Appendix M-6
Public Hearing Transcripts

Part 1
8-17-2021 - I-81 Viaduct Project - Virtual Public Hearing

NEW YORK STATE

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

I-81 VIADUCT PROJECT VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING

DATE: August 17, 2021

TIME: 5:01 P.m. to 6:40 p.m.

LOCATION: ZOOM/C&S COMPANIES

449 Col. Eileen Collins Blvd.
Syracuse, NY 13212
8-17-2021 - I-81 Viaduct Project - Virtual Public Hearing

APPEARANCES:

BRODY SMITH, Moderator
AILEEN MAGUIRE, Host
DAMRIS SANTIAGO
MARK FRECHETTE
RICK MARQUIS
JARED GROSS
BEN WALSH
KEVIN MCCORMICK
KERRY MANNION
MARK TUCKER
LANESSA CHAPLIN
CYNTHIA BRIGHT
KEVIN TUCKER
DR. NATHAN RAYBECK
CHRIS SHENTON
PETER KING
MICHAEL STANTON
SCOTT MACFARLANE
GLORIA SAGE
CHRISTOPHER COLEBROOK
MICHAEL GALLAGHER
JACQUELINE LASONDE
ROBERT HALEY
DONALD DOERR
KATHLEEN KINSLAW
DEVON KINSLAMAN
CARMEN EMMI
LAURA MILLER
MS. MAGUIRE: Good afternoon, and thank you for attending the I-81 Viaduct Project Public Hearing. This is Aileen Maguire, and I will be serving as the host for the virtual hearing. Prior to the presentation, I will go over some general information on how to participate in the virtual hearing. Today’s event will be conducted in English. Interpretation is available for anyone who wishes to hear the event in Spanish.

To listen to interpretation on a computer, locate the globe icon along the bottom row of your Zoom screen, and select your language. If you are joining via the Zoom app on a mobile device, click ‘More’ on the three dots in the corner of your screen, select ‘Language interpretation’, and then choose your language and click ‘Done’. These instructions will now be read in Spanish.

The hearing moderator will be facilitating the hearing. A formal presentation will be followed by oral testimony. Comments will be limited to three minutes, and speakers will be muted if they use inappropriate language. Substantive comments will be responded to in the final environmental impact statement.
This hearing is being live streamed and recorded, and the official transcript of the hearing will become part of the project record. If you are watching the live stream and would like to comment, visit the project website at www.i81.dot.newyork.gov to register and receive a link to join the hearing. I will now review the instructions on how to participate in the hearing. This is also available on the project website, and will be reviewed again at the start of the comment period. If you have questions about the webinar technology, use the chat box to send a message to the host and receive a written response. Do not send comments through the chat. They will not be included in the project record.

If you would like to comment, please use the raise hand function, or press star nine on your phone to alert the host that you would like to comment. On mobile devices, you may need to click the three dots to access more features. When you are called on to speak, the host will give you permission to unmute yourself so all participants can hear you. If you log in by computer or the Zoom app, you will receive a notification to unmute.
Speaker icons are located in the top-left of Android and iOS devices. If you are dialing in by phone, when the moderator calls on you to speak, press star six to unmute. Press star six again to mute when you are done speaking. I will now turn over today’s event to the hearing moderator, Brody Smith.

MR. SMITH: Good evening. On behalf of Marie Therese Dominguez, the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Transportation, and Rick Marquis, the Administrator for the Federal Highway Administration’s New York Division, I welcome you to this I-81 Viaduct Project Public Hearing.

My name is Brody Smith, and I am serving as the moderator for this public hearing. A stenographer will record the proceedings of this meeting, and a verbatim written transcript will be prepared. I’m going to read an opening statement, which will be followed by a brief prerecorded presentation. When the presentation is finished, I will begin the moderated oral comment session. If you are watching the live stream and would like to provide a verbal comment, visit the project website at www.i81.dot.ny.gov to register and receive a link
to join the hearing.

The New York State Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, published a draft design report/draft environmental impact statement/draft section 4(f) evaluation for the I-81 Viaduct Project, on July 16, 2021. The project has been advanced in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act -- NEPA -- codified at 40 C.F.R. parts 1500 through 1508, the F.H.W.A. Environmental Impact and Related Procedures final rule at 23 CFR part 771, and the New York State D.O.T. Procedures for Implementation of the State Environmental Quality Review Act, at 17 New York Codes Rules and Regulations, part fifteen, and in accordance with the provisions of Article Two of the New York State Eminent Domain Procedure Law.

The publication of the D.D.R./D.E.I.S. began with the public comment period on the document, which will be extended until five p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, on September 14, 2021. This public hearing is being conducted to obtain comments on the project’s D.D.R. and D.E.I.S., and the right-of-way acquisition process. The D.D.R. /D.E.I.S. is
The D.D.R. /D.E.I.S. describes the project, the consideration of social, economic and environmental effects that would result from the implementation of the project, and measures to mitigate adverse effects. The hearing provides the public an opportunity to make formal statements and positions before any project decisions are made.

The agencies will review and consider public comments submitted during the established sixty-day public comment period. Responses to the substantive comments will be included in the project’s final design report/final environmental impact statement, or the F.D.R/F.E.I.S., which is anticipated to be published by the end of 2021.

MS. MAGUIRE: I’m just asking the moderator to pause for a moment while we work on some technical issues with the live stream. We will begin momentarily. I apologize for the delay. For those of you who are just logging in, we are just working on the live stream, and will start again momentarily.
Again, we apologize for the delay while we work on the technical issues.

Again, we apologize for the delay as we work on the live stream. We will begin momentarily. We most likely will be continuing on while the live stream is being fixed, and we apologize to anyone that’s participating in the live stream. It will be available as a recording following the hearing.

MR. SMITH: Thank you for bearing with us. I’d now like to go over the additional ways that you can comment. In addition to comments made at the public hearing, comments will be accepted in the following ways. First, written comments sent via U.S. Mail to Mark Frechette, P.E., Project Director, New York State Department of Transportation, Region Three, 333 East Washington Street, Syracuse, New York, 13202, or Rick Marquis, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, at the Leo W. O’Brien Federal Building, 11A Clinton Avenue, Suite 719, Albany, New York, 12207.

You can also comment through the use of the electronic comment form, via the project website, at www.i81.dot.ny.gov. You may also email
comments to i81opportunities@dot.ny.gov, and finally you can provide comments through a telephone voicemail system, through the project hotline, at 1-855-I81-TALK. That’s 855-481-8255. Information on how to submit written comments is also outlined on the project website. You can elect to submit comments both orally, and in writing. Written statements will be given the same weight and consideration as oral statements made at the meeting. Again, New York State D.O.T. and the Federal Highway Administration will accept public comments until five p.m., Eastern Daylight Time, on September 14, 2021.

Before we begin accepting oral comments from participants, we will play a prerecorded presentation on the project. After the presentation, I will give you some instructions on how we plan to take your oral comments.

(Presentation playing)

MR. SMITH: I will now introduce representatives of the New York State D.O.T. and the Federal Highway Administration, who are in attendance for today’s hearing. Mark Frechette, Project Director, New York State Department of
Transportation, Rick Martee, Division -- I’m sorry, Rick Marquis, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, Damaris Santiago, Deputy Director, New York Division, Federal Highway Administration, and Jared Gross, Area Engineer with Federal Highway Administration.

The panelists, hearing officer and A.S.L. interpreter will be visible on screen during the oral testimony. Although you may not see all the panelists on screen at one time, all the panelists will be listening to the testimony. My role as the hearing moderator is to provide members of the public an opportunity to provide comments in an organized, fair and professional manner.

The testimony is being recorded by a stenographer, so please state and spell your name, and identify any organization that you represent. To ensure all are heard, comments will be limited to three minutes after the introduction. There’ll be a countdown clock on the screen, and I will provide a verbal warning when thirty seconds remain.

Agency representatives will not be answering questions or responding to comments during the hearing. Responses to substantive comments will
be included in the final design report/final environmental impact statement. If you are watching the live stream and would like to comment, visit the project website at www.i81.dot.ny.gov to register and receive a link to join the hearing.

Before we begin the comment period, I’d like to recognize elected officials, or their representatives, who are in attendance. Those include Ben Walsh, the Mayor of the City of Syracuse, Rachel May, New York State Senator for District 53, Carnie David, Town of Salina Fourth Ward Councilor, Kevin McCormack, Town of Skaneateles Councilor, Kerry Mannion, Town of DeWitt Deputy Supervisor, Mark Tucker, Town of Skaneateles Councilor, and Courtney Alexander, Councilor for the Town of Skaneateles.

At this time, we would hear from those who wish to make oral statements. I remind you that if you would like to comment, please use the raise your hand function, or press star nine if participating by phone. In accordance with agency policy, elected and appointed officials will be given the first opportunity to speak. Others will be called to make their statements in the order they are listed in the queue.
I will call two names at a time, so you are prepared when it is your turn to speak. I apologize in advance if I mispronounce any names. Our first speaker, or I should say our first two speakers, would be Lanessa Chaplin and Cynthia Bright.

MS. CHAPLIN: Hi, good afternoon. Very nice to see you. I apologize in advance. There is a thunderstorm going on, so I could be in and out of my service. First, I just want to thank Mark Frechette, and all of the hard work the New York State Department of Transportation has done on this plan. I think it’s a great plan, and I really appreciate you guys ... My name is Lanessa Chaplin. I am the project councilor for the New York Civil Liberties Union, the A.C.L.U. I just have two comments at this time. I plan to make written comments in the near future.

My first comment would be, I would ask to expand the public comment period. I think because of the complexity of the pre-D.E.I.S., and in this current D.E.I.S., it takes a lot of time to kind of sift through those reports to see the substantial differences in the plans. And so I think it may
require more than a few days, so I’d request an 
extension on that comment period.

And then my second point that I would 
like to highlight is the placement of the roundabout. 
While I generally agree that a roundabout does a 
great job calming traffic, in general I think the 
particular placement of the roundabout is an area of 
concern for our organization, considering the 
E.P.A -- the Environmental Protection Agency -- and 
the C.D.C. have all kind of put out guidelines on how 
in proximity to a school, since Dr. King School 
obviously is very close the roundabout.

So we would like to see one of two 
things. Either the roundabout be moved a safe 
distance, which is six hundred feet, and/or the 
school be mitigated, meaning that it’s outfitted with 
the adequate ... systems to make sure that the air 
pollution is not impacting the children’s ability to 
learn and function in school, and then also generally 
just safety issues of how close the roundabout will 
be. To my understanding, ... thirty-six thousand 
cars that travel through that roundabout each week, 
so it just meets that requirement of a major roadway. 
And at that time ...
MR. SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Chaplin. The next speaker will be Cynthia Bright. Following Cynthia Bright, will be Kevin Tucker.

MS. BRIGHT: Hi, my name is Cynthia Bright. I’m a resident of Skaneateles, and I want to thank you for this presentation and all the work that has gone into this project. Well, there’s so many people. I guess my biggest concern, I feel that the plan -- this may be an error, but I’ve heard that the plan is for the many trucks that are trying to go west, that they will be diverted to westward locations, including Buffalo, Rochester, Seneca Falls -- that they would be encouraged to go east on the old 481, renamed 81, and get to the New York State Thruway. And I’m not so sure that that is going -- I don’t have confidence that that’s going to happen.

We already have an inordinate amount of trucks that pass through Route 20, coming either from Lafayette or Cortland. So I guess my concern is that that would be the intent, and I feel that it’s not going to happen. And it’s going to create even more problems than we already have, with so many trucks trying to go west, trying to travel through
this small village along Route 20. That’s what I have.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Bright. The next speaker will be Nathan Raybeck, followed by Chris Shenton. I’d like to remind everyone to spell your name before you begin speaking, for the benefit of the stenographer.

DR. RAYBECK: Hi. I hope everybody can hear me. My name is Dr. Nathan Raybeck -- name is spelled N-A-T-H-A-N, R-A-Y-B-E-C-K – and I’m a resident of Syracuse. I thank the D.O.T. for this hearing, and for all its work to get the voices of the community to make this project the best it can be.

At the outset, I wish to make a comment on the focus of this project. This project should be about improving the lives of the people of Syracuse, specifically those who live in the footprint of the viaduct, and whose lives have been adversely impacted by the viaduct as it currently stands. The community grid is by far the best option for this, and this plan, and this plan alone, provides for immense improvement to our region.

That being said though, I think we can
make it better. As others have said, we should work
to narrow and sluice down the viaduct replacement,
whether you call it Business Loop 81 or Almond
Street. We should also look at moving the point at
which the highway comes to ... further south, to
better connect our city, allowing more residents the
benefit of highway removal, and dispersing traffic
away from the STEAM at Dr. King Elementary School.

In addition, the community should be
given alternatives to the roundabout near the Dr.
King and STEAM school, and have a specific process in
which they can make comments on their preferred
option. Further, I hope D.O.T. is looking at all the
ways they can fund ancillary transportation movements
that, at their heart, are intimately connected with
this project, changing how folks get around the
region, and improving the lives of people near the
current viaduct. Specifically, I’m talking about the
Bus Rapid Transit Project that has been proposed, and
is a wonderful idea. However, other forms of
multimodal transportation funding should be explored
as well.

Finally, and it saddens me to have to
say this, but I must make a comment on what some
others have asked for today, in delaying the process here. As I watched the first part of the hearing, I could not help but notice that some of the largest financial interests in our region are claiming their voices are going unheard, and asking for an even further delay. The fact is, those interests have already delayed the process for years, mainly in pushing for and receiving yet another useless, publicly-funded ... telling us the tunnel option was unfeasible, which we already knew.

