Initial Scoping Meeting
November 13, 2013
Overview of I-81

- Major north-south corridor and trade route
- 855 miles from Tennessee to Canada
- Principal north-south interstate through Central New York providing a connection to the New York State Thruway
- Primary local access to downtown Syracuse and University Hill
I-81 Corridor Planning Study

- Planning study undertaken by NYSDOT, in cooperation with FHWA and Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC)
- Identified issues for 12-mile corridor and prioritized projects for corridor
- Participation by nearly 3,000 people
- Study completed (Summer 2013)
I-81 Corridor Issues

- **Structural Condition**
  - Localized deck failure more frequent

- **Safety Issues**
  - Accident rate more than three to five times the statewide average

- **Geometric Deficiencies**
  - Shoulder width, distance between ramps

- **Capacity Issues**
  - Severe congestion in the AM and PM peak hour

- **Maintenance Issues**
  - Storm water, snow and ice control, general maintenance

- **Costs to the Community**
  - Emergency response hindered, divides the community
I-81 in Syracuse: Facts and Figures

- Built 1966-1968 (nearly 50 years old)
- Viaduct priority area is 3.5 miles (1.5 miles elevated) with 183 bridge spans and crosses 18 streets
- Carries 50,000-100,000 vehicles per day to, from and through Downtown Syracuse area
- Majority of traffic has origins or destinations within the downtown area
Initiation of I-81 Viaduct Project

- FHWA: Federal Lead Agency
- NYSDOT: State Lead Agency
- Published Notice of Intent (August 26, 2013) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement
- Initiated project review under National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Currently in NEPA Scoping
Initiation of I-81 Viaduct Project

Scoping phase of the project will:

- Establish the project’s purpose and need
- Establish the project’s goals and objectives
- Develop and examine alternatives for further study
- Develop an environmental analysis framework, and
- Engage agency, stakeholder, and public participation.
I-81 Viaduct project

Project Purpose

- Consider how transportation infrastructure can enhance economic growth and vitality in greater Syracuse
- Create an improved corridor that:
  - meets transportation needs
  - supports long-range planning efforts
  - moves people and goods safely and efficiently
- Address structural deficiencies and nonstandard highway features
Goals and Objectives

- **Improve safety** and create an **efficient** regional and local transportation system within and through greater Syracuse.

- **Eliminate structural deficiencies and improve bridge ratings in the I-81 Viaduct priority area.**

- **Address identified geometric and operational deficiencies in the I-81 viaduct priority area and related interchanges.**
## Goals and Objectives

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>Provide transportation solutions that enhance the livability, sustainability, and economic vitality of greater Syracuse</td>
<td>Create transportation infrastructure that is consistent with the long-range plans of the Syracuse Metropolitan Planning Area</td>
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<td>Improve bicycle and pedestrian surface connections that border the Interstate 81 viaduct</td>
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<td>Improve the visual and aesthetic character of transportation infrastructure to minimize the perceived barrier between Downtown Syracuse and adjoining neighborhoods</td>
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<td>Maintain or enhance vehicle access to the regional highway network and key destinations (i.e., I-690, I-481, central business district, hospitals, and institutions)</td>
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Environmental Review

What’s in an EIS?

Topics include:
- Transportation
- Land Use and Community Character
- Socioeconomic Conditions
- Visual Resources and Aesthetic Considerations
- Cultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Energy and Climate Change
- Noise and Vibration
- Natural Resources
- Hazardous and Contaminated Materials
- Construction Effects
What Is Scoping?

- Early opportunity for the public to provide input on the project
  - Comment on the purpose and need, goals and objectives, range of alternatives
- Identifies alternatives to be evaluated in the Environmental Impact Statement
- Initial scoping comment period through January 17, 2014
- All comments will be responded to at the end of scoping
Goals of Initial NEPA Scoping Meeting

- Present overview of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process
- Present when and how the public can get involved
- Present how I-81 Corridor Study is informing the Viaduct project
- Present purpose and need
- Present goals and objectives
- Present preliminary list of alternatives
Preliminary Alternatives Development

- No Build Alternative--baseline
- Above Grade / Reconstruction Alternative--remove and replace the viaduct
- At Grade / Surface Alternative--remove the viaduct and convert to a surface level highway; re-designate I-481 as I-81
- Below Grade / Depressed Highway Alternative--remove the viaduct and replace with an uncovered below grade highway through Syracuse
- Below Grade / Tunnel Alternative--remove the viaduct and replace with a tunnel to carry I-81 through Syracuse
Preliminary Alternatives Development

Highway Design
- Number of lanes
- Lane widths
- Median and shoulder widths
- Grades and curves
- Elevation

Highway Operations
- Traffic volumes
- Ramp location and spacing
- Roadway safety
- Snow and ice removal
- Maintenance costs

Community Impacts
- Effects on local street traffic
- Pedestrian and bicyclist safety
- Property requirements
- Visual quality
- Traffic noise
- Historic resources

Quality of Life
- Explore sustainable design elements
- Explore different pedestrian and bicycle designs
- Urban design improvements
- Opportunities to enhance economic development
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Goals of Future NEPA Scoping Meeting

- Present refined alternatives
- Present initial evaluation results
- Present study area for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- Present methodologies for the Environmental Impact Statement
Next Steps

- Initiate stakeholder meetings
- Develop and refine project alternatives
- Hold future scoping meeting
- Prepare Final Scoping Report, which will identify alternatives to carry forward to the Environmental Impact Statement
Initial Scoping Meeting

- We want to hear from you!
- Accepting written comments (by regular mail and through [www.i81opportunities.org](http://www.i81opportunities.org)) and oral comments at this meeting
- Comment period ends on January 17, 2014
- Comments will be summarized and addressed in the Final Scoping Report
- Please follow moderator instructions for public commentary
Thank You

Please Visit Us at ...

www.i81opportunities.org

Project hotline:

1-855-481-8255 (I-855-I81-TALK)