# MEETING SUMMARY

**Meeting Date:** Monday, September 22, 2014  
**Location:** I-81 Viaduct Project Outreach Center, 335 Montgomery Street, Syracuse  
**Event:** Community and Economic Development Stakeholders’ Advisory Working Group (SAWG) Meeting #4

## Attendees:

### Project Team Members
- Mark Frechette, NYSDOT  
- Joseph Flint, NYSDOT  
- Jessica Andersen, NYSDOT  
- Jon Adams, NYSDOT  
- Mark Honis, NYSDOT  
- Peter Liebowitz, AKRF  
- Molly McDonald, AKRF  
- Patrick Heaton, EDR  
- Rita Campon, Parsons  
- Carlos Lopez, Parsons  
- Kathryn Wolf, TWMLA  
- Aileen Maguire, C&S  
- Joni Steigerwald, C&S  
- Steve George, C&S

### SAWG Members
- Dean Biancavilla  
- Elizabeth Crawford  
- Rick Destito  
- Owen Kenney  
- Barry Lentz  
- Tony Mangano  
- Peter Sarver  
- Rob Simpson  
- Kristi Smiley  
- Doug Sutherland  
- Ann Marie Taliercio  
- John Vavalo  
- Meghan Vitale  
- Ben Walsh  
- Lynn Stearns (representing Janet Zane)
Discussion

Mark Frechette noted that the SAWG meetings continue to promote good discussions and provide NYSDOT with valuable input. He said that SAWG presentations and meeting summaries can be found on the project website, www.i81opportunities.org.

The project team held the Final Scoping Meeting in June, conducted eight neighborhood meetings in July, and met with elected officials, advocacy groups, and interested parties throughout the summer. These meetings have provided great insight to neighborhood issues and concerns.

The project’s scoping comment period remained open through September 2, 2014, and the team is compiling the hundreds of comments received during that period. Mr. Frechette said he appreciated the efforts of the numerous participants who took the time to comment and said he had read many thoughtful comments. The Final Scoping Report will include the comments as well as responses.

Mr. Frechette said the first few SAWG meetings, which primarily consisted of presentations to bring the groups up to date on the project alternatives under consideration, prompted very useful and frank conversations. Meetings in the upcoming three to four months will continue the interactive format and sometimes adopt a workshop-type approach. In response to feedback received during earlier SAWG meetings, NYSDOT anticipates that future topics will include urban design, transit, and sustainability. Mr. Frechette said that Heather Sporn (NYSDOT) has joined the project team to guide the urban design aspects and will participate in future SAWG presentations.

Jessica Andersen (NYSDOT) then gave a presentation on cultural resources. She introduced Molly McDonald (AKRF) and Patrick Heaton (EDR), who are leading the consulting team’s architectural and archeological studies.

Please note that additional information has been provided to clarify the responses given at the meeting.

Questions (Q), Comments (C), and Answers (A) included:

Q: What is the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (AHCP)?
A: The ACHP was established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, As Amended (NHPA) and is the federal oversight organization for implementing the act. An independent federal entity, the ACHP promotes the preservation, enhancement, and productive use of the nation’s historic resources.

Q: How do you determine which consulting parties can participate in the process? Specifically, can the Syracuse Housing Authority (SHA) participate, given the historic significance of the Pioneer Homes?
A: The SHA has been invited to be a consulting party. Section 106 of the NHPA requires that federal agencies (in this case FHWA), or their federally delegated authorities, actively consult with individuals and organizations throughout the Section 106 process. The regulations implementing
the Section 106 review process state that “certain individuals and organizations with a demonstrated interest in the undertaking [in this case the I-81 Viaduct Project] may participate as consulting parties due to the nature of their legal and economic relation to the undertaking or affected properties, or their concern with the undertaking’s effects on historic properties” [36 CFR Section 800.2(c)(5)]. The project team solicited consulting parties using several methods, including a public notice in the newspaper, which appeared in both English and Spanish. The scoping meeting included a board explaining the Section 106 process and a table staffed by project team members with information on the process (including the ACHP’s A Citizen’s Guide to Section 106 Review) and applications for consulting party status. Applications also were available at neighborhood meetings held during the summer and at the project’s outreach center in the Carnegie building. Members of the public can also apply for consulting party status through the project’s website, which has a page devoted to the Section 106 process. Some groups were specifically sent applications or personally contacted if they were likely have an interest in being involved. If these groups did not respond, FHWA and NYSDOT staff reached out to them personally. NYSDOT has submitted the applications for consulting party status to FHWA, which as the project’s lead federal agency will accept or deny the applications.

Q: Are all 17 alternatives identified during scoping being considered in the Section 106 process?
A: No, only those that are advanced for further study in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Q: Have you identified areas with architectural and archeological resources that would be affected by the project? Would you clarify the study area maps from the presentation?
A: Right now we have a general sense of the areas that may be affected, but we have not formally defined the Area of Potential Effects (APE). The APE is defined in 36 CFR Part 800.16(d)] as “the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause changes in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist. The area of potential effects is influenced by the scale and nature of an undertaking and may be different for different kinds of effects caused by the undertaking.” As shown in the presentation, a preliminary study area has been identified to encompass the variations associated with the multiple alternatives and to provide some early comparative assessment as part of the alternatives screening analysis. The study area shown in the presentation accounts for potential direct impacts. When delineated, the APE would include an additional buffer to account for potential indirect impacts.

Q: Noting that NYSDOT is responsible for historic bridges and highway structures, Mark Frechette asked how a highway structure is designated a historic resource.
A: If the structure is over 50 years in age, as is the I-81 viaduct, it will be evaluated to determine its potential eligibility to be included in the National Register. Features that would be considered when evaluating eligibility include the structure’s engineering aspects, unique features, whether it is the first or last of its kind, and so on.