I find it the most grotesque form of hubris that what appears to be a currently failing mall, with its entourage of highly-paid lobbyists, and after years of exclusive access to public officials, believe that they can demand complete domination of this process, and issue the final say in a public decision, at the expense of the community of people who actually live here. I urge the D.O.T. to ignore these disingenuous attempts, like yet another disastrously unfeasible sky bridge idea. As you continue on the --

MR. SMITH: Mr. Raybeck, your time has expired. I’d ask you to finish your thought, please. Thank you, sir. Apologies for interrupting. The
next speaker I have on my list is Chris Shenton. I would remind everyone, if you wish to speak, please use the raise your hand function on Zoom. Or if you’re participating by phone, please press star nine. The next speaker is Chris Shenton.

MR. SHENTON: Hi, my name is Chris Shenton. It’s spelled C-H-R-I-S, S-H-E-N-T-O-N. I’m a recent graduate of New York University School of Law. I’ve worked on community advocacy surrounding the I-81 Project during my time at the law school there. I want to call attention today to a larger framework in which we interpret the project. To call upon the State Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, make addressing the I-81’s history of racial exclusion a central component of the project in redeveloping the I-81 Viaduct.

The original I-81 Project was emblematic of a long nationwide campaign to displace and destroy minority neighborhoods through urban highway redevelopment, for the purpose of restructuring towns and communities for the benefit of their white residents, and potentially isolating and excluding residents of color whose homes are
being destroyed in that process. This history is explicit, and its effects are ongoing, and that is just as true with I-81 in Syracuse today.

I-81’s original construction was precisely calibrated for the destruction of black neighborhoods in Syracuse, with local, state and federal government officials working explicitly towards the goal of segregation. Syracuse stakeholders wanted to bring a highway project to the city’s central business district, which would hark in new economic benefits for the area. But the city was having trouble funding the contribution under the matching federal grant program -- a tale as old as time.

Unfortunately, enter into this equation urban renewal. The City Planning Commission proposed using urban renewal to solve the, quote-unquote, ... problem of funding the highway project. By using urban renewal grants, the city would be able to obtain deep discounts on the city’s share of the project expense. Yet far from worrying about appearances or substantive outcomes for Syracuse black residents, Syracuse leaders used urban renewal as a way to deliver their desired project, on their
desired budget.

The Syracuse Common Council, a succession of mayors, the City Planning Commission and the federal government, all explicitly endorsed using the highway project for what they referred to as slum clearance and ... removal. This language was well understood at the time as racist, yet the project barreled forward. None of the parties involved in the construction made an effort to hide what they were doing.

This history is not disputing the overarching goal was to remove black residents while enabling an economic development of the Central Business District, leveraging available funding streams without regard for the consequences on Syracuse’s black community. If that resulted in increased displacement of residential segregation, well, that was just fine. I know that everyone here is well-aware of this, but I can only wonder where those facts are present in the draft E.I.S.

MR. SMITH: Thirty seconds remaining.

MR. SHENTON: The D.E.I.S. does not make more than a cursory attempt to reckon with this history of discrimination, a history that has
continued all the way up to the present day, and continues to make its presence felt. The project, as constituted, does not take this history into account nearly enough, and by failing to fully consider the risk of displacement and environmental impacts on neighborhood residents, would perpetuate I-81’s original sin.

The ultimate concern I wish to highlight in this hearing today, is the extent to which the redevelopment project fails to reckon with this history of racial exclusion, and I call on the State Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration to do more to address this as the project moves forward. Thank you for your time.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Shenton. At this time, we’ve completed the list of speakers that have signed up to speak during this session. And I’d like to pause for a few minutes to give anybody else a chance, who wishes to speak, to call in, or raise your hand using the Zoom function. We’ll pause for a few minutes to give anybody else who wants to, the opportunity to speak. I see two more people. No, pardon me. We’re still waiting for more people to sign up. We’ve had a
couple more people sign up to speak. Next will be Peter King. Following Peter King, will be Michael Stanton. Mr. King, can you hear me?

MR. KING: Can you hear me now?

MR. SMITH: I can hear you.

MR. KING: Okay. I can hear a bit of an echo, but I’ll continue. I spoke this morning, representing two different groups, or speaking from my experience in two different groups in these comments. Well, this morning I outlined some possibly novel perspectives on public health concerns, like air quality, which other people are mentioning, and traffic safety. In this comment, I am suggesting a positive overarching vision for public health on the 81 Project, in ways which craft positive economic implications for Syracuse residents.

So far, there are many interesting initiatives suggested and created by community members, about improving air quality and urban quality on one hand, and then job potentials from the project on the other. But what so far seems an unstated potential is combining these concerns holistically. For example, D.O.T. is already
proposing some design measures with beneficial impacts on public health. D.O.T.’s proposed improvements on walking, bicycling, wheeling, and other non-vehicular transport modes, would also improve public health outcomes, especially in the city.

Existing data supports taking that approach here, and D.O.T.’s current design, it does include some new innovative features. But as other people are asking, I suggest D.O.T. incorporate public transit in a serious way, which would also promote reducing personal vehicular traffic when not necessary, and would improve -- if extended through the entire region, would improve health and safety for all.

However, one of the large challenges for a city so impacted by environmental justices, is balancing some needed improvements from the harms inflicted on one hand, by infrastructure, with the potential harms from making these improvements on the other. Let me explain this. When you introduce any amenity, like green trees, walking trails, new enhanced public spaces, and even new bus lines, these can all have an unintended deleterious effect by
gentrifying neighborhoods, which is sometimes called green gentrification.

One way for resolving some of these green gentrification issues is by -- and generating new local jobs, is by educating, training and hiring city residents in new jobs, in these new realms like driving better buses, planting trees, new green infrastructure, and so on. And furthermore, I suggest that the public health plan needs to --

MR. SMITH: Thirty seconds remaining.

MR. KING: -- D.O.T.'s land use working group process, which would place the planning into the city’s hands after the project. So I think that these combined could make just another way of looking at the whole public health question. Thank you very much.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. King. Next up to speak is Michael Stanton. Please state and spell your name, prior to giving your comments.

MR. STANTON: My name is Mike Stanton, S-T-A-N-T-O-N. I live in the city, near Syracuse University. I strongly support the community grid option. I-81 never should have been routed through the city. The community grid option will finally
remove this negative influence. I do have a few recommendations, however. I suggest that speeds on Almond Street be lowered to city speed. Well below Martin Luther King Boulevard, perhaps a second roundabout a block or two south of Martin Luther King, that would reduce traffic speed at that point. I suggest that Almond Street through the city be revised from a highway design to one more like a city street. That means narrowing lanes from twelve feet down to ten or eleven feet, and also it means reducing the turning radius at Almond Street intersections. Almond Street now looks more like a highway than a city street. This would make it safer for pedestrians, and for cyclists.

I’d also suggest that the parameter of Almond Street, including landscaping, be adjusted to maximize the amount of land that can be returned for development. This would offer an opportunity to start rebuilding the wasteland that is the center of the city ... by the interstate. Finally, let’s not delay this project any further. Time to move forward. Thank you for your time.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Stanton. I have next up to speak, Scott MacFarlane. Before Mr.
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MacFarlane speaks, I’d like to remind anyone who wishes to speak, to please use the raise your hand function in Zoom, or press star nine if you’re participating by phone. The floor is yours, Mr. MacFarlane.

MR. MACFARLANE: Hi, I am Scott MacFarlane, M-A-C-F-A-R-L-A-N-E, Scott, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak, and I also thank you for the great work that’s been done by D.O.T. I just had a view comments. First, I would like to reiterate the suggestion that I-81 -- the Business 81 on the southern side be returned to grade further south from Martin Luther King Boulevard, perhaps putting the initial traffic circle in Colvin, or even as far south as Brighton.

If we’re going to convert the southern portion of 81 into a street -- a city street-- we should do it wholeheartedly, instead of half -- not wholeheartedly. And that also gives the possibility of having a full bike lane going all the way from south of 481’s ... the Almond Street Business 81, going into the heart of the city.

I also agree with those who are asking to not fund another -- publicly fund another delay by
those that are arguing that their voices aren’t heard. It has been years and years. It’s been terrible for the city, and those people’s voices have been heard. They’re just not the only voices in the room this time. Back when I-81 was first built, those voices were the only ones that were heard, and now they’re not very happy about the fact that others are being listened to. I would also reinforce the idea of narrowing the Business 81, the Almond Street section, to slow traffic and reduce its footprint, so it doesn’t become a huge boulevard that’s difficult to cross.

And finally, I am very much in support of redressing racial inequities that were caused by the original project, by committing to hire local residents, especially those living in the footprint, in the I-81 quarter, and especially to those non-white residents there who were most impacted by the original building. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak, and spread the good word.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. MacFarlane. We’ve worked through the number of people who have asked to speak, up to this point. I would encourage anyone who wishes to speak, to press star nine if
you’re participating by phone, or use the raise your hand function on Zoom. Oh, we have another speaker. The next person is Gloria Sage. Ms. Sage, can you hear us?

MS. SAGE: Okay. My name is Gloria Sage, S-A-G-E, and I live in the Outer Comstock neighborhood, and I have been -- I am on the board of the Neighborhood Association, and for fifteen years I was president of the Neighborhood Association, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you. The plans for the community grid will allow a lot of people to get off the highway at Brighton Avenue, or East Colvin Street.

In both cases, they will disrupt our neighborhood. If they get off at Brighton, they will take Ainsley Drive into Jamesville Avenue, come up through Comstock, and go through the university onto the hospitals of Comstock. Now, the neighborhood there -- Ainsley Drive, Jamesville Avenue, Thurber Street -- are unapproved streets with no sidewalks. It is dangerous. There’s also a school in the neighborhood -- Hughes School -- which is now Syracuse Latin. And it’s very close to -- it’s on Jamesville Avenue, and it’s very close to East Colvin
The other thing is, if people go off -- get off at the new exit, on East Colvin Street, what they will do will be to go up to Comstock, and go down. That’s where most of the traffic will go. There are a lot of little streets that abut onto East Colvin Street, and you won’t be able to get out by Jamesville Avenue, and stuff like that, not at most times of the day.

The only thing that they would have to do would be to go around and get onto Comstock where there’s a light. And so nobody has spoken about the impact to the Outer Comstock neighborhood, and to Hughes School and to the people, where you have this area with unapproved streets, and not even striping on the side of the street. It’s dangerous. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Sage. We appreciate your comments. At this time we’re going to pause for a few moments to see if more people want to sign up to speak. If you wish to speak, please use the raise your hand function on the Zoom app, or press star nine if you’re participating by phone. We have another person who’s ready to
MR. COLEBROOK: Yes, hi.

MR. SMITH: Hello. We can hear you, Mr. Colebrook.

MR. COLEBROOK: My name is Christophe, C-H-R-I-S-T-O-P-H-E, Colebrook, C-O-L-E-B-R-O-O-K. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I’m a member of the Greater Strathmore Neighborhood Association, and I’d just like to say that we support the business loop converting the elevated highway into the community grid alternative. We support the increase of pedestrian and bicycle improvements that would be part of that plan, as well as access to downtown local businesses. Thank you for bringing us this opportunity in Syracuse.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Colebrook.

The next speaker is Michael Gallagher. Please state and spell your name for the stenographer, Michael Gallagher.

MR. GALLAGHER: Okay, I had to unmute myself. Sorry. So my name is Michael Gallagher. I live in Cortland, New York. Can you hear me, guys?

MR. SMITH: Yes. Yeah, I can hear you.
MR. GALLAGHER: Great. My name is Gallagher. Last name is spelled G-A-L-L-A-G-H-E-R. I live in Cortland, but I drive up to Syracuse frequently, mainly to visit the mall. I also have a destination on East Genesee Street, and I have a friend up in North Syracuse. One of the things I noted, driving through Syracuse, is how many people will get on at one exit, and then get off at the next one. It probably accounts for a lot of the traffic. And one habit I developed is getting on North Clinton Street, and getting off ... the mall, and obviously you skip traffic lights. And one thing I noticed in the D.E.I.S. is I’ve looked at the maps a hundred times, and I’m not really sure.

It doesn’t look as if you can get on at Wes Street, and then get off immediately at the next exit. So I think that’s something -- that’s a minor thing, compared to what everyone else has mentioned. I think that has to be taken into account, maybe a services road, maybe another different design, I don’t know.

Also, I would like to point out to the speakers who have suggested moving the roundabout south, if you move it too far south, then you add to
the travel time for people who are coming from the
south of Syracuse to points beyond 690, like Destiny
or Liverpool. So that’s all I have to say. Thank
you for this opportunity.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Gallagher.

The next speaker is Jacqueline Lasonde.

MS. LASONDE: Hello there. Thank you so much for taking my call. I have spoken earlier today, but it is incumbent on me, hearing the statements, to speak again, and to remind all that in fact we have a problem. And if that community grid is going to be the solution we are in full support of, here on the Southside, then that must be what it is.

The roundabout is not our issue. It needs to be away from that M.L.K. School. I’ll say it again. I travel a lot myself, and I rarely ever see a roundabout in front of, or near a school, where small children just should be busy about the day of playing and leaving school and going home, or whatever they’re doing, in front of that school. So I would ask the D.O.T. do a better job in reaching out to the community at large because if we don’t get... so that the community can give their comments,
then we need to do a better job at getting information out because people have heard about it for so long, and now it’s finally come to the point that they can do something about it.

Those are the things that need to be driven home, much like the political times that we have, and we always are inundated with the politicians who want to reach out and suddenly communicate with the public at large. We should have the same energy -- or D.O.T., I would ask, have the same energy -- when it comes to getting in touch and reaching, whether it’s mail-outs, public service announcements, or the like. Thank you for your time.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Lasonde. If you’d like to speak, you may indicate your intention to do so by raising your hand using the Zoom app, or pressing star nine if you’re participating by phone. We’ll pause for a moment to give more people the opportunity to sign up to speak.

