Today I am going to talk to you about a mega project in Central New York.

This is a rendering view of I-81/I-690 interchange in downtown Syracuse. As you can see the I-81 Viaduct plus I-690 are at the crossroads in the City of Syracuse.
• Albert Einstein quote that I really love: “Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow”

• The I-81 viaduct—which runs through Downtown Syracuse—was constructed in the 1960s, some 50 years ago.

• Since then, design standards have changed, and engineering practices and travel needs have evolved. As a result, a number of the existing highway features along the I-81 viaduct and I-81/I-690 interchange do not meet transportation needs or serve Central New York’s best interest.

• In addition, transportation infrastructure has deteriorated due to many years of wear and tear.

• The highway and its bridges undergo ongoing inspection and maintenance to remain in a state-of-good repair and remain safe for the traveling public.
I will now talk about some of the larger I-81 DOT projects happening in CNY.

- Interstate 81 is seeing an infrastructure upgrade in Central New York to many of its key highway sections and bridges. DOT looks at the interstate from a transportation system standpoint. Keep the whole system safe, functional and in a state of good repair.

- All of the Interstate systems across the Country were built in the 50’s and 60’s during the Eisenhower years. Much of the transportation system is coming due for work. NYSDOT is taking a very proactive approach to addressing the multitude of transportation deficiencies on the I-81/I-690 interchange but also many of the highways and bridges leading to the interchange.

- The I-81 bridge/Erie Canal and Oneida Lake is a beautiful bridge and is currently being rehabilitated in construction. This 320’ prestressed/post tensioned concrete beam bridge is one of the most unique structures DOT owns because the beams cantilever over the piers.

- Replace the deck, fix the structural beam elements, doing numerous other repairs at a construction cost of 8.5 million. Anticipated completion of construction work is in 2017.
Much like the crossroads of I-81/I-690 interchange in downtown Syracuse is critical to serving the hospitals, Central Business District, University, etc. The I-81/I-90 thruway bridge services a critical transportation link to major north/south destinations in Canada, and along the east coast as well as the east/west destinations across NYS.

- The I-81/Thruway bridge just started construction in the Spring of this year.

- This 5 million dollar construction project will repair the deck as you can see in the photo’s, repair and repaint the beams and do numerous substructure repairs to extend the life of this structure. DOT will complete construction work by the end of 2016.
• Interstate 81 bridge over Route 80 in Tully is the first CNY DOT design build project.

• These two bridges are well under construction with both northbound and southbound being replaced by the end of the year. Replacement of these structures will cost approximately 8 million.

• A temporary bridge in the median was built last fall to maintain two lanes of traffic in each direction at all times. The southbound bridge has been removed and construction of the new southbound is underway.
• DOT also has plans to upgrade pavement conditions on Interstate 81 over the next few years to the south.

• The I-81 highway section from the Onondaga County line to south of Cortland is just starting construction and will mill and repave this 17 miles of road at a cost of 13.5 million.

• Two subsequent paving projects extending from the Onondaga County line to Route 20 and from Route 20 to Route 173 (adjacent to the I-81/I-481 interchange) will be progressed over the next few years to address this 16 miles of interstate system.
The large I-81 Mattydale bridge over Route 11 and South Bay Road is also going to be repaired as it will be put into construction later this year.

This 955 foot long bridge will also undergo rehabilitation to extend the life of the structures for a number of years. DOT does not have a contractor onboard yet but is working towards finalizing the design and competitively bidding this contract later this year.
• The project limits include an approximately 3.75-mile section of I-81 from Colvin Street to Hiawatha Boulevard and the 2.5-mile section of I-690 from approximately the West Street interchange to Lodi Street.

• Some alternatives under consideration may also result in improvements along I-481, including its interchanges with I-81, and along I-690.

• These I-481 improvements would be necessitated by potentially relocating I-81 from its current location within the City of Syracuse to the current I-481. (Community Grid Alternative)
• In 2015 DOT put out an emergency construction contract to repair a number of red and yellow flags to steel members in the I-81/I-690 interchange.

• This year (2016) DOT put out a new emergency contract to repair decks on three spans eastbound I-690/Salina (25 spans) and Franklin Street (13 spans). We will have short term closure of the eastbound direction over the summer.

• DOT has started to install netting to catch concrete chunks from falling onto the roads below them as a safety precaution.

• DOT also has plans to renovate the old railroad platform adjacent to I-690 later this year.
• Originally I-81 Viaduct project incorporated the I-690 Teall interchange and I-690/Beech Street which is a 1500 foot long viaduct. Due to a more imminent need to address structural deficiencies DOT is accelerating this project to be under construction in 2017 as an independent project from the I-81 Viaduct project.

• DOT wants to improve safety within both I-690 and Teall corridor, create shorter delays and provide an aesthetically pleasing corridor. A public meeting is being scheduled for June 28, 2016.

