Thank you for joining the Federal Highway Administration and the New York State Department of Transportation for the Initial Scoping Meeting for the I-81 Viaduct Project. You will have an opportunity to provide written and oral comments on the project.

Schedule of Events

3:00 pm to 8:00 pm: Continual open house and displays
4:00 pm: Formal presentation
6:00 pm: Repeat of formal presentation

After each presentation, the public will have an opportunity to comment on the scope of the EIS. Those wishing to speak must complete a speaker card.

Comments will be received and recorded in several ways:

- Orally, in public, recorded by a stenographer. Please sign up here.
- Orally, in private, with a stenographer. Please sign up here.
- In writing, via email at www.i81opportunities.org, or by filling out the available comment forms on site or mailing them at your convenience to:

  I-81 Viaduct Project
  New York State Department of Transportation
  333 E. Washington Street
  Syracuse, NY 13202

The initial scoping comment period will remain open through January 17, 2014

- Spanish/English translators are available. Intérpretes de español e inglés están disponibles.
- Translation to multiple languages available at LinguaLinx table.
- A sign language interpreter is available.
Project Area

--- Viaduct Area

SCALE

0 0.5 MILE
I-81 Facts and Figures

► Important interstate and international corridor and trade route
► 855 miles from Tennessee to Canada
► Major north-south route through Central New York providing a connection to the east-west I-90 (Thruway)

► In Syracuse:
  ● Primary access point to Downtown and University Hill
  ● Built 1966-1968 (nearly 50 years old)
  ● Viaduct priority area comprises 3.5 miles/183 bridge spans/18 street crossings
  ● Carries 50,000–100,000 vehicles per day to, from, and through Downtown Syracuse
  ● Majority of traffic has origins or destinations within the Downtown area
WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?
I-81 Corridor Planning Study

► What was NYSDOT’s Corridor Planning Study?
  - Investigated opportunities, needs, and constraints along a 12-mile corridor surrounding I-81
  - Engaged communities to understand the public concerns and considerations
  - Nearly 3,000 people participated in study
  - Study completed (Summer 2013)

► What did we learn from the Corridor Planning Study?
  - The corridor’s transportation needs informed this project’s purpose and need
  - Corridor’s goals and objectives informed this project’s goals and objectives
  - Construction of I-81 on a new alignment (i.e., West Street or Western Bypass) is not feasible
  - Rehabilitation of outer segments is feasible (would be handled in future, independent projects)
  - Identified viaduct as a priority area for investigation under NEPA

► Identified four strategies for I-81 viaduct segment, which will be further investigated in this project
  - Reconstruction
  - Boulevard
  - Tunnel
  - Depressed Highway
In this stage, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT):

- Initiate project review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)
- Establish the project’s purpose and need
- Develop and examine alternatives for further study
- Determine how environmental issues will be studied
- Learn what is important to the public as well as federal and state agencies (throughout the process)
What Is an Environmental Review?

Why do projects undergo environmental review?

- Both the federal government and New York State have established environmental review requirements to ensure that agencies consider potential environmental effects of projects that they are undertaking or approving. The federal and state legislation are known as:
  
  **NEPA** National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
  
  **SEQRA** [New York] State Environmental Quality Review Act

- Both processes are similar, and in the event that FHWA and NYSDOT are involved (as is the case with the I-81 Viaduct Project), one Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) can be prepared to satisfy the requirements of both.

- The environmental review process provides a valuable way for agencies to gather public input, coordinate with other public agencies, and make decisions that involve engineers, planners, ecologists, landscape architects, and others.

What are the steps in the environmental review process?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notice of Intent</td>
<td>Formally announces project and initiates environmental review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoping Process</td>
<td>Establishes framework for environmental review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft Environmental Impact Statement</td>
<td>Documents potential environmental, social, and economic effects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Review</td>
<td>Minimum 45-day public review period of Draft EIS, including a public hearing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Environmental Impact Statement</td>
<td>Addresses public and agency comments on Draft EIS as well as any project refinements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record of Decision</td>
<td>FHWA and NYSDOT decision document that officially identifies the preferred alternative and mitigation commitments. It ends the NEPA process and allows the project to enter design and construction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Is Scoping?