[End of Audio]

210817alB1 Anelda Kellerman AK/ FTR

MR. SMITH: Robert Haley. Robert
Haley will be our next speaker. Please state and spell your name for the stenographer.

MR. HALEY: H-A-L-E-Y. I hope you can hear me. It sounds like you can. So thank you for this hearing, and thank you for the comments for the public session. I have lived in the Central New York area all of my life, and that’s quite a few years now, mostly in the city and in the suburbs, and then back into the city for the past nearly fifty years. I’m an architect and a planner, so I’ve been working with the city’s functions and business commerce for all of those years.

First of all, we have to really support the tremendous success of the D.O.T. project -- this project, even though it’s taken forever, quote-unquote, but a long time. But this team and design team has in fact done something quite revolutionary. They proposed the community grid option, an innovative option for a D.O.T. It is reconnecting the city streets, and really an extensively large project. We’re very fortunate to be where we are. A lot of skilled people who are on the edge, really are being almost the first in the nation to demonstrate some of these concepts.
nationwide.

With that being said, we have been involved- I’m representing the Moving People Transportation Coalition today, a community-based organization that has been successful in networking with many different community-based organizations. We are championing, and I would like to speak to the support of the Southside neighborhoods, in my particular comments. Essentially, ninety percent of the project is being done completely successfully, and obviously there’s minor issues almost everywhere. But essentially the high-speed highway trucks and traffic lanes for the I-81, the 481 and the 690 -sections - in other words, the high-speed -sections - are using standard that are appropriate for the commuting and the commerce and the visitors- to this area.

However, ten percent of the project -- only ten percent of the project, which is the distance between the ... center of the city, down to the current intersection of 481 near Loretto, still can be improved before this project.

Essentially, the term ‘business loop’ is in question, and so is ‘qualifying highway’. I
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would like to ask for both of those terms to be
defined in terms of truck size and truck speed, and
lane width. We have not found confirming evidence
that they are required. If so, we need to change the
term ‘business loop’ to an appropriate street or
highway --

MR. SMITH: Thirty seconds remaining.

MR. HALEY: -- through the city, that
is safe and residential in business neighborhoods.
It includes the downtown and the Southside
residential areas, and essentially that’s where we
can add more to this project, in terms of skills of
urban design. And community input is asked for this
as well, so we look forward to working with the
D.O.T. in adding this to this currently quite
successful venture that we look forward to getting on
with.

MR. SMITH: Thank you for your
comments, Mr. Haley. At this time we’ll pause, to
give more people the opportunity to sign up to speak.
If you wish to speak, you can press star nine if
you’re participating by phone, or use the raise your
hand function in the Zoom app.

MS. MAGUIRE: If you are watching the
live stream and would like to comment, you may also visit the project website, www.i81.dot.ny.gov, to register and receive a link to join the hearing and provide comments.

MR. SMITH: Donald Doerr will be our next speaker.

MR. DOERR: I wasn’t going to speak, but I feel compelled to speak -- I spoke earlier today -- especially since the Federal Highway is involved now, and I don’t think you’d been involved. But this project, from the beginning, D.O.T. has been pushing and plugging the community grid. And this is supposed to be listening sessions, and I don’t think that you’re really listening to all the people. You’re listening to the people that want the community grid.

This is biased towards the community grid. All your details -- and for those people that say you don’t need an extension, there’s thirty-seven thousand pages. And guess what, just the weight of pages, and by handing stuff doesn’t make it right, okay. The other thing is, what are you connecting? What communities are you connecting? You have the cemetery, you have the hospitals, you have the
university, and you’re basically -- everything that’s there, you’re just bringing it down to street level. The width of it, in some places it’s fifty yards. Do you know how long it takes to walk across the street, for fifty yards? It is, like I said earlier, like crossing Erie Boulevard. That’s not safe. And, you know, just -- it doesn’t connect -- roads don’t connect communities.

You just have to look as far as the connective corridor that Chancellor Cantor had brought up with D.O.T., and worked on. But millions of dollars was spent on that. Guess what? It’s in disrepair. The lights are broken. The sidewalks are cracked. The people that were supposed to take care of it, aren’t taking care of it. So roads don’t fix -- the roads don’t bring communities back together again.

I just implore you, you have -- you know, people now are on board with community grid, but by putting some skyway, or some kind of method so that you keep the traffic -- a high means of getting between the south and the north. That’s what we’re asking you to do. We’re asking you to listen and look at this, and make this the best project that it
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can be. You have the opportunity to do it right now. You’ve waited. We’ve gone through this for ten years. Open your eyes and please, please listen to the people.

There was something on Dan Cummings the other day. I hope you listened to that. Former police commissioner Frank Fallon was on. He said that the people on the Southside are not being listened to. They’re not. And then, you know, you have the economic indicators that you’re using, and the data you’re using. It was mentioned before that it’s out of date. Use real numbers. Do a study that’s recent, not ten years old. A lot of things have changed in this community, and I’m afraid that, you know -- and the last thing I’m going to say is on marketing, and coming through --

MR. SMITH: Thirty seconds.

MR. DOERR: I know a lot of people, you know, want to go around the city. But you’re basically not letting anyone see the City of Syracuse. You have an opportunity to put a sky bridge in with neon lights and L.E.D. lights, et cetera, and make it a centerpiece of Syracuse.

You get to see the university on your
right. You get to see the hospitals. You get to see a real downtown. Now what you’re doing is just pushing it all the way around. No one is going to see Syracuse. So I implore you to listen. This is a listening session, and I hope you’re really listening, especially the federal authorities, and the State D.O.T. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Doerr. If anyone else would like to speak, please press star nine if you’re participating by phone, or use the raise your hand function on the Zoom app. We’ll pause and wait a few minutes to see if anyone else would like to speak. The next speaker will be Kathleen Kinslow. Ms. Kinslow, please state and spell your name for the record. Ms. Kinslow, please unmute yourself, if you can. If you’re on the phone, use star six.

MS. KINSLOW: Okay. Can you hear me now?

MR. SMITH: I can. Thank you, Ms. Kinslow.

MS. KINSLOW: Yes?

MR. SMITH: Yes, ma’am.

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is my -- I hadn’t intended to speak, but I do want to thank you, first of all, for the brochure you sent out with the summary because there has been an awful lot of work, and I feel that you’ve done so much with the aesthetics, to the point where you’re probably doing better than if we had never had a viaduct in the first place. I just want to mention one thing, and that would be that I was interested in the entryway or access to the historic Oakwood Cemetery.

The reason that I think that it’s worthwhile considering, I understand it would slow down traffic if we were to move the entranceway a little bit further back towards Colvin, but I do have to say this. I live on the two busiest corners or streets in Baldwinsville, and we have a very large property. And just since the COVID, I have to say the people walking -- parents, grandparents -- with strollers, people walking dogs, riding bikes, running, is just so much more increased than it’s been -- it’s maintained and continued -- and so my interest is really more in opening up that access, just to have access for the Southside, an entryway to a park-like area.

My neighbor and I often walk in the
Riverview Cemetery here in Baldwinsville in the winter. When you really don’t think to pick up and go to a park somewhere, that’s where we walk. And so that to me is such a valued green space that I understand people want to be able to hurry through the business loop, but I feel that for the community and the people who are being affected the most by the change in the traffic pattern, I believe that it’s very important to be able to have just better access to the Oakwood Cemetery area. And one of the professors came from the school -- oh, I’m sorry. Oh, I just heard somebody. Am I done?

MR. SMITH: No, ma’am.

MS. KINSLOW: I was just going to say --

MR. SMITH: You’ve got another minute left.

MS. KINSLOW: Okay. I was going to point out that one of the professors who had spoken, just from Environmental School of Forestry, mentioned about the great loss of the canopy around Syracuse with the storms -- the Labor Day storm. And I know that the city is planning to plant a lot of trees, but one of the garden or park-like areas that I think
is really important to focus on here, is if it’s possible to restore access to that, which we lost with the I-81 Viaduct, I believe that that would be a very valuable aesthetic to be able to include in the plan.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Kinslow. We appreciate your comments. At this point, we’re going to pause for five minutes. If anyone else would like to speak, please sign up. If no additional speakers sign up, then that will conclude the public hearing for today. There’ll be additional time to give comments in person tomorrow at two hearings, at four and at six. So we encourage anyone else who wishes to speak in this forum to sign up by using the raise your hand function in the Zoom app, or by pressing star nine if you’re participating by phone. We’ll pause for about five minutes to see if anybody else would like to speak today and, if not, we’ll close the hearing. The next speaker will be Devon Kinsman. Devon Kinsman

MS. KINSMAN: Hi, I’m Devon Kinsman. That is D-E-V-O-N, K-I-N-S-M-A-N. I’ll be submitting more comments via written, but there’s one particular concern that hasn’t been spoken about that. I’m
looking at the onramp to 690 westbound, from Almond Street, and there’s what looks like it’s going to be a large cross merge of people going from 690 westbound to 81 northbound, will have to cross merge with the oncoming traffic.

This reminds me greatly of the interchange in Rochester that was recently redone between the 490 westbound traffic, and the 390 northbound traffic. That was one of the highest accident-rate interchanges in Rochester, and recently we did that. And this reminds me greatly of that, and I’m concerned about the accident rate that would occur there. Thank you. I hope that gets ...

MR. SMITH: Thank you for your comments, Ms. Kinsman. At this time I don’t see any additional speakers. We’ll pause for a few minutes to see if anyone else would like to speak. The next speaker will be Carmen Emmi.

MR. EMMI: Can you hear me?

MR. SMITH: Yes, we can hear you.

MR. EMMI: Okay. Thank you for your time. I appreciate it. Mark, we’ve met several times. I’m in the hotel business, on 7th North and Exit 25 on 81. I’m actually not going to -- you know
my concerns. They’ve been well-documented. I’m going to use my three minutes today to talk about the concerns that my team members have brought to my attention, regarding the grid-only option that’s being considered.

We have over two hundred employees on 7th North Street. Fifty percent of them live in the City of Syracuse. They commute daily. They live there, and they commute daily from there, for work. I’m going to start by reading your mission statement that I found online. It is the mission of the New York State D.O.T. to ensure our customers -- those who live, work and travel in New York State -- have a safe, efficient, balanced and environmentally sound transportation system.

With that said, ninety thousand vehicles per day use the current viaduct, which makes sense because you’re traveling to and from the most densely-populated employment area in the region -- the hospitals ... et cetera. Over seventy thousand people work in that area. Where do these ninety thousand vehicles per day go, under the grid-only plan? They go under the city streets and in the neighborhoods.
How is that a safe, efficient, balanced and environmentally sound transportation system solution? It’s not, and my team members are extremely concerned about that. They live there, they play there, they have children that play in the streets. The same government agency that tore apart the fifteenth ward fifty years ago, when it was built, is going to spill thousands of cars on the city streets and into the neighborhood. We’re going to make the same mistakes again, just in a different format, under this grid plan.

Health and safety, as per your mission statement, should be a priority for the Southside community. How does dumping ninety thousand vehicles a day on city streets make the Southside safer? We’ve also had fifty-five years to correct the issues that the current viaduct created. Why haven’t we? D.O.T.’s answer now is to put ninety thousand vehicles per day on city streets in a roundabout at the STEAM school, and at Dr. King. This is not a solution. We can do better, and we must. Tonight I’m formally requesting a six-month extension to find a better solution. A safe, balanced --

MR. SMITH: Thirty seconds.
MR. EMMI: -- and environmentally sound transportation system that works for all. Thank you so much for your time. I appreciate it.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Emmi. We appreciate your comments. At this time we’ll pause to see if there’s anyone else who wants to speak.

MS. MAGUIRE: Just a reminder, if you would like to speak, to please use the raise hand function, or press star nine.

MR. SMITH: It looks as though there may be no additional speakers. We’ll give just a few more minutes, if anybody else would like to sign up. It looks like we may have someone -- I don’t have a name, who is participating by phone. Can you please state and spell your name for the record?

MS. MILLER: Hi, my name is Laura Miller -- L-A-U-R-A, Miller -- and I’m calling to second the notion that we need more time to study an overall plan for our region’s transportation network. I think it’s irresponsible -- as we enter a decision-making process towards the end, it’s irresponsible to not consider new evidence and changing positions. I work in manufacturing, and there is a whole lot of activity out here, in the
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manufacturing field. We pull people and vendors and salespeople and employees from all over the region back and forth all day long, and our voices really have not been heard. The activity is palpable. If you come out here ... you will see as much traffic as when ... So I think we need to pause and really look at the evidence, and start counting cars and trucks, and really understand how traffic is changing in light of all the growth that’s happening.

It’s really encouraging growth. That growth can help all of us strive. We have nineteen thousand ... jobs added in the last year. We’re above average, compared to other regional regions our size. We have populations coming our way, and it’s just really, really amazing. So if we can think of a way to ... consider all these changes, we really should do that. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Miller. I appreciate your comments. If you wish to speak, you still have an opportunity to do so. Please use the raise your hand function, as part of the Zoom app, or press star nine if you’re participating by phone. We’ll wait a few minutes to see if anyone else would like to speak.
Okay, we appreciate everybody’s attention, and we appreciate all the comments that we’ve received from the public. We’re going to close the hearing today. There will be additional opportunities to comment tomorrow in person, at four o’clock and at six o’clock, at The Oncenter. Again, the representatives of the D.O.T. and the New York State Highway and the Federal Highway Administration -- Rick Marquis and Mark Frechette -- appreciate your comments. They have been present during this entire hearing, to listen to what you have to say. Thank you again for taking the time to provide those, and if you’d like -- again, if you’d like to speak tomorrow, we’d like to see you. Take care. Good day.