• The new Teall interchange will serve as an instrumental transportation corridor to serve the University Hill and Central Business District while the I-81/I-690 interchange is under construction.
NYSDOT’s goals for the project remain the same, and are shown on this slide.
This project is more than just transportation. More than a bridge replacement or highway reconstruction project.

Many opportunities to integrate livability, sustainability, and economic vitality into the project.

Livability:
- Create a new environment that is aesthetically pleasing and sets the stage for the type of development and revitalization that the City, County, and Central New York envisions. Aesthetics need to be improved with green spaces, street trees and promotion of a vibrant urban downtown.

Sustainability:
- Integrate walkability, bicycle mobility, and access to transit to promote other modes of transportation to go along with the vehicular highway improvements.

Economic:
- Construction will create many jobs. DOT will need to build in a fashion that preserves the historic resources and takes advantage of recycled materials, renewable energy, and implementation of qualitative stormwater treatments in a very narrow footprint.
• In April 2015, DOT published the project’s *Scoping Report*. With the publication of this report, we have reached a new milestone in our schedule—the start of the preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) and a higher level of engineering studies, which will help us determine the future of I-81.

• The *Scoping Report* summarizes the results of the scoping phase which evaluated 17 different alternatives. This phase was critical to reduce alternatives down to a manageable level prior to the start of the EIS process.

• This process we are in leads to the selection of the preferred alternative.

• The construction of a mega project needs to be carefully and thoughtfully sequenced to help facilitate maintenance of traffic and safe access to the city. DOT desires to minimize the construction impacts to the community, users and businesses.
• A number of State and Federal laws need to be adhered to throughout the design and construction phases of the project. Multiple State and Federal agencies are involved to protect the environment such as Federal Highway Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Environmental Conservation, State Historic Preservation Office, Army Corp of Engineers to name a few.

• Early in the project DOT started having monthly conference calls with our regulatory partners to streamline the agency coordination process and keep the agencies informed and involved. Recently, for example, NYSDOT shared and received concurrence on the environmental methodologies that would be used for the analysis.

• Some aspects of the environmental analysis and protection will not be challenging (ex: farmlands don’t exist on the project) whereas other aspects (ex: historic preservation) will be extremely challenging and will require much coordination with agencies as well as others.

• DOT always tries to avoid negative environmental impacts. Where there is not the ability to avoid environmental impacts, we attempt to minimize the impact and ultimately mitigate the environmental resource.

• DOT has changed the report format for the Environmental Impact Statement in an effort to make it more customer friendly and provide a state of the art streamlined document.
• DOT is evaluating four different solutions for further study in preliminary design: the No Build, Viaduct, Community Grid, and Tunnel.

• The No Build is required by NEPA and serves as the benchmark against which the other alternatives are compared.

• DOT is down to four different solutions that require:
  ▪ A much higher level of engineering.
  ▪ A better understanding of project implications associated with each alternative. For example travel times, financing the project, construction staging challenges, real estate impacts, and job creation to name a few.
  ▪ Need to provide environmental analysis and implement strategies to protect natural resources for future generations.
  ▪ Engage the public on multiple fronts to assist in development of each solution. Meetings like today. One on one meetings with advocacy and special interest groups. DOT will hold a larger Stakeholder group meeting in June to review some of the common features.
• The Viaduct Alternative would involve a full reconstruction of I-81 between approximately Colvin Street and Spencer Street as well as modifications to highway features north of Spencer Street to Hiawatha Boulevard and along I-690.

• The Scoping Report recommended three Viaduct Alternatives for further consideration in the Draft EIS. Given the similarities of these alternatives they have been consolidated into a single alternative with options for the design of seven curves within the I-81/I-690 interchange.

• These options have varying degrees of improvement of nonstandard/nonconforming features and a different range of property impacts.
Three viaduct alternative options
- Most similar alternative to what exist today to replace the interstate thru Syracuse.
- See from the drawing we are looking at much wider structures to bring the interstate up to current standards and address the many safety deficiencies. See red outline of existing bridge at Genesee Street (Connective Corridor).

Other
- Construction phasing of the viaduct options are being engineered, analyzed and evaluated in an effort to minimize impacts to the community, businesses, and users of the system. This is a very complicated issue in the tight footprint that exists and accommodating the multiple types of users of the interstate system (i.e. emergency services). Preliminary layouts include two lanes of traffic on I-81 (North-South) and I-690 (East-West) in each direction at most locations during the construction process. It is anticipated that only one I-81 lane in each directions will be possible along the Almond Street corridor unless temporary bridges were to be constructed.

• DOT has hired an “Under the Viaduct” consultant to do an independent analysis of the opportunities that could be implemented to improve livability, visual quality, sustainability, and economics under this viaduct alternative.
• DOT is also moving forward with the Community Grid Alternative, formerly known as the Street-level Alternatives. The three Street-level Alternatives (SL-1, “Boulevard”; SL-2, “One-way Traffic on Almond Street and Other Local Street[s]”; and SL-3, “Two-way Traffic on Almond Street and Other Local Street[s]”) have been combined into one alternative, known as the Community Grid Alternative.