Scoping is an initial step in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and begins with publication of a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* (August 26, 2013).

The goals of scoping are to:
- Identify issues and concerns that a project is intended to correct
- Develop the project’s statement of purpose and need
- Identify project goals and objectives
- Consider and develop a reasonable range of project alternatives
- Evaluate and screen alternatives to determine if an alternative should be advanced for detailed study in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or if an alternative should be discarded
- Identify study areas and methodologies to assess the potential environmental impacts of the project in the EIS
- Solicit input from public agencies with certain expertise about the project or its potential environmental effects
- Get your input and feedback

*This initial scoping comment period is open through January 17, 2014*

What Are the Goals of These Scoping Meetings?

**Initial Scoping Meeting**
- Present overview of NEPA process
- Present when and how the public can get involved
- Present how the I-81 Corridor Study is informing the current project
- Present purpose and need
- Present goals and objectives
- Present preliminary list of alternatives

**Future Scoping Meeting**
- Present refined alternatives
- Present initial evaluation results
- Present EIS study areas
- Present EIS methodologies

*Get your input and feedback*
**Purpose and Need**

**PURPOSE**

To address the structural deficiencies and nonstandard highway features of the I-81 corridor while creating an improved corridor through the City of Syracuse that meets transportation needs and provides the transportation infrastructure to support long-range planning efforts.

**NEED**

The I-81 viaduct contains numerous nonstandard and nonconforming design features; is prone to congestion and safety hazards; and influences the livability, sustainability, and economic vitality of the City of Syracuse.

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**What is nonstandard?**

A nonstandard highway feature is any critical element of the highway that does not meet NYSDOT design standards. NYSDOT's Highway Design Manual defines seventeen critical elements (e.g. design speed, lane width, shoulder width) for roadways in the state.

**What is nonconforming?**

Nonconforming highway features are elements of the highway that are not considered critical by NYSDOT but do not meet common engineering standards or practices specified by NYSDOT's Highway Design Manual.

**What is sustainability?**

As defined by FHWA's Livability Guidebook, sustainable transportation provides exceptional mobility and access to meet development needs without compromising the quality of life of future generations. A sustainable transportation system is safe, healthy, and affordable, while limiting emissions and use of new and nonrenewable resources.

**What is livability?**

U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood defined livability as “being able to take your kids to school, go to work, see a doctor, drop by the grocery or post office, go out to dinner and a movie, and play with your kids at the park—all without having to get in your car.”

**What is economic vitality?**

Economic vitality is the combination of many elements that contribute to the financial health of a community, including employment opportunities, real estate values, retail sales, tax base, and the adequacy of public infrastructure and services.
The project’s goals and objectives are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve safety and create an efficient regional and local transportation system within and through greater Syracuse.</td>
<td>◦ Eliminate structural deficiencies and improve bridge ratings in the I-81 viaduct priority area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◦ Address identified geometric and operational deficiencies in the I-81 viaduct priority area and related interchanges.</td>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◦ Improve bicycle and pedestrian surface connections that border the I-81 viaduct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◦ Improve the visual and aesthetic character of transportation infrastructure to minimize the perceived barrier between downtown Syracuse and adjoining neighborhoods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◦ Maintain or enhance vehicle access to the regional highway network and key destinations (i.e., I-690, central business district, hospitals, and institutions).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why are these goals and objectives important?

*Goals and objectives are used to evaluate the project’s alternatives. An alternative that does not meet the goals and objectives will not be considered for further study.*
WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Issues and Constraints

Deficiencies between I-690 and Hiawatha Blvd:
- Multiple S-shaped curves
- Not enough space between on- and off-ramps
- Narrow lanes

Quality of life issues:
- Aesthetics and visual character
- Street ambience
- Ineffective use of space
- Pedestrian and bicycle connections
- Existing structure creates uninviting spaces

Lacks connections between:
- SB I-81 to WB I-690
- EB I-690 to NB I-81

Bridges carrying roadway need to be improved or rebuilt

Deficiencies include:
- Narrow shoulders
- Sharp curves on ramps
- Roadway banking (tilting)
- Not enough space between ramps

Constrained right-of-way at I-81/I-690 interchange and along other areas of elevated highway