(The proceeding concluded.)
STATE OF NEW YORK

I, ANNETTE LAINSON do hereby certify that the foregoing
was reported by me, in the cause, at the time and place,
as stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1 hereof; that
the foregoing typewritten transcription consisting of
pages 1 through 49, is a true record of all proceedings
had at the hearing.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
subscribed my name, this the 1st day of September, 2021.

ANNETTE LAINSON, Reporter
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NEW YORK STATE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

I-81 VIADUCT PROJECT VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING

DATE: August 17, 2021
TIME: 11:01 a.m. to 1:01 p.m.
LOCATION: ZOOM/C&S COMPANIES
449 Col. Eileen Collins Blvd.
Syracuse, NY 13212
8-17-2021 - I-81 Viaduct Project - Virtual Public Hearing

APPEARANCES:

BRODY SMITH, Moderator
AILEEN MAGUIRE, Host
MARK FRECHETTE
RICK MARQUIS
MARICI CHAU
JARED GROSS
BEN WALSH
KERRY MANNION
FRED WAGNER
ELLEN ROLOFF
QINGYANG LIU
MICHAEL BONE
CONSTANCE NYMAN
PETER SARVER
BARRY GORDON
DONALD DOERR
DAVID CARNIE
JACKSON HURST
WILLIAM SANFORD
CHARLENE TARVER
MARY CUNNINGHAM
HOLLAND GREGG
DARA HOBBS PETER KING
KEVIN MCCORMICK
WOODRUFF CARROLL
RONALD VANNORSTRAND
PAUL CZAJKOWSKI
MEGAN LEE
JACQUELINE LASONDE
COURTNEY ALEXANDER
MARK TUCKER
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(The hearing commenced at 11:01 a.m.)

THE REPORTER: We’re on the record.

MS. MAGUIRE: Good morning. Thank you for attending the I-81 Viaduct Project Public Hearing. This is Aileen Maguire, and I will be serving as the host for this virtual hearing. Prior to the presentation, I will go over some general information on how to participate in the virtual hearing.

Today’s event will be conducted in English. Interpretation is available for anyone who wishes to hear the event in Spanish. To listen to interpretation on a computer, locate the globe icon along the bottom row of your Zoom screen, and select the language.

If you are joining via Zoom -- the Zoom app -- on a mobile device, click ‘More’, or the three dots in the corner of your screen, select ‘Language interpretation’, and then choose your language, and click ‘Done’. These instructions will now be read in Spanish.

The hearing moderator will be facilitating the hearing. A formal presentation will be followed by oral testimony. Comments will be
limited to three minutes. Speakers will be muted if they use inappropriate language. Substantive comments will be responded to in the final environmental impact statement.

This hearing is being live streamed and recorded. The official transcript of the hearing will become part of the project record. If you are watching the live stream and would like to comment, visit the project website, www.i81.dot.ny.gov, to register and receive a link to join the hearing.

I will now review the instructions on how to participate in the hearing. This is also available on the project website, and will be reviewed again at the start of the comment period. If you have questions about the webinar technology, use the chat box to send a message to the host and receive a written response. Do not send comments through the chat, as they will not be included in the project record.

If you would like to comment, please use the raised-hand function, or press star nine on your phone, to alert the host that you would like to comment. On mobile devices, you may need to click the three dots to access more features. When you are
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called on to speak, the host will give you permission
to unmute yourself, so all participants can hear you.
If you log in by computer, or the Zoom app, you will
receive a notification to unmute.

Speaker icons are located in the top
left of Android and iOS devices. If you are dialing
in by phone, when the moderator calls on you to
speak, press star six to unmute, and press star six
again to mute when you are done speaking.

I will now turn over today’s even to
the hearing moderator, Brody Smith.

MR. SMITH: Good morning. On behalf
of Marie Therese Dominguez, the Commissioner of the
New York State Department of Transportation, and Rick
Marquis, the Administrator for the Federal Highway
Administration’s New York Division, I welcome you to
this I-81 Viaduct Project Public Hearing. My name is
Brody Smith. I am serving as the moderator for this
public hearing. A stenographer will record the
proceedings of this meeting verbatim, and a written
transcript will be prepared. I’m going to read an
opening statement, which will be followed by a brief,
prerecorded presentation. When the presentation is
finished, I will begin the moderated oral comment
MS. MAGUIRE: Hold on a second.

Please hold on one moment. We are trying to unmute the moderator. Sorry for the technical difficulties. Please give us one moment.

MR. SMITH: Can you hear me okay? Is the sound check okay? Okay, let me try it from my Zoom. Can you hear me now, if I use this? Okay, I’ll do it from my phone. Are we ready?

MS. MAGUIRE: Hold on one more moment.

I am aware that you are hearing double. Hold on. Start again, please.

MR. SMITH: Good morning. On behalf of Marie Therese Dominguez, the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Transportation, and Rick Marquis, the Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration’s New York Division, I welcome you to this I-81 Viaduct Project Public Hearing.

My name is Brody Smith. I am serving as the moderator for this public hearing. A stenographer will record the proceedings of this meeting, and a verbatim written transcript will be prepared. I’m going to read an opening statement, which will be followed by a brief, prerecorded
8-17-2021 - I-81 Viaduct Project - Virtual Public Hearing presentation. When the presentation is finished, I will begin the moderated oral comment session. If you are watching the live stream and would like to provide a verbal comment, visit the project website at www.i81.dot.ny.gov, to register and receive a link to join the hearing.

The New York State Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, published a draft design report/draft environmental impact statement/draft Section 4(f) evaluation, for the I-81 Viaduct Project, on July 16th, 2021.

The project has been advanced, in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act -- NEPA -- codified at 40 C.F.R. parts 1500 through 1508, the F.H.W.A. Environmental Impact and Related Procedures final rule at 23 CFR part 771, and the New York State D.O.T. Procedures for Implementation of the State Environmental Quality Review Act, at 17 New York Codes Rules and Regulations, part fifteen, and in accordance with provisions of Article Two of the New York State Eminent Domain Procedure Law.

The publication of the D.D.R.
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/D.E.I.S. began the public comment period on the document, which will extend until five p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, on September 14, 2021. This public hearing is being conducted to obtain comments on the project’s D.D.R. /D.E.I.S., and the right-of-way acquisition process. The D.D.R. /D.E.I.S. is available for review at this hearing, on the project’s website, www.dot.ny.gov/i81opportunities, and at libraries and other public facilities throughout Greater Syracuse.

The D.D.R. /D.E.I.S. describes the project a consideration of social, economic and environmental effects that would result from the implementation of the project, and measures to mitigate adverse effects. The hearing provides the public an opportunity to make formal statements and positions before any project decisions are made.

The agencies will review and consider public comments submitted during the established sixty-day public comment period. Responses to substantive comments will be included in the project’s final design report, final environmental impact statement, which is F.E.I.S. which is anticipated to be published by the end of 2021.
In addition to comments made at the public hearings, comments will be accepted in the following ways: One, written comments sent via U.S. Mail to Mark Frechette, P.E., Project Director, New York State Department of Transportation, Region Three, 333 East Washington Street, Syracuse, New York, 13202, or Rick Marquis, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, Leo W. O’Brien Federal Building, 11A Clinton Avenue, Suite 719, Albany, New York, 12207.

Electronic comment forms, via the project website, are available at www.i81.dot.ny.gov. You may email at i81opportunities@dot.ny.gov, or you may use the telephone voicemail system, through the project hotline, which can be found at 1-855-I81-TALK. That’s 855-481-8255. Information on how to submit written comments is also outlined on the project website. You can elect to submit comments both orally, and in writing. Written statements will be given the same weight and consideration as oral statements made at this meeting. Again, New York State D.O.T. and the Federal Highway Administration will accept public comments until five p.m., Eastern Daylight Time, on September 14, 2021.
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Before we begin accepting oral comments from the participants, we will play a prerecorded presentation on the project. After the presentation, I will give you instructions on how we plan to take your oral comments.

(Presentation playing)

MS. MAGUIRE: We’re about to go live. I just want to remind everyone, before we continue with the hearing, that if you have questions about the webinar technology, to please use the chat box to send a message. But we will not be responding to substantive comments about the project through the chat. That will be done through the F.E.I.S. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: I will now introduce representatives of the New York State D.O.T. and the Federal Highway Administration, who are in attendance for today’s hearing -- Mark Frechette, Project Director, New York State Department of Transportation, Rick Marquis, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, Jared Gross, Area Engineer, Federal Highway Administration, Maria Chau, Senior Planner, Federal Highway Administration.

The panelists, hearing officer and
A.S.L. interpreter will be visible on screen during the oral testimony. Although you may not see all the panelists on screen at one time, all the panelists will be listening to the testimony. My role here, as the hearing moderator, is to provide members of the public an opportunity to provide comments in an organized, fair, professional and orderly manner.

The testimony is being recorded by a stenographer, so please state and spell your name, and identify any organization you represent. To ensure that all are heard, comments will be limited to three minutes after the introduction. There will be a countdown clock on the screen, and I will provide verbal warnings when only thirty seconds remain.

Agency representatives will not be answering questions, or responding to comments, during the hearing. Responses to substantive comments will be included in the final design report/final environmental impact statement. If you are watching the live stream and would like to comment, visit the project website at www.i81.dot.ny.gov, to register and receive a link to join the hearing.
Before we begin, I’d like to recognize elected officials, or their representatives, who are in attendance. Ben Walsh, the City of Syracuse’s Mayor, Rachel May, New York State Senator, District 53, Carney David, Town of Salina Fourth Ward Councilor, Kevin McCormack, Town of Skaneateles Councilor, Kerry Mannion, Town of DeWitt Deputy Supervisor, and Mark Tucker, Town of Skaneateles Councilor.

At this time, we will hear from those who wish to make oral statements. I remind you that if you would like to comment, please use the raise your hand function, or press star nine if participating by phone. In accordance with agency policy, elected and appointed officials will be given the first opportunity to speak. Others will be called to make their statements in the order that they are listed in the queue.

I will call two names at a time, so you are prepared when it is your turn to speak. I apologize in advance to anyone whose name I mispronounce. Our first speaker will be Ben Walsh, Mayor of the City of Syracuse, and our second speaker will be Kerry Mannion from the Town of DeWitt.
MR. WALSH: Good morning. Can everyone hear me?

MS. MAGUIRE: Yes.

MR. WALSH: Great. Good morning.

Thank you for the opportunity. The community grid is the right alternative for Syracuse, Central Park, and all of New York State. While there are still elements of the project that must be improved, that fact remains clear.

I want to thank the D.O.T. for thoroughly studying the options for this project. With the community, the D.O.T. is seizing the transformational moment before us, in creating the best framework to correct the historical wrongs that hurt city residents. I also want to thank the D.O.T. for addressing the comments and concerns it has received during the process. That work of listening and responding must continue. My team and I are reviewing the D.E.I.S. We are talking with key stakeholders, attending community meetings, and working with the D.O.T. We will file detailed written comments as part of this process. Today let me cover four points.

First, my greatest concern has been,
and continues to be, for the people who live closest
to the viaduct. They have borne the biggest burden,
and their neighborhoods must be protected and
invested in. I am concerned about the current design
and position of the roundabout at STEAM, at Dr. King
School. We cannot put our children at risk for
decades to come. I request that you listen to the
concerns on this critical element of the project, and
present alternative solutions in the final
environmental impact statement.

The roundabout is one key concern, but
not the only one. The D.O.T. must deliver a
comprehensive approach that addresses pedestrian,
bicycle, public transit and parks amenities.
Mitigating health and construction impacts are
critically important. As I noted earlier, the city
will provide written comments on other areas of
concern regarding the project impact in city
neighborhoods.

Second, I appreciate the D.O.T.’s
inclusion of a land-use working group for surplus
land that will become available as a result of this
project. This group must include the city, the
school district, neighborhood representatives,
environmental justice communities, economic opportunity and development organizations, and other stakeholders. Land use is a priority concern for the city and its residents, so there must be local control of decision-making regarding surplus land.

Third, I challenge the State to aim high on local hiring. The city and D.O.T. has worked well together in planning to ensure city residents, especially women, people of color and veterans, get equitable opportunities for jobs and careers from the project. The most critical stages are happening now, and I urge the State to set aggressive goals in its application to the Federal Highway Administration for local hiring, and commit to even more aggressive programs to train and prepare city workers.

Fourth, I commend the D.O.T. for addressing concerns of our suburban neighborhoods, including through the economic analysis of northern suburbs, and the proposed improvements to Exit Three on Interstate 81, and Lyndon Corners to the East. I urge you to continue to address these concerns, especially to the north and south of the city where we have opportunity to reduce traffic problems that have long concerned those communities.
In closing, we know the pandemic continues to create uncertainty. The D.O.T. set up a process to ensure everyone can participate. To my fellow city residents, and all of Central New York, please ensure you are heard. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: The next speaker will be Kerry Mannion, from DeWitt. Followed by Kerry Mannion, will be Jackson Hurst.

MR. MANNION: Good morning, D.O.T. Thank you so much. I still haven’t gotten my comments ready yet, but I just wanted to -- so I mentioned on there that I was undecided, but I appreciate you allowing me the opportunity to speak, but I’ll be speaking up later. I’d like to go to the live meeting tomorrow, to see the effects of the traffic on Jamesville, DeWitt and East Syracuse, and how you’re handling that. But again, thank you for allowing me to speak today, and thank you so much for having so many presentations.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Mannion. Next up is Jackson Hurst, followed by Qingyang Liu.

MS. MAGUIRE: ... perhaps they’ll come back to him.

MR. SMITH: Okay. We’re going to come
back to them. Let's see. Next up will be Andrew Schuster.