• Analyses of whether to carry one-way or two-way traffic on local streets, or on a combination of both, is being undertaken during development of the Draft EIS.

• There are many transportation improvement opportunities that are being evaluated under the Community Grid Alternative. One option is to look at Almond as a primary thoroughfare. Another option would be to reduce the number of traffic lanes on Almond and make better use of the existing local street network.
• Under the Community Grid Alternative, a new route would be designated I-81 where I-481 currently exist.

• Existing I-81, north of I-690 will remain an interstate system, whereas south of I-690 to existing I-481 would no longer function as an interstate.

• DOT is also looking at the possibility of redesigning the northern portion of the old I-81 and I-690 to the west as I-481. I-481 would be a bypass thru Syracuse.
• As with the Boulevard option, under the Almond Street and Other Local Street[s] option a new surface street would be constructed along Almond Street to provide access to local destinations and the remaining interstate system. The new Almond Street would include accommodations for pedestrians and bicycles and would be entirely constructed within the Almond Street right-of-way.

• This option disperses traffic throughout the city grid by making use of one or more local streets in addition to Almond Street. An additional local street (e.g., Townsend Street, State Street, Salina Street, Clinton Street, West Street, University Avenue, Crouse Avenue, or Irving Avenue) or a combination of streets also would be used to carry traffic. Shifting traffic to other streets would allow a reduction in the number of lanes on Almond Street.

• Traffic analysis is under way to study the impacts on the interstate operations and operation and configuration of individual streets to take advantage of available capacity.
• Tunnel studies are under way to develop a tunnel alternative that takes into account previous tunnel alignments the Department developed during scoping as well as the public’s new concepts and ideas received during the scoping phase.

• The tunnel is seen by some as a compromise between the Viaduct Alternative and Community Grid Alternative. This concept would maintain high speed interstate traffic underground through Syracuse but also would provide a boulevard above the tunnel.

• We are looking at deeper bored tunnels, the tunnel not being an interstate due to the challenges of connecting back to I-690.
This part of the presentation focuses on the common features of the alternatives that are moving forward for further study.

Common features are any element that will be built no matter which alternative is selected.
To improve safety on I-690 and the West Street ramps, NYSDOT will remove the existing, free-flow Interchange 11 and replace it with a new interchange, controlled by a traffic signal on West Street.

The new interchange would simplify connections to and from the interstate from West Street, as well as the connection to Genesee Street.

View of West Street/Genesee Street. Bridge would be eliminated which would dramatically reduce the speeds along the West Street Corridor.
• All alternatives would reconstruct the I-690/I-81 interchange, providing all of the required interstate-to-interstate movements.

• This includes the two “missing connections” in today’s I-690/I-81 interchange: eastbound I-690 to northbound I-81, and southbound I-81 to westbound I-690. Both are illustrated by the yellow arrows on the slide.
• Develop a new partial interchange at MLK east via Renwick Avenue.

• As a result of the new partial interchange the public would see reduced congestion at the Harrison and Adams corridor as a result of this common feature.

• Improve access to the Southside and University Hill from the I-81 South.

• Thru recent discussions with the public (SHA, SU, Hospitals, City, Railroad, etc.) DOT has developed a new concept on the Southside for the Community Grid and Tunnel solutions. DOT will show these new concepts at the upcoming Stakeholder meeting in June.

• The MLK partial interchange will no longer be considered a Common Feature and will only be considered under the Viaduct replacement solution.

• The public outreach and DEIS process is built to have lots of input on a variety of topics.
• Also under all the build alternatives, a new bridge to carry Butternut over I-81 would be constructed. This new overpass would connect to Clinton and Franklin Streets, providing better access between the Northside and the Franklin Square neighborhoods.

• Pedestrian and bike improvements are planned to improve connectivity between eastern and western neighborhoods.
NYSDOT plans to also make improvements in the northern section of I-81, from the I-81/I-690 interchange to Hiawatha Boulevard, we are proposing a new travel lane in each direction to improve operations on I-81.

There are several non-standard highway features like narrow shoulders and tight curves that also would be corrected.

The on and off ramps would be reconstructed, and possibly reconfigured, with longer entrance ramps and better merges.
• What’s coming next for the project?

• Four solutions moving forward with different sub-options under each solution and common features across all alternatives.

• The Draft EIS is a comprehensive and thorough document that looks at a range of topics, and how they might be affected by the project.

• The public will have an opportunity to comment on this document at a public hearing.

• After public review and comment move to a Final EIS which identifies the preferred alternative and then the Record of Decision documenting the findings.
• For more information and to read the Scoping Report, please visit our project website, www.i81opportunities.org.

• Drop by the project’s outreach center at the historic Carnegie building on 335 Montgomery Street, Tuesday and Thursday from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

• You may also call the project hotline during business hours or email us. Thank you for your interest in this project, and the Project Team looks forward to hearing from you.