Welcome to the Stakeholders’ Advisory Working Group meeting.
What is scoping? It’s part of the environmental review process that NYSDOT follows, which is guided by the National Environmental Policy Act—the federal law, enacted in 1970, that outlines policies to protect the environment—as well as New York State’s Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). Scoping involves substantial public input to determine the scope—what will be studied—in the EIS. An EIS is a comprehensive document that describes and analyzes a project’s potential impacts on the environment.

Through this scoping process, and with substantial input from the public, FHWA and NYSDOT have identified the project’s purpose and need, developed its goals and objectives, investigated a range of potential alternatives, and determined the methodology that will be used to carry out the studies to assess the project. We’ve provided multiple opportunities for the public and our partner agencies to give us their ideas and comments to help shape the content of the Draft EIS.
In April 2015, we 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—an early and important step in the environmental review process that determines the “scope”—what will be studied—of the Draft EIS.

Tonight I will summarize for you some of the results of this initial phase of the project.
NYSDOT’s goals for the project remain the same, and are shown on this slide.

- Improve safety and create an efficient regional and local transportation system within and through greater Syracuse; and
- Provide transportation solutions that enhance the livability, visual quality, sustainability, and economic vitality of greater Syracuse.
In response to public comments, we’ve modified the project’s objectives. These objectives will be used to evaluate the project’s alternatives. The modifications to the project objectives address the need for walkability and enhanced pedestrian connections and the need to provide access to Centro’s bus services.

Transit amenities that may be explored could include bus stops and shelters, bus turnouts, and layover and turnaround places.
We are advancing three alternatives for further study in the DEIS: the No Build, Viaduct, and the Community Grid Alternatives. The No Build is required by NEPA and serves as the benchmark against which the other alternatives are compared.

Based on public input received NYSDOT will conduct additional engineering and further analysis to determine if there is a tunnel alternative that addresses the project’s need and meets the project purpose and objectives, as well as the established screening criteria. If a tunnel alternative is determined to be reasonable based on these factors, it may be considered for further evaluation and analysis.
We received new ideas during the scoping comment period from members of the public.
What’s coming next for the project? As you can see from the list on this slide, 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, which will be held after it’s published, and during a formal comment period.
In the meantime, we will continue to meet with stakeholders’ groups such as the advisory groups, the Stakeholders’ Committee, and others. We’ve had dozens and dozens of one-on-one meetings with a range of stakeholders—with individuals, elected officials, advocacy groups, business groups, the universities and hospitals, with SMTC, Centro, and many others are planned for the near future. We’ve held regular meetings with our cooperating agencies and with the City and County.

These efforts will continue throughout the environmental review process to ensure the public and agencies are afforded ample opportunities to participate in the project.