MR. SCHUSTER: Hi, my name is Andrew Schuster. I’m a principal at Ashley McGraw Architects in Syracuse, New York, as well as president-elect of the A.I.A.C.N.Y. Speaking in my capacity as a principal at Ashley McGraw Architects, we are a Downtown employer. We’ve been based in Downtown Syracuse for over thirty years, and we rely on the vibrancy of Downtown Syracuse to attract and retain talent.

We’re a very specialized architecture firm. We require the need to hire very specific skilled workers, and we often relocate them from other communities. And whether Syracuse -- Downtown Syracuse -- is healthy, is very important criteria in hiring those people. We feel that the community grid is absolutely the best way to ensure that that vibrancy continues and grows, and maintains the momentum in Central New York that is currently occurring. We also support the community grid on the premise that it will take less time to construct, which will be positive for all business in all communities associated with I-81.
We do have a couple of concerns that we’d like to put on the record. We’d like to encourage the D.O.T. to design the street as an urban thoroughfare that allows for a street wall to be built, with buildings to form a street wall on either side. And to do that, we would like to see options with a narrower right of way. The current hundred and ninety-seven foot right of way seems out of character for an urban right of way, and we feel that the same service can be provided in less than one hundred and twenty feet.

We also would like to see more information on how the land is going to be returned to the community. I was very encouraged to see that included in today’s presentation. We feel that the park-like spaces shown in the D.O.T. renderings do not provide a context that will encourage pedestrian flow between the central business district and Upstate University, and that further urban-style development and urban streetscapes will encourage a positive connection between the two communities.

We also are confident that this will increase the city’s tax base, and the county’s tax base, in a constructive way. So that concludes my
statements at this time, and we'll submit further written comment.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Schuster. Next up is Brian Sampson, followed by Michael Bome.

MR. SAMPSON: Good morning. My name is Brian Sampson. I’m president of Associate Builders and Contractors, Empire State Chapter. We represent about four hundred contractors across the State of New York, and well over a hundred right in the Central New York region. We’re commenting today just to give our support for the I-81 Project. We think it’s long overdue, and will be good for the Syracuse community to have that.

We also support the use of local hiring. We believe that there are a number of skilled crafts workers in the region that can work on that project, and in fact I think D.O.T. probably realizes that about eighty percent of the work that’s being done in the Central New York region right now, currently, is being performed by what are considered open shop contractors -- so those that choose not to be signatory to a union and collective bargaining agreement.

With the implications of a project
labor agreement, the local hiring requirements are going to be tough to meet because, as people know, with P.L.A.s, there are requirements that a certain percentage of the local workforce has to come from the local union hall. As a result, open shop contractors don’t typically bid project labor agreements because they can’t put their own workers on the job.

So as D.O.T. looks to advance this plan, we would strongly ask them to not put the project labor agreement on this project because it will decrease your bidding. It will decrease local hiring, and it will create different challenges. Further -- this may seem strange for us to take this position -- project labor agreements are often justified on the backs of the workers. So there are savings in there that the workers have to concede, in order to make these projects go forward. We don’t believe that that’s the right approach. Most of the P.L.A. studies that we see, have false savings, and false narratives.

For example, the study will claim that there’s hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars, to be saved by non-union contractors using
union apprentices. What happens when you have no non-union contractors bidding that work, they won’t use union apprentices. Therefore, those are false savings. There’s also a management rights section. If no non-union contractors did the work, there is no management savings to be had because there are no work conflicts, no jurisdictional issues to be resolved. Those tend to be the two biggest cost savings for a P.L.A. So I would strongly ask you to not use a P.L.A. on this project.

Further, we would ask that if that is something you are going to consider, ask you to think about this -- the individual workers on those projects are making concessions, but the union business agents and other management are not. That is not fair to the workers, and is something that should be strongly discouraged. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Sampson. Next up is Michael Bome, followed by Minchin Lewis.

MS. MAGUIRE: Michael Bome, you should have access to unmute yourself.

MR. SMITH: Okay, we’ll try to come back to Mr. Bome. Next up is Minchin Lewis.

MR. LEWIS: Thank you. I now have the
unmute button. So my name is Minchin Lewis. I live at 205 Rigi Avenue, in the City of Syracuse. I teach metropolitan government and politics at Syracuse University’s Maxwell School. I also served for nine years as the elected Syracuse City Auditor.

I thank you for the opportunity to comment on this once in a lifetime decision for the future of our community. I particularly appreciate the comments made by both Senator Schumer and Secretary Buttigieg when they were here in Syracuse. They both said that the project would undergo changes, going forward. So I am requesting an important change. I am requesting that the D.O.T. extend the comment period for an additional six months. I have several reasons for this request.

First, the length of the D.E.I.S. -- twenty-eight thousand pages, with thousands of details. It requires many, many hours of study just to understand the elements. Second, the D.E.I.S. contains new features that were not included in the preliminary D.E.I.S. They require analysis and community input, for instance, the roundabout at Dr. King Elementary School, the new exits at Colvin, and the extended
entrance -- exit -- at Glen Avenue. The changes to 481 that may impact the environment, and there are untold details, like the changes in alternative E-4, the exit from northbound 81 to eastbound 690, from a right-hand to a left-hand exit.

Third, there are many changes in the community. The traffic has changed significantly with the recent two Amazon facilities, and additional prospective development. The community needs more time to determine how these changes will impact the D.E.I.S. The social economic impacts on the community, for the neighborhood and for the community in general, need to be evaluated. Then there are several groups that are exploring alternatives that could achieve all of the goals of the community grid that you’ve outlined, and maintain the economic vitality of the region, bringing a true consensus to support this major public project.

Fourth, there are external changes also. Leadership in Albany is changing. It’s in transition. We are still in the middle of a very serious global pandemic. And finally, the new world of technology is changing, and it requires time to adjust to those changes, just as we saw at the
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beginning of this webinar, with the startup technical difficulties. For all of these reasons, all of this requires more time, and I urge D.O.T. to extend the comment period for at least six months. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Lewis.

Next up to speak is Fred Wagner, followed by Ellyn Geller Roloff.

MR. WAGNER: Good morning. Can I be heard well?

MR. SMITH: We can hear you.

MR. WAGNER: Thank you so much, and good afternoon. I’m Fred Wagner -- W-A-G-N-E-R. I’m a former chief counsel of the Federal Highway Administration, and I have the honor of representing Carousel Center company, Destiny USA. To begin, we reiterate and support comments like we just heard, requesting an extension of the comment period. The sheer volume and complexity of the materials released by NYSDOT has not made the current comment period fair or reasonable. If the agency wants a true dialogue with all stakeholders, more time is simply needed.

To the merits, it’s apparent that the agency is intent on advancing the so-called community
grid concept without a fair consideration of other options. If the heart of NEPA is a fair analysis of a full range of reasonable alternatives, this document fails at that legal obligation. There had been many and persistent calls for an alternative that could both preserve safe, high-speed mobility, and reconnect communities. That option deserves a fair review, yet public statements by the agency have discounted that option without adequate consideration.

Without an analysis of full, and a reasonable range of feasible alternatives, the NYSDOT draft E.I.S. is arbitrary and capricious. Even based on the very limited time we’ve had so far to review the enormous amount of information in the document, NYSDOT’s analysis is flawed and erroneous. First of all, the traffic study is based on stale and outdated data. There’s no sense of how the grid will impact key intersections, outside the very narrow study area established by the agency, as your graphics earlier demonstrated.

The analysis presumes a growth rate that is completely inconsistent with recent data, and dramatically understates the mobility performance of
the grid option. It fails to address that only six percent of existing trips based on the old data are through trips that do not stop within the city or nearby destinations. It makes no sense to presume that a large portion of the ninety thousand average daily trips will drive sixteen miles out of the way on 481. In addition, it fails to account for recent developments, like the creation of the Amazon distribution center.

We will be providing in our written comments a more formal critique of this traffic data, but it’s enough to say now that the proposed action does not meet the main purpose of the project, to improve mobility. In addition, the economic impact analysis is inadequate. Nobody from the State, nobody from F.H.W.A., consulted with my client -- a large regional employment and commerce center -- nor, as far as we know, with any other major businesses in and around the area.

How can that create a fair economic impact assessment, and how can the conclusion that there would only be minor disruptions be supported, as was stated earlier? From an air quality and greenhouse emissions, the E.I.S. is flawed. The
traffic analysis I mentioned before --

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Wagner.

That is three minutes.

MR. WAGNER: No, it’s not. The timing did not -- that’s incorrect.

MR. SMITH: Next up scheduled to speak is Ellyn Geller Roloff, and Qingyang Liu.

MS. ROLOFF: Good morning. Thank you for providing the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Ellyn Roloff, and I’m a member of Temple Concord on the corner of University and Madison Street, in Syracuse. As Jews, we are commanded by God to perform acts of tikkun olam, loosely interpreted as healing the world. That is why I am speaking with you today. I have some concerns about the Route 81 community grid, some of which have been mentioned earlier this morning.

One, there is potential for negative environmental impacts on people who live, work and study near the construction area. Therefore, clear steps should be taken to ensure reduction of dust, water, air and noise pollution. In addition, conducting a community health needs assessment before construction begins, as well as a study to determine
if the community grid will remain a major roadway, would be desirable. Also, I’d like to see a plan to move the proposed access ramp to at least six hundred feet from the STEAM school at Dr. King Elementary.

Two, I’m hoping that real economic benefits will be there for local residents, and will be generated by this project. This would be achieved by requiring contractors to hire thirty percent people of color, and thirty percent local residents, first from areas around the viaduct, then folks from the rest of the city.

Three, I’d like to see minimal displacement of lower-income residents, by providing relocation assistance, support and funding, and recognition of a right to return. This would include providing market-rate buyouts for existing homeowners, and funding for reasonable moving costs. Also, designating an eight to ten-acre parcel of land, just east of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, for development, under the direction of a community land trust run by local communities of color, would help to mitigate this disruption and dislocation. Thank you so much for your time.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Geller
Roloff. Next up to speak is Qingyang Liu, and Michael Bome. I would remind everyone to state and spell your name before you begin speaking.

MS. LIU: Good morning. I want to make sure, can everyone hear me correctly?

MR. SMITH: We can hear you fine.

MS. LIU: Hi, everyone. My name is Qingyang Liu. I’m currently a graduate student at Syracuse University. I’m living in Madison Towers, which is just next to the I-81 Highway. Thank you all for the comment and ... I wanted to raise my concern about this I-81 Project.

First, I am concerned about the noise, air quality, and then the air pollution during the construction time, which can bring a lot of damage to the residential area nearby the I-81, such as to Madison Towers, Jefferson Tower, and also the Upstate dormitory. I do not see any current presentation -- I do not see any of this being mentioned in the presentation. I would want to see how your government agency can acknowledge those potential negative effects to those residential areas.

Secondly, I’m concerned about the
traffic change during the ... The potential removing of the current I-81 next to Madison Towers could be causing the traffic jam nearby the area, such as through as Elm Street, and also going down to the Syracuse University. All of this has not been examined during the presentation.

Third, I’m concerned about the current pandemic situation. I do not know how this uncertainty can be leading to the continuity of the project. Would the project even go through as planned, or with the project being halted due to the pandemic situation? And that will be all of my concerns. Thank you so much for your hearing today.

MR. SMITH: Okay. We’re going to return to Mr. Wagner. I think that he was cut off prematurely, and he wanted to speak for another thirty seconds.

MR. WAGNER: Yes, and thank you for recognizing that error. I want to say in closing that the project has laudable goals, but it is the wrong solution. Instead of a highway eighteen feet overhead in Syracuse, NYSDOT will be building a highway at ground level. This cannot and does not advance any of the project objectives, especially
those related to equity and social justice. We urge you to consider fully the skyway grid alternative in a fair and comprehensive way, and listen to the citizens of Syracuse who want a modernized I-81, not just what certain people think. Thank you very much.

MR. SMITH: Next up to speak is Michael Bome, followed by Constance Nyman.

MR. BOME: Can you hear me? Are you able to hear me now?

MR. SMITH: We can hear you fine.

MR. BOME: Thank you. I had a little problem with that before, but thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. My name is Michael Bome -- spelled correctly B-O-M-E -- I’m a retired physical therapist, I live in Marietta, New York, and my statement or my question would be what have these studies shown, regarding the increase in commercial traffic exiting at Cortland, Preble, Tully or Lafayette, passing through Scott, Spafford, Tully, Marietta and Skaneateles, to get to the Thruway West. If there is an increase in commercial traffic, do you have any plans to restrict the traffic on these exits, or rural roads?

My other comment would be, we talk
about safety, and I would question how many people have been killed walking or riding on the viaduct. My guess would be zero, since it is illegal to do those two activities. However, people walking and biking on a grid will succumb to injuries, and maybe die. And also, we may have an increase in fatalities on our rural roads, as a result of, I anticipate, commercial traffic.

The mayor should be well aware, as he knows the area here in Marietta well, families frequently walk these streets. So I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak, and I hope we make the right decision. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Bome. Next up to speak is Constance Nyman, followed by Peter Sarver.

MS. MAGUIRE: Constance Nyman, you should be able to unmute yourself.

MS. NYMAN: Thank you. My name is Constance Nyman -- N-Y-M-A-N. Can you hear me now?

MR. SMITH: We can hear you fine.

MS. NYMAN: Thank you. I’m in favor of the community grid, with improvements to the bus service and scheduling. I’ve lived in Central New
York 27 for the last fifty years, and nine of them in Syracuse. I retired to Syracuse from Orlando, Florida, because this is a great place to live, and I want it to be livable as well. I represent Moving People, which is part of the Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse.

