td>NYSDEC</td>
<td>33 USC §§ 1251-1387 and 33 CFR 320-330</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) Permit</td>
<td>NYSDEC</td>
<td>State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (ECL Article 3, Title 3; Article 15; Article 17, Titles 3, 5, 7, and 8; Article 21; Article 70, Title 1; Article 71, Title 19; 6 NYCRR Part 750).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### S.6 SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND DISMISSED FROM FURTHER STUDY

Seventeen potential alternatives (NB, V-1, V-2, V-3, V-4, V-5, SL-1, SL-2, SL-3, DH-1, DH-2, T-1, T-2, T-3, T-4, O-1, and O-2), several of which were the result of public input (V-5, T-4, O-1, and O-2), were developed and evaluated during the initial screening presented in the Scoping Report (April 2015). Seven alternatives were identified for further study: No Build, V-1, V-2, V-3, SL-1, SL-2, and SL-3. Following the screening, V-1, V-2, and V-3 became options of one Viaduct Alternative and the Street-level Alternative was renamed the Community Grid Alternative with two options, CG-1 and CG-2. A summary of Section 3.3 Alternatives Considered and Dismissed from Further Study is provided below:

#### S.6.1 DEPRESSED HIGHWAY POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES - SCOPING REPORT (APRIL 2015)

Potential Alternatives DH-1 and DH-2 failed to address the Project’s needs and to meet the Project’s purpose and objectives, and would pose difficult constructability considerations. Both alternatives would remove local street connections between Downtown and Northside, and it would not be reasonable to provide connections across the highway at every east-west street. Alternatives DH-1 and DH-2 were not recommended for further study.

#### S.6.2 OTHER POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES - SCOPING REPORT (APRIL 2015)

Potential Alternative O-1 and O-2 would require a substantial amount of property acquisition. Additionally, alternative O-2 would substantially diminish local street connections in the West Street corridor, thereby failing to meet the Project’s objective to “maintain or enhance the vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connections in the local street network within and near Downtown Syracuse to allow for connectivity between neighborhoods, business districts, and other key destinations.” Alternatives O-1 and O-2 were dismissed from further consideration.
S.6.3 POTENTIAL TUNNEL ALTERNATIVES - SCOPING REPORT (APRIL 2015)

Potential Alternatives T-1 and T-2 failed to address the Project’s needs or meet the Project’s purpose and objectives and are considered unreasonable. Both alternatives would eliminate several local street connections between Downtown, Northside, and University Hill. Severing these streets would create about a three-block gap in north-south and east-west vehicular access, which is inconsistent with the objective to “maintain or enhance the vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connections in the local street network within and near Downtown Syracuse to allow for connectivity between neighborhoods, business districts, and other key destinations.”

Alternative T-3 was not recommended for further study because it has many of the same deficiencies as Alternatives T-1 and T-2: Alternative T-3 failed to address the Project’s needs or meet the Project’s purpose and objectives, poses difficult constructability considerations, and has an unreasonable cost of $2.6 billion. In addition, Alternative T-3 would require acquisition of 55 to 70 buildings, which is considered unreasonable.

Alternative T-4 would address the Project’s needs and meet the Project’s purpose and objectives and constructability considerations. However, Alternative T-4 would acquire more than 100 buildings and would cost more than $3 billion, which are both considered unreasonable. Therefore, Alternative T-4 was dismissed from further consideration.

S.6.4 ADDITIONAL POTENTIAL TUNNEL ALTERNATIVES - TUNNEL FEASIBILITY STUDY (OCTOBER 2016)

In response to public input after the publication of the Scoping Report, FHWA and NYSDOT conducted additional engineering and further analyses to determine whether a tunnel alternative that satisfies the Project’s needs, meets the Project’s purpose and objectives, and meets the established screening criteria could be developed. Three new potential tunnel alternatives (T-5, T-6, and T-7) were developed and studied in the Tunnel Feasibility Study (October 2016).

Potential Alternative T-5 would eliminate the Colvin Street entrance ramp to northbound I-81; introduce an overpass (East Fayette Street from South Townsend Street to approximately Forman Avenue would need to be elevated); and eliminate the northbound I-81 ramp from Harrison Street, a main access point from University Hill to travel north. Alternative T-5 meets the Project’s purpose, need, and objectives.