Safety, congestion, and highway operational issues

Must maintain adequate separation between railroad tracks and I-81

Limited right-of-way

Almond Street area unfriendly to pedestrians and bicyclists

I-81 and parking beneath it make it difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross east-west

I-81 physically divides Downtown/Southside and University Hill

A truck attempting to pass a disabled vehicle on the road (since shoulders are lacking) creates a traffic back-up.
WHERE WE ARE NOW?
Development and Refinement of Project Alternatives

Key Considerations in Alternative Development

- How many lanes should each option have?
- How can we maintain local connections and keep through traffic flowing on the highway? How will local streets be affected?
  - Investigate local street connections and improvements
- Where should interchange ramps be located? How much distance should there be between ramps so they function most efficiently?
- What improvements can be made to I-690 interchange, and to other key interchanges?
  - Identify ramp connections, configurations, and enhancements
- Safety
  - How can we improve pedestrian safety?
  - How can we improve bicyclist safety?
  - How can we improve motorist safety?
- Quality of life
  - How can we improve the visual quality of the transportation infrastructure (roadway, streets, crossings, signs, etc.)?
During scoping, alternatives will be identified and explored further

- Multiple options to be developed for each alternative (e.g., explore different number of lanes and configuration, etc.)
- Develop and engineer multiple options under each scenario and determine their feasibility
- Reasonable alternatives may be suggested during the scoping process and will be considered
- Refined options will be presented for public review at future scoping meeting
Above Grade / Reconstruction Alternative options are being explored for a replacement viaduct. These options will examine the endpoints of the new viaduct, heights and grades, aesthetic treatments of the viaduct and local roadways that travel beneath the viaduct.
WHERE ARE WE NOW?
Sample of an Above Grade/Reconstruction Alternative

EXISTING PLAN VIEW

SAMPLE PROFILE OF AN ABOVE GRADE / RECONSTRUCTION ALTERNATIVE
(MORE TO BE DEVELOPED AS STUDY PROGRESSES)
WHERE ARE WE NOW?
At Grade/Surface Alternative

Multiple At Grade Alternatives will be developed. These could include differing lane configurations, lengths, streetscape enhancements and urban design improvements, and surface-level options to redirect traffic flow and connect communities. Other features are highlighted on this board.
WHERE ARE WE NOW?
Sample of an At Grade/Surface Alternative

EXISTING PLAN VIEW

SAMPLE PROFILE OF AN AT GRADE / SURFACE ALTERNATIVE
(MORE TO BE DEVELOPED AS STUDY PROGRESSES)
Below Grade / Depressed Highway Alternatives will be developed. These could include differing lane configurations, lengths, depths, streetscape enhancements and urban design improvements, and surface-level options to redirect local traffic flow along the depressed highway and connect communities. Other features are highlighted on this board.
WHERE ARE WE NOW?
Sample of a Below Grade/Depressed Highway Alternative

EXISTING PLAN VIEW

SAMPLE PROFILE OF A BELOW GRADE / DEPRESSED HIGHWAY ALTERNATIVE
(MORE TO BE DEVELOPED AS STUDY PROGRESSES)
Multiple Tunnel Alternatives will be developed. These could include differing alignments (routes), depths, lane configurations, lengths, streetscape enhancements and urban design improvements, and surface-level options to redirect traffic flow and connect communities. Other features are highlighted on this board.
WHERE ARE WE NOW?
Sample of a Below Grade/Tunnel Alternative

EXISTING PLAN VIEW

SAMPLE PROFILE OF A BELOW GRADE / TUNNEL ALTERNATIVE
(MORE TO BE DEVELOPED AS STUDY PROGRESSES)
WHERE ARE WE NOW?
Samples—All Alternatives Combined

EXISTING PLAN VIEW

SAMPLE PROFILES - ALL ALTERNATIVES COMBINED
(MORE TO BE DEVELOPED AS STUDY PROGRESSES)
WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Other Strategies Considered

► Rehabilitation of I-81

- In the viaduct segment, NYSDOT identified 42 bridges in need of repair or replacement
  - 40 bridges would need to be replaced
  - 2 could be rehabilitated
- Given limited highway right-of-way, these replacement or rehabilitation projects may not successfully correct nonstandard highway features or other deficiencies identified in the I-81 corridor planning study
- NYSDOT has determined that the rehabilitation strategy would not be appropriate for the viaduct segment and is considering not carrying it forward to the EIS