Improved transportation has been the major mission for Moving People for nearly ten years, and we’re not talking about cars and roads. Rather, Moving People advocates the best transportation for everyone. Moving People asked me to speak to one of its five major points. N.Y.S.D.O.T. must work closely with Centro to get planned and designed into our community grid the accommodations for buses and their riders, for now and in the future, when we expect that the Bus Rapid Transit will be a reality.

I feel strongly that to make Central New York a better place to live, we must make it better for all citizens. That means transportation in C.N.Y. -- Central New York -- must be able to move all of us efficiently to our jobs. To make it a better place, we must also reduce our carbon footprint. A public transportation system must be designed into the community grid, as if people are
really going to use it. Coordinated plans between Centro and the New York State D.O.T. will move Syracuse towards this vision of livability. Thank you very much. Please support the community grid and recommended bus transit improvements.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Nyman.

Next up to speak is Peter Sarver, followed by Barry Gordon. I’d like to remind everyone to state and spell their name before they begin to speak.

MR. SARVER: My name is Peter Sarver -- Sarver is S-A-R-V-E-R -- and I’m the convener of the Moving People Transportation Coalition, which includes some twenty organizations, and hundreds of individuals who support community grid as the I-81 replacement. My purpose in speaking at this session this morning is to focus on jobs for local people, as a priority.

As the mayor suggested, we need to aim high. We specifically support the training and hiring of local residents that the Urban Jobs Task Force recommended for building equity in the construction trades, including a pro-Syracuse version of the Federal Government’s local hire program, called SEP-14. That provides for training and hiring
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and the C.W.A.-P.L.A. agreement on I-81. That includes unions and community representatives in decision-making on the implementation of the I-81 plan.

Moving People believe this is an important priority because social justice requires the chronically disabled, disadvantaged persons to be made a priority with this huge infrastructure project. In closing, we’ve been working on this as a group for eight to ten years, and we would oppose any kind of an extension of comment period. Everyone has had more than enough time to digest and articulate various viewpoints. Thanks very much for listening.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Sarver. Next up is Barry Gordon, followed by Donald Doerr.

MR. GORDON: Hello. My name is Barry Gordon. That’s B-A-R-R-Y, G-O-R-D-O-N. We have lived in Onondaga County since 1969, and in the Town of Lysander since 1976. We feel a strong attachment to Syracuse, and travel there multiple times each week. For the past two or three years, I have been a volunteer with the I-81 Project of the New York Civil Liberties Union.

This project’s efforts are directed
towards ensuring a just solution for the people of
the Southside, and surrounding neighborhoods in
Syracuse. The highway replacement should be viewed
as a matter of justice -- environmental and
racial -- and as an attempt to avoid a repeat of the
unfair effects created when the original highway was
built. The original highway’s construction, as well
as its current urban renewal projects, combined to
destroy the fifteenth ward community.

Today, and throughout this commentary,
you will receive many specific comments, such as
concern about the unfortunate proposed location of
the roundabout adjacent to Martin Luther King School.
I prefer to focus on the broader picture, in an
effort to place many of those specific comments in
context. In the past, the New York State Department
of Transportation, and other transportation -- I’m
sorry, but I had to move my cursor -- and other
transportation agencies across the country, have
primarily seen their role as providing for the
movement of traffic.

I hope this longstanding approach has
evolved into an enlightened understanding that
systems designed to move people, have far-ranging
effects beyond transportation. For the decades of I-81’s existence through Syracuse, the people, including ourselves, who have benefited most from the road’s utility, are the people who have suffered the least of its ill effects, and the people who have received the least utility from the road, have borne the greatest burden of its negative effects. It is time to correct his imbalance. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, sir. Next up to speak is Mr. Doerr, followed by David Carnie.

MR. DOERR: Hi, my name is Don Doerr. It’s Donald Doerr -- D-O-E-R-R. I’m a resident of the Town of DeWitt, and I work in the City of Syracuse. I think that right now it’s a really big mistake if you go ahead with the community grid, without looking at some of the alternatives. I’ve heard mention of a sky bridge. I go back and I started looking at, you know, the volumes and volumes of paper that you put in the D.E.I.S.

I’ll tell you one thing I saw, was I had comments that I gave back at Jamesville-DeWitt High School almost five years ago -- November, five years ago -- and everything I said I went and read, and they’re pretty much the same concern. The other
thing I see is that you have in your appendix all the stakeholder and public meetings. If you get down to the one that Senator John DeFrancisco had at Henninger High School, and all you put there is ‘event sponsored by others’.

There were hundreds of people at that. Mark Frechette was there. The director was there. There was a lot of politicians, community leaders, and every single problem with the community grid that was raised, none of them have been addressed. The whole key is to have a high speed, north-south alternative, to keep in place of 81.

Right now, I took a look at that video, the one where you’re behind the wheel. That is absolutely atrocious. You’re taking 81; you’re slowing everything down to thirty miles an hour. And I said this five years ago, and I’m going to say it again. You’re taking an Erie Boulevard, and you’re plopping it down in the middle of the city. You have pollution. You have sound. You have all sorts of problems, by doing that.

The main purpose of 81 -- or one of them -- is so that you could get in and out of Syracuse. That’s one of the advantages of living in
Syracuse, is that we have that access. You’re taking 81, and turning it into an Erie Boulevard. You’re not making it any safer. If you look at Erie Boulevard right now, would you take Erie Boulevard into the city from the east, or would you take 690? No, you hop on 690, and it brings you right into the city. You get off the exit, and you’re right downtown.

The problem you have is right now you have a chance to build consensus. The sky bridge, or having some alternative of north-south traffic, is really what you need to do. And right now you can build consensus. Senator Schumer said there’s consensus. There is not consensus.

MR. SMITH: Thirty seconds remaining.

MR. DOERR: Read the hundreds, if not thousands of comments, directors. I mean, read all the stuff of the negative effects. You have not addressed any of all the communities from the west. The tractor trailers, you have not addressed that. And the other thing you haven’t addressed -- and this is crazy -- is Destiny U.S.A., the sixth largest mall in America, you get the sales tax revenues from that. Where does that go? To the City of Syracuse. Please
open your eyes and give some more time, and look at
the other options. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Doerr.

Next up to speak is David Carnie, followed by Jackson
Hurst.

MR. CARNIE: All right, good
afternoon. Can you hear me okay?

MR. SMITH: Yes, we can hear you
great.

MR. CARNIE: All right, thank you very
much. My name is David Carnie - D-A-V-I-D, C-A-R-N-
I-E. I am the Town of Salina Fourth Ward Councilor.
So I am not in favor of the proposed community grid.
I speak on behalf of the constituents - I represent.
I speak today regarding the Appendix D-2 Economic
Considerations in the D.E.I.S.

The market information which had been
used to this point, in the decision-making process,
has numerous pitfalls and shortcomings inherent to
the data. There’s out-of-date information. The
labor force data used is from the 2000 U.S. Census.
We just now had been released 2020 U.S. Census data
that should be used. The current and forecasted
employment conditions are irrelevant. One example is
the new Amazon distribution center in Clay -- three point eight million square foot warehouse -- one of the largest warehouses in the world.

Number two was contradictory data. There’s multiple sources that will develop different estimations, even though the estimates are for the same market. So one example is 81 North to Seventh North Street, which is my district. Currently it’s six point five miles on 81 North, from 41 North, to where the 81 business Loop will begin. -- six point five miles. If you take 81 North, take the business loop to 81 South, back down to the Seventh North Street exit, it’s an additional thirteen point five miles longer.

So the data is contradictory. Projections can differ on how conservative or liberal the estimators are, and their interpretation of the raw data. Thirdly, there’s a lack of ... A local study on area data gathered and analyzed, were established to ... locations to an overall metro area. So the study areas has established the focus on potential ... growth does not apply to suburban areas, and negatively impacts them.

In closing, I’ll just say that when
you look at data sources, you require the use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data is data gathered specifically for the task at hand. It is the data obtained from a site inspection. I urge for primary data to be gathered by direct observation, and explicit questioning of people in businesses that represent the areas impacted. I thank you for your time, and I look forward to your responses. Have a good day.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Carnie. Next up is Jackson Hurst, followed by William Sanford. I can’t hear you, Mr. Hurst.

MR. HURST: Hi, my name is Jackson Hurst -- J-A-C-K-S-O-N, H-U-R-S-T -- and I highly approve and support N.Y.S.D.O.T.’s I-81 Viaduct Project. The alternatives I strongly feel that N.Y.S.D.O.T. should drop from consideration, is the no-build alternative, and the viaduct alternative. You should basically keep the community grid alternative. Now, with the community grid, I support that.

The other alternative that I highly support is the skyway bridge alternative, if nothing else. If there is so much community opposition to
the community grid alternative, just go with the skyway alternative, please. I understand about the community grid, how it is going to basically reduce pollution and noise, by taking away the physical effects of 81 through fifteenth ward.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, sir. Next up is William Sanford, followed by Charlene Tarver.

MS. MAGUIRE: William Sanford, you should have the ability to unmute yourself.

MR. SMITH: Okay. We’ll try to get back to Mr. Sanford in a moment, if he’s having some technical difficulties. Please let us know in the chat if you’re still on the line. Next up on my list is -- oh, is that Mr. Sanford?

MR. SANFORD: Yes.

MR. SMITH: Okay. You’re up, sir.

MR. SANFORD: Yes, sorry for that.

MR. SMITH: That’s okay.

MR. SANFORD: Thank you for having this public hearing. My name is William Sanford, S-A-N-F-O-R-D. I grew up in the fifteenth ward, and I saw the devastation that was done to the neighborhoods there, at that time. And I also served as the chairman of the County Legislator, from 1980
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to 2001, and I was seeing a similar project that was
going to really change the Southside, and the effect
on those people down there, during my tenure.

And the people stood up and moved
against that, and so it didn’t happen, and so here’s
another time that I would like to see the people on
the Southside be able to, you know, comment on this
whole process. I just spent three weeks down in the
Southside, reacquainting myself with some of my old
neighbors, and also talking with many people, and
they’re clueless. They don’t know how this is going
to affect them, and I think that there is a
responsibility by the D.O.T. to make sure that those
folks have the information.

And so the other concerns that I have,
in just looking at this, I guess is that there’s
going to be more traffic in those neighborhoods, as
it’s all funneled through the city. And it’s going
to cause neighborhoods, and the ability to be a
neighborhood, having kids playing out there by the
streets and all of those things, as well as the
environmental impact of, you know, all that exhausts
and everything going into that area, and so I’m
really worried about that.
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I’m not against the grid, but I think that we should probably have a hybrid-type thing going on, so that the people that want to just continue at high speed through this area, would be able to do that. And so the other thing is that we just got the census back, and the City of Syracuse has grown, and the only one Upstate that’s done that, which is great. And so in the E.I.S., as far as I can find out, there isn’t any accommodation for the growth.

In fact, it’s ... of growth, I think, or maybe it’s just even. So I think you’d better take a look at that again because it’s going to be affecting those neighborhoods at that time. And so I appreciate, again, the time that you are all putting in, and I hope that you will take these comments into consideration. Thank you very much.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Sanford. Next up is Charlene Tarver, followed by Mary Cunningham.

MS. TARVER: Yes, this is Charlene Tarver. Can you hear me?

MR. SMITH: We can.

MS. TARVER: Yes. Good afternoon.
Thank you again to the New York State D.O.T. for the work that you’ve done in convening this project, and of course convening this public hearing. My name is Charlene Tarver -- T-A-R-V, like Victor, E-R. Excuse me, T-A-R-V-E-R. I am a resident of Syracuse. My family has resided in Syracuse for more than five decades.

According to the 2010 census, Syracuse had the highest concentration of black and brown poverty in the nation. That, coupled with the history of redlining in Syracuse, and the further isolation -- segregation -- enforced by the viaduct, really leads me today to echo a number of the comments that have already been made regarding the need for local hiring, and the emphasis in prioritizing establishing a land trust that would address some of the historic racial, social, economic and environmental justices that have been done and committed against African-Americans in the City of Syracuse.

The City of Syracuse is actually ranked one of the worst -- one of the top ten worst places in the country for African-Americans to reside. This one point nine to two point two billion
dollar project is an opportunity to address some of those economic issues and inequities it has been stated, and also a report was created by the Urban Jobs Task Force and Legal Services of Central New York, which identify that a number of the recent construction projects in Syracuse, eighty-eight percent of those workers in construction are white, and a very low percentage of those are even from the City of Syracuse.

The STEAM School, which is located right at the base of the construction of the removal of I-81 -- the viaduct -- those students are eighty percent black, and ninety-nine percent low income. I think that it is very imperative that we give the community more time to review the two hundred -- excuse me, the twenty-eight thousand page report that has come out, so that the community can be better galvanized, that there be a stronger emphasis on hiring local, and hiring African-Americans specifically, since they are the ones who are going to be most impacted. I think it is also imperative that we look at the environmental issues here, the placement of the construction site there at Wilson Park, and ensuring that our children are not
further impacted.

     MR. SMITH: Thirty seconds remaining.

     MS. TARVER: That is one of the lowest performing schools in the State of New York. And again, I think there is an opportunity here not only to integrate the community, but to further integrate culture, and create a stronger sense of economic development and economic viability within the African-American community that was destructively impacted by the removal and the destruction of ward fifteen. Thank you.

     MR. SMITH: Thank you, ma’am. The next speaker is Mary Cunningham, followed by Holland Gregg.

     MS. CUNNINGHAM: Hi. My name is Mary Cunningham, C-U-N-N-I-N-G-H-A-M. One of the causes of the deterioration of cities is when cities start to emphasize that they are places of parking lots and high-speed traffic and big trucks. And we really need to remember that cities are also places where there’s people who are living in neighborhoods that we want to form.