However, Alternative T-5 would involve constructability difficulties. Community disruptions, including impacts to vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic, are likely as a result of cut-and-cover tunneling. In addition to relocation of substantial utilities, Alternative T-5 would require the underpinning of the viaduct, which is nearly 60 years old. This would be a risky operation with some unknowns (such as the risk of potential lateral movements), adding difficulty to the construction and at least two to three years to the construction duration. In addition, Alternative T-5 would temporarily disrupt 15 major road crossings and a railroad crossing.

Alternative T-5 would require the acquisition of 35 properties (34 buildings and one parking lot). Alternative T-5’s property needs are deemed reasonable. Alternative T-5’s estimated cost
of $3.1 billion is considered unreasonable. For these reasons, Alternative T-5 was dismissed from further consideration.

Potential Alternative T-6 would eliminate the Colvin Street entrance ramp to northbound I-81 and require the closure of Willow Street. In addition, Alternative T-6 would require the closure of Townsend Street between Genesee Street and Harrison Street to accommodate I-81 ramps to and from the north, and the closure of James Street between Oswego Boulevard and State Street due to insufficient clearance over the interstate-to-interstate ramps. These two closures would substantially sever local street connectivity and are not consistent with the Project’s objective to “maintain or enhance the vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connections in the local street network within and near Downtown Syracuse to allow for connectivity between neighborhoods, business districts, and other key destinations.” Therefore, Alternative T-6 does not meet the Project’s purpose, need, and objectives.

Alternative T-6 would require the acquisition of 17 properties (16 buildings and one open space) and would cost $2.6 billion, both of which are considered unreasonable. For these reasons, Alternative T-6 was dismissed from further consideration.

Potential Alternative T-7 involves the construction of a high-speed, non-interstate tunnel in addition to all of the improvements associated with the Community Grid Alternative. The construction of Alternative T-7 largely would be implemented underground, using a tunnel-boring machine and sequential excavation method. While there are some risks associated with all underground construction, the use of these conventional and known tunneling methods would allow the alternative to pass on constructability. Alternative T-7 would require the acquisition of 11 properties and would cost $2.5 billion, both of which are considered unreasonable. For these reasons, Alternative T-7 was dismissed from further consideration.

S.6.5 WSP “I-81 INDEPENDENT FEASIBILITY STUDY” (DECEMBER 2017)

In December 2017, NYSDOT released the WSP “I-81 Independent Feasibility Study” which was conducted “to ensure that a tunnel and depressed highway were sufficiently analyzed to assess their feasibility and cost” and to “[examine] alternatives that would adequately provide for vehicular traffic to replace the existing I-81 viaduct through the center of Syracuse.” This report was a technical engineering report and did not study the social, economic and environmental consideration required by NEPA and SEQRA. Under the study’s “Key Findings and Conclusions” it states that “it would be technically feasible to design and construct a tunnel alternative that meets the study goals and improve [sic] the transportation system in the Syracuse Metropolitan Area,” and ultimately identified the Orange Alternative as the tunnel option with “greatest benefit.”

NYSDOT further developed the “Orange Alternative” and evaluated its potential social, economic and environmental effects. To accommodate ramps connecting southern Almond Street to BL 81/I-81 (to and from the south) and ramps connecting northern Almond Street to I-690 (to and from the west), local street, through traffic would be severed at Washington, Jackson, and Burt Streets, as well as at Almond Street between Van Buren Street and Burt Street. Therefore, the Orange tunnel concept would not meet the Project’s objective to “maintain or enhance the vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connections in the local street network within the project limits in and near Downtown Syracuse to allow for connectivity
between neighborhoods, business districts, and other key destinations.” The concept would require 17 building acquisitions. The Orange tunnel’s 11-year construction duration and $4.9 billion cost is considered unreasonable. Therefore, the Orange tunnel concept is dismissed from further study.

