Overview of Meetings on the Real Estate Acquisition Process
I-81 VIADUCT REAL PROPERTY RIGHTS ACQUISITION INFORMATION SESSIONS
June 1, 2016 and June 2, 2016

On June 1 and 2, 2016, three public meetings were held in neighborhoods across the City where properties may be impacted by the I-81 Viaduct Project. The meeting locations were the Boys & Girls Club at 212 Van Buren Street, the I-81 Information Center at 335 Montgomery Street, Syracuse and Assumption Church Parish Center at 808 S. Salina Street. Each presentation was the same, with the purpose of providing information on the process that is undertaken by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) when it acquires real property interests for transportation projects.

Eileen Moore from the NYSDOT Region 3 Right of Way office and Mark Frechette, Project Director of the I-81 Viaduct Project presented information on the real estate acquisition process. Other staff members were also on hand to answer additional questions.

The presenters provided a brief background of the I-81 Viaduct Project and information on the acquisition process followed for all transportation projects across the State, in accordance with New York State Law.

The presentation emphasized that no Preferred Alternative for the I-81 Viaduct Project has been selected and that NYSDOT continues to study the potential alternatives presented in the Scoping Document. Mr. Frechette stated that the alternatives will be included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for public review and comment.

Ms. Moore clarified that acquisitions range from temporary or permanent easements to partial or total acquisitions of properties. No decisions have been made on what property rights might be needed for the I-81 Viaduct Project. She also explained the compensation that could be available to residential and commercial tenants, and residential and business owners.

Moving forward, NYSDOT will continue to listen to the concerns of the community as it takes the necessary steps toward selecting a Preferred Alternative.
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE REAL PROPERTY MEETINGS

Q. I saw maps and sketches of the I-81 corridor in the media and at presentations by other organizations. These maps and sketches showed potential properties that could be acquired. Are they official maps from the New York State Department of Transportation?
A. No. These maps are not official maps or renderings of NYSDOT. These maps and renderings were created by others, not NYSDOT. They are ideas and opinions of others put forward to generate discussion by others.

Q. When will the official maps for the I-81 Viaduct Project be available?
A. NYSDOT does not have a defined timeline. Plans of the project area will be developed as part of the project development process.

Q. When will property owners and tenants know if their property is going to be acquired?
A. NYSDOT does not have a defined timeline. Plans of the project area will be part of the project development process. NYSDOT anticipates meeting with potentially affected property owners as the draft of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is finalized.

Q. Does NYSDOT have to take all of my property or can they acquire just a portion of it?
Q. If NYSDOT only takes part of the building for construction purposes, can I buy back the land?
A. NYSDOT would only take what is needed. Depending on the selection of the preferred alternative and the final design, NYSDOT could acquire an easement over a portion of your property, (temporary or permanent), may have to acquire a portion of your property, or may have to acquire the entire property. NYSDOT is in the process of determining property needs as the alternatives are being refined.

Q. When will elected officials know if properties in their neighborhoods are going to be acquired?
Q. What role has City government played to assist the project?
A. NYSDOT continues to update our elected officials. We will continue to collaborate with the elected officials and administrators to identify the potential impacts to neighborhoods that may result from certain acquisitions. Once the potentially affected properties are identified, the elected officials will be notified as well.

Q. Will decisions of NYSDOT consider whether or not a property is eligible or listed on the Historic Register?
Q. Will decisions of NYSDOT consider the overall impact on a neighborhood if properties are acquired?
Q. Will NYSDOT address community wide economic impacts due to buildings being taken?
Q. Will NYSDOT “balance” economic impacts?
Q. Will decisions of NYSDOT consider the potential reduction in taxable real property in the City if properties are acquired?
A. Yes. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement will include the assessment of these topics.
Q. Does NYSDOT compensate owners and tenants for impacts to my property during construction?
A. No. By law, there is no separate compensation to property owners or tenants for impacts during construction. The DEIS will include an assessment of the potential construction impacts.

Q. Is there any compensation to properties that will be closer to 81 as a result of the improvements made?
A. The real estate acquisition process does not address a property’s proximity to the improvements unless a property interest is acquired for the project. The DEIS will include an assessment of potential construction impacts.

Q. Will there be any impacts on McBride and Raynor Streets?
A. At this time, NYSDOT does not know all the impacts for each alternative being analyzed.