Q: Who makes that determination?
A: The NYSDOT project team would do the assessment and make recommendations; SHPO would need to concur; and FHWA would make the final determination.

Q: Do you do the archeological survey during construction?
A: Typically not, since the research, testing, and identification of sensitive areas and resources, as well as a determination of potential impacts and available mitigation, are done during the EIS process. However, the Section 106 process contains provisions to deal with “unanticipated discoveries.” In such cases, NYSDOT and the consultant team would have the authority to delay or halt construction while the appropriate specialists assess any unanticipated resources, as necessary.

Q: What do the blue lines in the preliminary study area maps shown in the presentation represent?
A: The blue lines depict areas of potential effects specific to the Street-level Alternatives; they basically correspond to potential streets where improvements could be implemented. The red lines are applicable to all the alternatives and generally cover the interstate portions.

Q: How are applicants informed if they can be consulting parties?
A: All who apply for consulting party status will be notified, whether they are approved or not approved for such status by FHWA. NYSDOT will than contact the approved parties and establish the next steps.

Q: When will you start looking at specific buildings within the APE?
A: We are starting to identify historic properties in the preliminary study area, but the full effort starts when we have finalized the alternatives to be analyzed and there is agreement on the APE. Each property in the APE will then be assessed in more detail.

Q: When does the APE become available to the public? Will it be part of the DEIS?
A: The APE will be delineated when alternatives are selected. The APE will be presented to consulting parties and fully presented and described in the DEIS. The lines in the preliminary study area shown in the presentation are for direct effects only, and the ultimate APE will be larger than shown in the presentation to account for potential indirect effects.

Q: Can you provide examples of indirect effects?
A: An adverse effect is found when a project may alter, directly or indirectly, any of the characteristics of a historic property that qualify the property for inclusion in the National Register in a manner that would diminish the integrity of the property's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association. For example, if a building is significant because of its relationship to a harbor, then cutting off its connection to that harbor by erecting an obstruction would likely be an indirect adverse effect. Or if a cemetery is significant in part for its quiet and tranquil setting, a loud racetrack constructed adjacent to it could result in an indirect adverse effect.

Q: The Section 106 process basically identifies, avoids if possible, and then mitigates impacts. Can the Section 106 process be used to enhance historic resources?
A: Yes, enhancement of a resource could be part of a mitigation program. For example, as part of mitigation, funding could be provided for repair or rehabilitation of a historic resource. Historic signage might be developed to enhance a historic district, or a permanent public exhibit might be created to raise awareness of historic features.
Q: No matter what the solution is, the project will be over the Erie Canal area and in Downtown. In the 15th Ward there are historic buildings that remain and could benefit from enhancement. As part of the project could such buildings be restored? It may be a way to develop project support.
A: Yes. The project historians are collaborating with the urban design/landscape architecture team to look at creative ways to take into account the history in the area.

Other questions/comments included:

Q: When will the Origin-Destination (O-D) survey be completed and when will it be available?
A: SMTC’s consultant has completed the O-D study. It’s possible that SMTC could put together a SAWG presentation in the future to talk about the study.

Q: I represent a hotel and when the bus schedule changed it resulted in employees that couldn’t get to work; it would be good to know these issues before changes are made. Is there any part of the process that focuses on the human part, not the statistical part?
A: That is a Centro issue. NYSDOT focuses on the state road system.

C: It would help if you outline potential impacts resulting from each of the alternatives, for example, traffic impacts or construction impacts such as timing of traffic interruptions.
A: Potential impacts will be disclosed in the DEIS. We will share information generated as part of the DEIS technical studies as it becomes available. We recognize how important this will be and that people will want to hear about how this will be managed.

Q: Has the overall schedule for project changed based on the extended comment period, and has the schedule for the publication of the Final Scoping Report changed? It was initially said to be a 24-month process that NYSDOT would try to reduce to 18 months.
A: The scoping comment period was closed on September 2, 2014 and the NYSDOT team is now compiling, categorizing, and responding to the public comments received. It is anticipated that the scoping process will be completed by the end of the year. Finalizing the alternatives—including evaluation of concepts submitted during scoping—is clearly a critical factor in setting the schedule. Another concern is NYSDOT’s ongoing maintenance needs during this process. Overall, the schedule is still within the original framework.

Q/C: How are the existing maintenance of the viaduct and the future project connected? Are you in charge of the existing system, or are you just responsible for the future of I-81? It seems like you are doing two jobs and you should be focusing on the future I-81.
A: NYSDOT has a separate maintenance department, but there is overlap and coordination between maintenance and the future project.

Q: Did Syracuse University submit comments regarding a new exit off I-481? Obviously, the future of the Carrier Dome and its potential relocation are a consideration.
A: The University did bring up access from I-481 when the NYSDOT team met with them. Their comment also speaks about their plans and what they want to accomplish, and we will take the comment under consideration. If I-481 is re-designated as I-81 (as proposed under the Street-level Alternatives), this could be a factor, but it would take initiative on the University’s part to make the necessary improvements on campus.
Q: The Draft Scoping Report lists five project objectives, most of which are related to Goal 1 and not to Goal 2. When will we have a larger conversation about the project objectives, and why do we have just a narrow list of transportation objectives? We want to reflect more of sustainability, livability, and economic vitality instead of just transportation objectives.

C: It is hard to understand why there is not a larger list of objectives. Right now there is nothing that focuses on economic vitality since the objectives are still framed as transportation objectives and not larger goals.

A: Part of the scoping process is to solicit input on the project objectives; the process allows for comments that could add to or enhance the project objectives. The report presents the objectives defined so far. The more in-depth evaluation of the selected alternatives will apply a more comprehensive assessment of impact criteria including project benefits and opportunities for economic vitality.