S.7 PROJECT COSTS

The estimated total project costs are shown in Table S-2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Viaduct Alternative</th>
<th>Community Grid Alternative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction Cost</strong></td>
<td>$1,700,000,000</td>
<td>$1,500,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design build to include Force Account, CI, Final Design, QC, Site Mobilization (25%)</td>
<td>$425,000,000</td>
<td>$375,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Award Cost</strong></td>
<td>$2,125,000,000</td>
<td>$1,875,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right-Of-Way (ROW)</td>
<td>$43,000,000</td>
<td>$5,500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost Rounded to Nearest $100M</strong></td>
<td>$2,200,000,000</td>
<td>$1,900,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S.8 PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

S.8.1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Table S-3 lists key milestones and public meetings that have or will occur.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publication of Notice of Intent</td>
<td>August 26, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Meeting – Toomey Abbott, Syracuse</td>
<td>September 25, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Meeting – Dr. Weeks Elementary School, Syracuse</td>
<td>October 22, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Meeting – Everson Museum, Syracuse</td>
<td>October 23, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Meeting – Fowler High School, Syracuse</td>
<td>October 29, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Meeting – DeWitt Community Room, DeWitt</td>
<td>October 30, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication of Initial Scoping Packet</td>
<td>November 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoping Meeting, Oncenter, Syracuse</td>
<td>November 13, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Update Presentation, Everson Museum, Syracuse</td>
<td>May 1, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication of Draft Scoping Report</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders’ Committee Meeting</td>
<td>June 24, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoping Meeting, Oncenter, Syracuse</td>
<td>June 26, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Meeting – Southwest Community Center, Syracuse</td>
<td>July 16, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Meeting – The MOST, Syracuse</td>
<td>July 23, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Meeting – HW Smith School, Syracuse</td>
<td>July 24, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Meeting – Toomey Abbott, Syracuse</td>
<td>July 29, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Meeting – St. Lucy’s, Syracuse</td>
<td>July 30, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Meeting – Dr. Weeks Elementary School, Syracuse</td>
<td>July 31, 2014</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In addition, there have been multiple meetings of the Project Stakeholders’ Advisory Working Groups, Urban Design Technical Advisory Panel, Northside UP I-81 Work Group, as well as numerous one-on-one or small group meetings with the interested public, stakeholders, community groups, and elected officials.

Refer to Chapter 9, Agency Coordination and Public Outreach, for more information on public involvement.

### S.8.2 COOPERATING AND PARTICIPATING AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Cooperating and Participating Agencies are responsible for identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding a project’s potential environmental or socioeconomic effects that could substantially delay or prevent an agency from granting a permit or other approval.

The following agencies were invited to serve as Cooperating and/or Participating Agencies on this Project:

- **Cooperating Agencies:**
  - Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
  - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 Participating Agencies:

- Onondaga Nation
- Tuscarora Nation
- Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC)
- CNY Centro, Inc.
- New York, Susquehanna and Western Railway
- Onondaga County
- City of Syracuse
- Town of Cicero
- Town of DeWitt
- Town of Salina
- Village of East Syracuse
- Village of North Syracuse

FHWA and NYSDOT are collaborating with the Cooperating and Participating Agencies in the preparation of the DDR/DEIS and assessment of effects, including frequent conference calls with the Cooperating Agencies and a meeting with Participating Agencies. The Cooperating and Participating Agencies will be notified of the availability of the signed DDR/DEIS and the Final Design Report/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FDR/FEIS) and given appropriate comment opportunities. Following the Record of Decision, NYSDOT would coordinate with the appropriate agencies to complete any necessary permit(s) for the Project.

The Onondaga and Tuscarora Nations are both Participating Agencies and a Consulting Parties, the latter for the review of the Project pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). FHWA and NYSDOT have invited them to participate in stakeholder and Section 106 meetings for the Project and have communicated directly with

2 Declined the invitation to participate as a Cooperating Agency.
them on several occasions. This outreach will continue throughout project development, as needed.

S.9 CONTACT INFORMATION

Individuals may offer comments on the DDR/DEIS in a variety of ways:

- Individuals may submit written comments by mail to:

  Mark Frechette, PE, Project Director  
  New York State Department of Transportation, Region 3  
  333 East Washington Street  
  Syracuse, New York 13202

- Or individuals may email comments via the Project’s website: www.i81opportunities.org. For more information, contact NYSDOT at 315-428-4351 or via the Project’s toll-free hotline, 1-855-I81-TALK (855-481-8255).

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3 A Consulting Parties meeting took place on June 29, 2016. A meeting and site visit of the Project Area with the Onondaga Nation and SHPO was conducted on July 13, 2016. Briefings were also held with the Onondaga Nation and SHPO on October 7, 2016 and June 13, 2017.