► I-81 on a New Alignment

- NYSDOT investigated a realignment of the I-81 corridor through Syracuse
  - explored a western bypass
  - explored a new interstate corridor along West Street
- Both of these options would be very costly, require substantial land acquisition, and potentially displace residences and businesses
- NYSDOT concluded that a realignment option is not reasonable and is considering not carrying it forward to the EIS.
WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Bicycle and Pedestrian Design Considerations

- Explore different designs to optimize access and safety for walkers and bicyclists and make it easier for them to get where they want to go
- Improve access to different modes of transportation (biking, walking, bus, car, train)
- Integrate landscape with multi-modal facilities

Examples from other cities across the nation
WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Urban Design Considerations

- Whatever the solution, the project provides an opportunity to the Syracuse area to incorporate high quality urban design that promotes neighborhood connections and more opportunity for social interaction, provides quality amenities, and creates a safe environment.

- Potential urban design features could include:
  - landscaping,
  - high quality furnishings,
  - lighting, and
  - gateway treatments.

- Explore opportunities for making the current space under the elevated highway more attractive and safe.

Examples from other cities across the nation.
WHERE ARE WE NOW?
Sustainable Design Considerations

- Consider green infrastructure including sustainable stormwater strategies
- Explore potential for integrating renewable energy and green infrastructure features into the urban design
- Consider potential for solar and wind power
- Explore landscape design features that promote improved air, water, and visual quality

Examples from other cities across the nation
WHERE ARE WE GOING?
Next Step: Alternatives Screening

**Develop Alternatives**
- Explore and engineer multiple alternatives

**Screen and Evaluate Alternatives**
- Screen alternatives based on engineering studies and public input

**Important Considerations in the Screening**
- How does the alternative meet project goals and objectives?
- What are the potential property impacts?
- What are the effects on regional and local street connections?
- How well does the alternative correct I-81’s nonstandard features (shoulder/lane widths, etc.)?
- Is the alternative consistent with community needs?
- What will the solution cost to construct, operate, and maintain?

**RESULT**
Alternatives to be Studied in DEIS

*Future scoping meeting will present results of the ongoing alternative development process*
Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

An EIS is a comprehensive document that analyzes potential effects of a project on the natural, man-made, social, and economic environments. It is prepared following procedures of federal and state mandates.

EIS technical studies are often organized by the following three primary considerations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affected Environment</th>
<th>Existing conditions, or base line conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Consequences</td>
<td>Potential effects, or a comparison to existing conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitigation</td>
<td>Explore opportunities to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**I-81 Viaduct Project**

**WHERE ARE WE GOING?**

The EIS will examine...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Overview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Evaluates potential effects on the movement of people and goods and looks at traffic, public transit, and pedestrian and bicycle movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use and Community Character</td>
<td>Looks at development patterns (e.g., residential, commercial, recreational, etc.) to determine potential effects on land use operations and the character of an area and also considers community visions for the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Conditions</td>
<td>Evaluates demographic and employment characteristics and the potential impacts and/or benefits on businesses, tax bases, and other economic indicators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Acquisition, Displacement, and Relocation</td>
<td>Determines if the project would require acquisition of or easements on any property outside the existing highway right-of-way and whether that would result in displacement or relocation of any occupants and whether that would affect tax revenues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Resources and Aesthetic Conditions</td>
<td>Evaluates whether the project would affect any views to or from resources where such views are considered defining or important, and evaluates the aesthetic quality of the project itself and its potential effects on the visual character of the surrounding area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Resources</td>
<td>Considers potential impacts to historic and archaeological resources. Historic resources may include buildings, districts, monuments, or sites of architectural, cultural or historic significance. Archaeological resources include buried artifacts or remains that have cultural or historic significance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHERE ARE WE GOING?  
The EIS will examine...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air Quality</td>
<td>Evaluates how a project may affect (increase or decrease) pollutants in the air we breathe, typically related to vehicle emissions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy and Climate Change</td>
<td>Considers potential energy consumption of a project and its effect on greenhouse gases and climate change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>Analyzes potential changes in ambient noise levels (typically from highway traffic) and potential effects on sensitive receptors (e.g., residences, schools, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources</td>
<td>Considers potential effects on the natural environment, such as plants and wildlife (including endangered or threatened species), wetlands and other water resources, floodplains, and geologic conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazardous Wastes and Contaminated Materials</td>
<td>Identifies the potential to disturb or expose hazardous wastes and contaminated materials and the measures that would be implemented to protect public health from the removal, transport, and disposal of these materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Effects</td>
<td>Considers the short-term effects in each of the subject areas described above that could result from construction of the project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHERE ARE WE GOING?