Q. What about “on ramps” and “off ramps” through the neighborhoods?
A. NYSDOT will address geometric and operational deficiencies and we propose to maintain or enhance vehicle access to the interstate highway network and key destinations. The benefits and adverse impacts that may result from implementation of the project will be presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Q. If I move, can I stay in Syracuse or can I move to another City or State?
A. Yes, the State compensates you to move to comparable housing. You can move to any City or State you want to and NYSDOT will work with you to determine your eligible relocation benefits.

Q. Tenants need some clarity and stability so they can plan ahead if necessary. Stress is really high where I live. How soon will we know whether we have to relocate or not?
A. At this time we are assessing who may be affected. When we do know we will notify those impacted and they will be given time to relocate, if necessary.

Q. How much time will I have to find a new place to live after I am told that my apartment will be acquired?
Q. If my home is in the path of the new roadway, how much time will I be given before I have to move?
Q. My business needs time to find a new location and move my inventory. How much time do I have before I have to move out?
A. The actual date of a relocation would depend on the availability of replacement properties and the project’s construction timetable. NYSDOT will give owners and tenants a minimum of 90 days notice.

Q. Will you pay for my moving expenses?
A. Yes. Those affected may also be eligible for moving expenses.
Q. What if my new rent is more than the rent that I pay now? Does the State pay for that difference?
A. Yes. If comparable housing is found, you could be eligible for a supplemental housing payment after you move and you give NYSDOT a rent receipt showing the new rent to be paid.

Q. Homeowners have put their heart and soul into their homes and into reviving their neighborhoods. Will NYSDOT take that into consideration when selecting a Preferred Alternative?
A. Yes.

Q. How would NYSDOT value my property?
A. NYSDOT obtains and appraisal to establish Fair Market Value.

Q. Does NYSDOT help me find another home?
A. Yes. The State assists in identifying comparable property.

Q. There is so much speculation out there that my business plan is in jeopardy. Tenants are fearful of committing to a long term lease. What can I tell them?
A. NYSDOT advises against speculating on whether your building will or won’t be acquired. When it is determined that your building must be acquired, you will be notified and the acquisition process will begin.

Q. As a business owner, can I get reimbursed for the time and cost needed to re-do my business plan or long range operations plan?
A. No. Under New York State Law, reimbursement does not include the cost of business planning.

Q. My building is mixed use—commercial on the 1st floor and residential units above. What assistance does NYDOT provide if they need to acquire the building?
Q. I own my building but I also have commercial tenants. Does NYSDOT provide separate relocation assistance to both me as the owner and to my tenants?
A. Yes. Assistance is provided to both the property owner and each rental unit.

Q. I have a very specialized business in my building. Will NYSDOT pay for the relocation of that specialized equipment?
A. Yes. Moving expenses of your equipment is part of your relocation assistance. The Real Estate Specialists at NYSDOT will work with you to minimize the impacts on your business and determine what assistance you may be entitled to receive.

Q. I am a business renting space in a building that may be acquired. I paid for the improvements to my space. Will I get reimbursed for these expenses?
A. The appraisal will determine the Fair Market Value of the property. The State compensates the owner of the building based on that Fair Market Value. Tenants who have a right to any of
that compensation is handled through an Assignment of Claim and Release to ensure that all interests in the parcel are addressed.

Q. We own a commercial building with long term business and or office tenants. If my building is acquired before the leases are up, will I be paid for the loss of those future rents?
A. The appraisal could use the Income Approach, which addresses leasehold interests, to determine the Fair Market Value. The State compensates you based on that Fair Market Value.

Q. Do you compensate for the loss of business income?
A. No, but the appraisal uses the Income Capitalization Approach to determine the Fair Market Value; and we work closely with each property owner so they don’t experience a loss in business time. Usually there is time between when a property is acquired and when the business relocates.

Q. What if I cannot relocate my business and I have to close it?
A. The State may compensate you a separately computed allowance “in lieu of” moving expenses.

Q. If billboards are affected, will they be allowed to be put back up? If not, will the owner be compensated?
A. Billboards are treated the same as every other property interest. If a property right is acquired, the owner will be compensated and assistance will be provided.

Q. Where can I get more information on the Acquisition Process for transportation projects?
A. Information is available on the NYSDOT website at www.dot.ny.gov/divisions/engineering/real-estate.

Brochures are available “How Does New York State Acquire Property for Public Purposes” and “If you must move... we can help”. Both are available at the Information Center on Montgomery Street (the Old Carnegie Library) on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 a.m. to 2 p.m.