     I want to remind people that all the streets in our city should be thirty-mile-per-hour
streets. There should not be any other streets in our city that are higher than that, certainly not near schools. And school -- if you go down East Genesee Street, everybody slows down to twenty miles an hour for a high school, and we should be slowing down to twenty miles per hour for the Martin Luther King STEAM School. One, there should be no business loop or qualified highway going near that area, along Almond Street, and particularly near the school. Lanes should be eleven feet to slow down traffic.

If people have to take five more minutes to get from one place to another, from the north to the south, or the south to the north, I’m sorry; it’s worth the health and the welfare of the people on the Southside who have been so punished by having I-81 raised in their middle. There should be no roundabout near M.L.K. As one person said, if there had been a roundabout there first, no one would have built the school there. So why would we now say, well, there’s a school; let’s build a roundabout? It’s going to bring more traffic, more pollution, more noise, more destruction, and it’s a barrier.

We are taking down 81 to try and
remediate a barrier that made us a segregated city.
Putting a roundabout in that area, it could go off at
West Street into Fayette. It could go down it right
now, so that it is not a barrier, nor does it then
concentrate traffic in a roundabout right by a school
where there is preschoolers, kindergarten, young
children. And kids don’t watch traffic the way we
would like them to, so it is just murder waiting to
happen. It is dangerous. The last thing I guess I
want to --

MR. SMITH: Thirty seconds remaining.

MS. CUNNINGHAM: Yeah. The last thing
I want to encourage is that when we talk about local
hire, we think about local hire from the fifteenth
ward, and nineteenth ward, where it’s been most
impacted by the construction of I-81, that we don’t
think ... so much as we see city and the local
Southside for training and hiring. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, ma’am. Next up
to speak is Holland Gregg, followed by Adara Hobbs.

MR. GREGG: Testing. Can you hear me?

MR. SMITH: Yeah. We can hear you,

Holland.

MR. GREGG: Okay, thank you. First of
all, thank you all for conducting this Zoom meeting.
It’s going very well, even with the technical issues.
My name is Holland Gregg. First name is H-O-L-L-A-N-D, and last name is Gregg, G-R-E-G-G. I’m a resident of Skaneateles. I’m the executive director of a preservation group here called the Citizens to Preserve the Character of Skaneateles. I have sent my comments in, via email, and so I’m assuming those are on the record, and so I would just like to summarize those.

First of all, I do believe that the City of Syracuse does need an update to its cityscape, and so many good reasons have been articulated today. Our concerns are about the traffic study that the State has conducted. There’s great nervousness about the way those traffic studies were calculated, and what I’m hoping is that -- I’ve heard enough noise about the calculations, that I’m hoping that the State would entertain the idea of having some objective traffic experts come in and comment about those calculations, and to really get them around together in a constructive way, to make sure that the calculations are accurate. The one thing that could be a disaster is if they’ve been
underscored, or if they’ve been -- if the counts have been too low, because we’ll never get a chance to correct that, and so now would be the time.

Our other concern is for the communities to the east and north of Syracuse, and all of the traffic that’s going to impact their -- again, I’ve outlined this in my comments, in writing. And that, as Mr. Bone said earlier, traffic coming through above Route 81, the design, as far as we could see, is -- the design of the new traffic pattern is going to really discourage members of the trucking industry, especially long-haul truckers coming up from the south and heading west, to continue on and go through the city, and go east, go north, and then come back west.

This is going to have a negative impact on all of the communities, not just Skaneateles. This is not a Skaneateles problem. This is a Cortland problem, and an Ithaca problem, and an Aurora problem. In other words, this community grid design is going to impact all of Central New York, and a lot of us are very, very nervous about this.

And what I’m hoping is that the State
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will adopt regulations that are enforceable, to keep the trucks on the highways, and not allow them to cut off, and cut through the back roads, which all we could see is more traffic, over two hundred and fifty trucks that come through every single day. And then the Amazon outlet too, is going to have an impact. So thank you very much. You have my comments in writing, and I do appreciate it. I hope you will address them. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Gregg.

Next up is Adara Hobbs, followed by Peter King.

MS. HOBBS: Hello. Can you hear me?

MR. SMITH: Yes, we can.

MS. HOBBS: Hi, many is Adara Hobbs. Spelling is A-D-A-R-A, last name H-O-B-B-S. I’m a community member and lifelong resident of Syracuse, New York. I am also a teaching assistant at Brighton Academy, which is the feeder school for Dr. King. And I would just like to address my concern with the racial and economic disparities that would take place when this project is in effect.

First and foremost, I really am concerned about the displacement of this community. I lived in McKinney Manor as a child. A lot of my
family members still reside in these neighborhoods, and my concern is primarily the access to different areas, and even opportunities. A lot of these students who come up in this neighborhood, have an opportunity to get an education at Syracuse University, like myself, at an extremely discounted or free rate because of their residence there, and I want to know what will be put in place to continue to create equity in this community.

As we know, when the bridge was built, it was a ... when they destroyed the fifteenth ward. And to my group, particularly my demographic, our biggest concern is how that would happen again, and how this gentrification will affect this neighborhood. My students have lived in this area their whole life. Their grandparents have lived here. Pioneer Homes is one of the oldest public housing buildings in the United States -- one of the fifth oldest. It’s been here since 1940. There’s whole communities that would be displaced. Their grandparents would be displaced. They will not have the strong community unit, which is very important in the black community.

So I have several concerns I would
like to address furthermore. The roundabout at Dr. Martin Luther King School is completely unethical and unsafe for our students, on the basis of traffic and speeding around that roundabout. My concern is that one of my children will die at that roundabout, as well as the pollution that will be caused with this project.

I strongly encourage you guys as well to extend the comment period from the community because, like someone else said, they are completely clueless. I think that the Department of Transportation should take some responsibility for informing these people what really is going to happen, and what the effects of this displacement will be. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, ma’am. The next speaker is Peter King, followed by Kevin McCormack.

MR. KING: Hello. Hello?

MR. SMITH: I can hear you, sir.

MR. KING: Okay. I am Peter King -- P-E-T-E-R, K-I-N-G -- and I have lived in Syracuse for twenty years. I am supporting the project concerned, expressed by Moving People
Transport Coalition and the New York State Civil Liberties Union. I think the health and safety concern should be a priority for the 81 project.

In general, the community grid option would more likely improve public health concerns in Syracuse and the region, largely by reducing traffic volumes and speed. However, I recommend a maximum speed of thirty miles an hour, and eleven-foot lanes along business loop 81 within the city, and also slowing and dispersing traffic from Martin Luther King East until the 481 South interchange.

These measures will promote public health and safety for pedestrians and cyclists by calming traffic, and are more likely to reduce the air pollution here. However, D.O.T. should not underestimate the air quality issues remaining in the city, and especially on the Southside, even after a grid conversion. Nobody has adequately studied air quality and its related effects in Syracuse, which are structural environmental justice concerns.

D.O.T. needs to examine the microclimate here, and plan for reducing the air pollution overall, and buffering its impact. For example, as is common on hilly terrain, the cold air
likely drains each night from the university area and Oakwood Cemetery, blowing along 81 into the Southside. On still days, atmospheric inversions can also occur, keeping pollutants recirculating in the valley. Keeping this microclimate in mind, the traffic between Martin Luther King East to the 481 South interchange should not remain a high-speed roadway, but should be dispersed along the street grid as much as possible.

The public health impact from this stretch can be reduced by including more road access to and from the Southside and university, for example like the proposed interchange at Colvin Street. D.O.T.’s planning for natural areas along the Southside may be beneficial for air quality, but should be openly evaluated.

Dust concern is especially a concern in the city neighborhoods during the construction phase and after. D.O.T. should attend remediating heavy metals from the soils underneath the current viaduct and surrounding area for at least a hundred feet. Existing techniques can do this efficiently without costing too much.

D.O.T. should use input from multiple
sources, including experts, people’s on the ground observations and knowledge, and technical measurements for air quality, for monitoring the rebuild process and afterwards. D.O.T. should rethink the roundabout currently planned for the Martin Luther King intersection.

MR. SMITH: Thirty seconds.

MR. KING: As within this location is, six hundred feet of a busy roadway, a school. In general, that is most of my comments. Thank you very much.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. King. Next up to speak is Kevin McCormack, followed by Woodruff Carroll.

MR. MCCORMACK: Thank you. I’m Kevin McCormack. McCormack is spelled M-C-C-O-R-M-A-C-K. I’ve lived in the town and village of Skaneateles for over forty years, and I’m currently serving on the Town Board of Skaneateles. I’m here to echo, to a large extent, the comments of Mr. Gregg. I’m very concerned about the impact of the community grid plan on truck traffic exiting off of I-81, and coming north through the small towns and villages west of the city. We already have a problem with long-haul
freight and garbage trucks, traveling off of I -- I’m sorry, Route 481 and 41A along the lake, the Skaneateles Lake.

In addition to the problems mentioned by Mr. Gregg, there’s a danger of accidents, particularly in the winter. Anyone’s who’s traveled the 41A in the winter will know how narrow it is, especially when there are storms, it’s very dangerous. And our lake is a significant water supply for the City of Syracuse, and accidents occurring along those routes will be catastrophic for the water supply. The community grid plan will increase this traffic significantly, and encourage more trucks to leave I-81.

I’m asking the New York State Department of Transportation to consider mitigation methods to discourage trucks leaving I-81, and perhaps speed limit signs and roundabouts, or other means of restricting traffic. Specifically one issue I’d like to raise with the New York State D.O.T. is trucks coming up Route 41A and exiting onto Route 20 in the Village of Skaneateles. It’s an extremely dangerous situation, and we desperately need a real traffic light at that intersection, and we need
crosswalk markers to allow village residents to safely cross Route 20.

I think that would be a very helpful improvement, and once again can reduce and help to discourage trucks from leaving I-81. Thank you very much. I appreciate your time.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. McCormack. Next up is Woodruff Carroll, followed by Ronald Van Norstrand.

MR. CARROLL: Hi, can you hear me?

MR. SMITH: I can hear you.

MR. CARROLL: Okay, thank you. The concern I’ve been having, as I look at this, is I don’t see what the consideration has been, and what effect it will have on economic development in the city to go to this community grid approach. I was wondering if you could make some comments on that.

MR. SMITH: Mr. Carroll, did you have more to say?

MR. CARROLL: No, not at the moment. I’ve heard every other possible issue addressed, but nobody’s addressed anything to what it would do for economic development in the city.

MR. SMITH: Understood. Thank you,
sir. Next up is Ronald Van Norstrand, followed by Paul Czajkowski.

MR. VAN NORSTRAND: Thank you. My name is Ron Van Norstrand. That’s in V, as in Victor, A-N, N-O-R-S-T-R-A-N-D. I’m a resident of the City of Syracuse. I’ve lived here for thirty-eight years, and I’m a recently retired civil rights attorney. During my legal practice, many of my clients struggled with numerous quality of life issues, of living in an environmental justice community.

I implore the D.O.T. to acknowledge and to take concrete actions to address the fact that these quality of life issues arose primarily from the destruction of the fifteenth ward, and the enabling of white flight suburbs, caused greatly by the initial construction of I-81. Many people have addressed examples of concrete actions that could be taken.

I would point out that it is imperative that you reserve an equitable percentage of I-81 demolition and construction jobs for Syracuse city residents, and that you use an independent compliance officer, which is general practice for
construction projects, to effectively monitor the local hiring goals. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Van Norstrand. At this time, I’d like to remind the public that the D.O.T. and Federal Highway Administration will not be extemporaneously answering questions during this call. But all of your comments are being carefully recorded and will be responded to in due course, as part of the final environmental impact statement. Next up is Paul Czajkowski, followed by Megan Lee.

MR. CZAJKOWSKI: Good morning. Good afternoon, I’m sorry -- a quarter of one.

MR. SMITH: Hello. Good afternoon, sir.

MR. CZAJKOWSKI: Hello, how are you?

MR. SMITH: Go ahead.

MR. CZAJKOWSKI: Can you hear me?

MR. SMITH: We can hear you fine.

MR. CZAJKOWSKI: Thank you. So a lot of the comments I’ve heard have been on truckers, and I originally had submitted some maps for D.O.T. via email, on August 10th, and it was looking at an alternative route from I-81 northbound going to I-90
westbound, and vice versa, for truck traffic. It seems right now there’s an issue in Skaneateles, as well as there will be other issues toward the business loop with truck traffic, as we go westbound and southbound. I think the D.O.T. should look at an alternative. I included a map of Baltimore, Maryland, where they have a complete interstate that goes around the entire City of Baltimore. It could actually be tied back into Cicero, where the Amazon building -- or, excuse me, that’s up in Clay.

But having a basic interstate roundabout that would take basically 481 currently, and basically near it, right over 81, and create an interstate that goes around the entire City of Syracuse. And that would help both propel the business loop and community grid project, as well as provide an alternative means for both through traffic going northbound, to alleviate some of the issues we see currently with the interchange exit three at five and seventy-two, as well as provide access to western areas, such as Oswego and Fulton, with the development of the port authority up there in Oswego currently.

It could be pulled down, you know,
depending on the route of it, looking at Google Maps, utilizing the current Route 80 through Tully, between Skaneateles and Marcellus, and extending out towards between Weedsport and Jordan on I-90. This corridor could provide access for the many Finger Lakes regions, and it could also provide additional support for congestion within the City of Syracuse, as an alternative to access 81 and I-90 in that area.

MR. SMITH: Thirty second remaining.

MR. CZAJKOWSKI: I know ninety -- or excuse me, the ... exit is definitely very busy. My wife ... in DeWitt, and I think that that situation needs to be looked at again, and more comments ...