The EIS will examine...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect and Cumulative Effects</td>
<td>Indirect effects consider a project’s potential to induce separate actions later in time or farther removed in distance and result in secondary impacts. Cumulative impacts consider the combined effects of a project with other independent but simultaneous or reasonably foreseeable actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Justice</td>
<td>Evaluates potential effects on minority and low-income populations to ensure these communities do not suffer disproportionately high and adverse effects from a project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other NEPA and SEQRA Considerations</td>
<td>Considers more general or global aspects of a project, such as potential short-term effects that are necessary for its long-term productivity; irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources; a summary of unavoidable impacts, which cannot be partially or fully mitigated; and consistency with New York State smart growth principles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4(f) Evaluation (Assessment of Effects on Public Parks, Wildlife Refuges, or Historic Resources)</td>
<td>An independent evaluation that is often incorporated into an EIS and evaluates compliance with Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Act of 1966, which prohibits USDOT (including FHWA) from approving any project that “uses” or adversely affects public parks, wildlife refuges, or historic resources unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative to that use and all measures to minimize harm have been implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 6(f) Evaluation (Consistency with Land and Water Conservation Act)</td>
<td>An independent evaluation that documents coordination with respect to Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1964. A Section 6(f) analysis is needed when a project would alter parklands or other sites that previously received federal money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. There is potential that parklands near the existing alignment of I-81 have received Land and Water Conservation Funds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

- Initiated when there is a federal undertaking
- Requires that Federal agencies consider the effects of their actions on historic properties within the project’s Area of Potential Effect
- Comprises a public involvement component, which includes:
  - providing the public with information about the project and its effects on historic properties
  - seeking public comment and input, and
  - consultation process among project’s lead agencies, State Historic Preservation Office, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, federally recognized Native American tribes, and other consulting parties

Who are the consulting parties?

Consulting parties may include local governments and individuals and organizations with a demonstrated interest in the project who may participate due to the nature of their legal or economic relation to the undertaking or affected properties, or their concern with the undertaking’s effects on historic properties
Public Participation/Agency Coordination

Invited Cooperating Agencies:
- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)
- US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation—State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)

Public participation is important to this process
- New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) want continued feedback. We encourage open, transparent discussion of project issues and details. Throughout the project, NYSDOT will provide opportunities to hear from the public and the agencies early and often, as well as opportunities for questions, comments and dialogue. We encourage you to participate.

Agency Coordination
- Cooperating agencies
- Participating agencies
- Section 106 consulting parties

Public involvement tools include:
- Public meetings/open houses at project milestones
- Additional meetings with stakeholders
- Stakeholders’ Committee
- Project website: www.i81opportunities.org
- Project email: i81opportunities@dot.ny.gov
- Project hotline: 1-855-481-8255 (I-855-I81-TALK)
- Mailing list
- Project document viewing sites throughout greater Syracuse
- Environmental justice outreach
- Outreach to populations with limited English proficiency
WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Next Steps

- Continue stakeholder, agency, and community meetings (ongoing)
- Develop and refine project alternatives
- Evaluate and screen alternatives
- Hold future scoping meeting (will present refined alternatives)
- Prepare *Final Scoping Report*, which will identify alternatives to carry forward to the EIS
Project-related documents will be available for public review at locations (see map below) throughout greater Syracuse.
For more information, please contact:

I-81 Viaduct Project
New York State Department of Transportation
333 E. Washington Street
Syracuse, NY 13202
(315) 428-4351

Visit www.i81opportunities.org