MR. SMITH: Mr. Czajkowski, can you hear me? Can you hear me, sir?

MR. CZAJKOWSKI: Yes, sir.

MR. SMITH: We lost you there for a moment. I’m going to give you a little extra time so you can finish your thought.

MR. CZAJKOWSKI: I’m all set. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: You’re all set, okay. Thank you, sir. The next person to speak is Megan Lee, followed by Jacqueline Lasonde.
MS. LEE: Hi, my name is Megan Lee --- M-E-G-A-N, L-E-E. I strongly support the community grid alternative. The community grid alternative not only meets the needs of the project described in the project documents, but it also rights the historical wrong done to the people displaced by the original build of I-81. I am a resident of the Town of Geddes.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my opinion, yet it is vital that the most attention is paid to the people living directly around the I-81 highway, in the City of Syracuse -- those whose health, homes and lives are most impacted by the highway in its current form, and who will be most impacted by the changes to come. I would echo the Urban Job Task Force’s clear and attainable demands for environmental, racial and economic justice, in the implementation of the community grid alternative.

I look forward to someday viewing this chapter in Syracuse’s history, and knowing that our community made a series of moral choices. Many people participating today have asked for an extended comment period. I would ask that as well, given the magnitude of the decisions being made here. Thank
you very much for the opportunity to speak.

    MR. SMITH: Thank you, ma’am. Next up is Jacqueline Lasonde, and I would like to remind everyone, as we reach the end of our list of people who have submitted their names ahead of time, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand using the Zoom app, and we’ll make sure that you get the opportunity. So next up is Jacqueline Lasonde.

    MS. LASONDE: Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

    MR. SMITH: I can.

    MS. LASONDE: Great. So thank you for the opportunity, and for bringing this meeting -- very important meeting -- together, and I look forward to the others as well. My name is Jacqueline Lasonde. I’ll spell the last name -- L-A-S, like Sam, O-N-D-E. I am a member of the I-81 Project, which is run by NYCLU, as well as I am the president of the Greater Syracuse Southside Neighborhood Association, in which we are civically engaged and run a full service food pantry on the Southside.

    I have not grown up here, but I’m here now six years. And as a Southside resident and
homeowner, I have many concerns, as many of the residents of the Southside do. I am deeply concerned about the business loop, which should not be placed near the Dr. Martin Luther King School. This is not a business. It is a school.

The quality of life, as it regards to air quality, is a priority. It has not been during the endurance of this bridge that has gone above this school and Wilson Park, above their heads. Well, traffic should not be a consideration. Respiratory and quality of life, and making right the atrocities of the past, this is what the goal should be, and should always be. The deadline for commentary should be extended, I agree, at least six months.

This community, as well as other people, but specifically here, we have gone through a lot of things. We are still in COVID, job loss, home loss, and so we need to take all of these things into consideration because we are in unprecedented times. Jobs should be concentrated to the persons most affected before this interstate demolished ward fifteen. And now that it will be removed, the City of Syracuse residents, predominantly African-Americans, should benefit from this. There needs to
be accountability on all of these projects because it is very concerning that there are a lot of comments, and people in the surrounding areas, based on ...

MR. SMITH: Thirty seconds.

MS. LASONDE: And yet we are the ones who these decisions were made about, so we need to be the ones that are specifically and totally involved. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to going forward with the project.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Lasonde. That concludes the list of people that we had ahead of time. I’m going to pause for a moment, to give the moderator an opportunity to see if there’s any other people who wish to speak through raising their hand on the app, and we’ll be back in a moment. I see that a couple of people have been added. Next up to speak is Courtney Alexander. Oh, I’m sorry; I don’t know if you could hear me before. I see that a couple of people have been added to my list. Next up to speak is Courtney Alexander, followed by Mark Tucker.

MS. ALEXANDER: Excellent, thank you. I’m Courtney Alexander. I’m the deputy town supervisor, as well as town councilor, in the Town of
Skaneateles, and we have some different concerns about this project. I am here speaking on behalf of myself and our board, and I know Mark will also be speaking as well. We have a request that the final report and E.I.S. that the Federal Highway Administration and the New York State Department of Transportation recently released, that identifies the community grid alternative as the project’s preferred alternative.

Our concerns are for the impact and the increase in interstate trucks entering and exiting Interstate 81 at the Homer exit, as a shortcut from the throughway to Seneca Falls. This will create an untenable negative impact on our small, rural communities on the Skaneateles Lake, and throughout the Finger Lakes. Skaneateles Lake is the source of unfiltered drinking water for over two hundred thousand people in Skaneateles, the City of Syracuse, and many surrounding communities.

Truck traffic entering and exiting Interstate 81 at Homer will travel along this highway on the east and west side of Skaneateles Lake. That has potential consequences to all these communities, and the surrounding towns and villages in Central New
York. This has not been adequately addressed by the D.E.I.S. We have sent this letter of our concerns on to Rick Marquis, the Division Administration, but I can’t communicate enough the impact that this project will have on the traffic in these surrounding communities and the Finger Lakes, and I would like to formally request that this be examined thoroughly as the project moves forward. Thank you for your time.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Ms. Alexander.

Next up to speak is Mr. Tucker.

MR. TUCKER: Hello. Can you hear me?

MR. SMITH: I can hear you.

MR. TUCKER: Hi, this is Mark Tucker, town councilor for the Town of Skaneateles. T-U-C-K-E-R is the last name. I’m glad we have a chance to listen to all the comments here today. I have to agree with Courtney on what she said about trucks. I mean, we’ve had this discussion quite a bit. The one thing I always considered with this community grid, have they looked at the pollution?

I read these articles that say, well, these highways create pollution through the community for those. But if you’re going to start putting in all these traffic lights, are you going to
take -- how are you going to create a better environment with vehicles idling at those intersections? The other thing, if this thing is wide, like Erie Boulevard, as one guy mentioned earlier, it’s still going to keep the place separated down there. And I don’t know on the land, that I hear there’s going to be all this land for development.

Who’s going to get that? Is it going to be hospitals, or the university, which don’t supply any taxes to the City of Syracuse? Those are some of my concerns. I understand these people have had some unjust down there over the years, but let’s not make it worse for them by putting in too many traffic lights, or at least get them timed right, or something. I don’t know if that’s been addressed. And that’s all I have for now. Thank you.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Tucker. I believe we’ve reached the end of our speaker list. This hearing will be continued at five o’clock today, so we will go into recess. It will not end. And I want to thank everybody who participated, and I appreciate all of your comments. And I know that the D.O.T. participants are listening carefully, and
considering everything you have to say.

(The proceeding concluded.)
STATE OF NEW YORK

I, ANNETTE LAINSON do hereby certify that the foregoing
was reported by me, in the cause, at the time and place,
as stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1 hereof; that
the foregoing typewritten transcription consisting of
pages 1 through 72, is a true record of all proceedings
had at the hearing.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
subscribed my name, this the 1st day of September, 2021.

ANNETTE LAINSON, Reporter
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NEW YORK STATE

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

I-81 VIADUCT PROJECT PUBLIC HEARING

DATE: August 18, 2021
TIME: 3:38 p.m. to 7:20 p.m.
LOCATION: ONCENTER
800 South Street
Syracuse, New York 13202
APPEARANCES:

Mahlon J. Sodlay
Mable Wilson
John Edinger
Anthony Tartaro
Kevin E. McCormack
Daniel N. Weingartha
Tom Carlin
Woodruff Carroll
Joe Bright
George Lawrence
Patrona Jones
dave Podkowinski
Audrey Fletcher
Andy Boucounis
Twiggy Billue
Stephen Erwin
James W. Darlington
Giovanni Vazillete
Tom Law
MR. JODLAY: What I wanted to check was -- what I wanted to check was, the 2nd November 1950, I was born in Crouse Irving Hospital. So I saw 81 built. Not heard about it, not waited until it was done, I watched it built. And one thing I'm kind of commenting about is once they do what they're going to do, are they going to have more cut-offs where you can go places, you know, to see different things? Go to the university, go to the hospitals, go to your friend's house, go the grocery store, go to the liquor store, go visit a friend. That's what I want to know, what they're going to do about that? As far as I'm concerned, that's it.

MS. WILSON: Hi. I'm Mable Wilson and I live in Pioneer Homes. My -- one of my great concerns is that the roundabout at Martin Luther King school is not a good idea because our kids have the highest incidences of asthma and other respiratory diseases. I think that there should be a good -- a good look into the environmental impact that's going to be on us residents that live in Pioneer Homes until we're able to move out of that area.

And also, I want to see a lot of green
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spaces -- paces -- places when the grid is done, and
trees in our area because we have the lowest amount
of trees in the African-American community, a native
plant. And if we can, have a park somewhat similar
to Central Park, but it might have to be on a small
scale, but a park like that in this area would bring
vitalization to the community, and us to go out when
it's nice and warm, to take our children and
grandchildren and great-grands to these areas.

And also, open up jobs for African-
Americans to work on this project because as far as I
know there haven't been any African-American
contractors involved, and I think that's a shame.
And I think it's a shame if you're not looking at the
needs of the minority community with environmental
protections.

Thank you.

(Off the record, 3:47 p.m.)

(On the record, 4:11 p.m.)

MR. EDINGER: Hello. My name is John
Edinger. I am a current resident of the town of
Preble in Cortland County, but live right near the
Onondaga-Cortland County line. I've traveled on
Route 81 all my life, either as a driver or a
passenger. I am currently employed with National Grid as a Class A truck driver, and for our warehouse which is located on Henry Clay Boulevard in Liverpool.

I'm -- I'm present at the meeting today to give my objection to a new community grid. I feel that -- that the community grid is going to hold up much -- a lot of traffic to go throughout the area the way it is. I also feel that it's also going to force people to leave the -- move out of the area -- force people to go outside of the area to, you know, to get to work like myself. Like myself, it probably would add time to like, fifteen, twenty minutes -- probably ten, fifteen minutes every day going back and forth to work.

I also feel that this is also going to force truck travel throughout -- you know, outside -- you know, that is coming in from Syracuse. It's going to force it to go into towns of Homer and Skaneateles where there -- even their ordinances about they're still not -- they're going to be risking that going through the -- those areas.

I also feel that it may force us to go -- do different things in regard to traveling to --
you know, traveling west to let's say the State Fairgrounds or to the amphitheater or, you know, going into Buffalo. It would change my routes that I normally would take, which would be a lot longer than what it currently is now.

I plan on giving a more formal statement, but I wanted to just at least express my dissatisfaction of the grid. And I feel that this has not been treated as -- treated as a regional decision. It's only been treated as a city decision, and it needs -- this needs to be more regionally focused.

That's my statement.

(Off the record, 4:14 p.m.)

(On the record, 4:25 p.m.)

MR. TARTARO: Okay. I want to know if there has been an environmental impact statement, or an environmental impact study of the increase in miles traveled if you change 81 to 481? I've -- I've clocked it on my motorcycle and it's over five miles longer distance, going around the city, than it is going straight through the city.

In 2002, approximately twenty-five thousand of the cars that were on 81 each day were
through cars. That means they weren't stopping in the city, they didn't start in the city, they didn't finish in the city, they were just going through the city. So that's twenty-five thousand cars every day that will be traveling an extra, at least five miles an hour around the city of Syracuse.

And if there isn't an environmental statement already, impact statement, I think there should be one because you're going to add a hundred and twenty-five thousand miles driven every single day, needlessly. It's going to cost all those twenty-five thousand people every day that much money to drive around Syracuse, but most importantly, it's going to create a hundred and twenty-five thousand miles of exhaust every single day that doesn't have to be there if you keep the cars going straight through Syracuse like it was.

And I'd like to know what the environmental impact of all that would be. I guess, that's it.

MR. MCCORMIACK: Hello. My name is Kevin McCormiack. I live in the town and village of Skaneateles. I'm also a town counselor on the Skaneateles town board and have been for the last
For years, we've had significant truck traffic, specifically fifty-foot-long trucks with freight and garbage taking a shortcut through small communities like Skaneateles, Cortland, Auburn, and Ithaca. Currently, we're experiencing two hundred and fifty trucks a day in the village of Skaneateles.

These in my opinion represent very dangerous trips up very narrow winding country roads, particularly Routes 41 and 41A, East and West Lake Road in Skaneateles.

And in the winter, there're extremely dangerous snowstorms, et cetera, and we're trying to keep it so that the amount of trucks that Exit 81 will -- will be reduced.

One of the problems too is, if there's an accident on 41 or 41A and something spills into the lake, as you -- as you well know, it's the water supply or part of the water supply for the city of Syracuse. So it's important, in my opinion, to keep the truck traffic under control. The community grid will increase the traffic significantly.
What I would ask is that the New York State Department of Transportation consider ways to reduce the traffic such as reduce speed limits, maybe make it more attractive on the Thruway by reduced tolls, more stop signs, maybe a roundabout.

And one specific recommendation, I live on 41A. 41A intersects with Route 20, State Route 20 in the village. It's a mess. Trucks -- there's no stop -- there's no traffic light, full traffic light, green, red, yellow, and it's really a mess. And we would ask that the Department of Transportation New York State consider putting in a permanent traffic light and an intersection with markers so that -- so that pedestrians can cross safely. I think putting in the light will help to reduce the truck traffic.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak. That's all I have. Thank you.

(Off the record, 4:32 p.m.)

(On the record, 4:37 p.m.)


They are now going to close Court
Street on-ramp to 81 North, and they're going to close the Court Street exit at Bassett Street that goes to 81 North. And now they're going to make the on-ramp at Bear Street. So they're going to move the highway down two blocks to where they're going to get on, and that's going to increase a lot of traffic going by my house.

I'm two -- two houses away from the -- from Sunset and I'm a senior, I'm a veteran, and I was wondering if I could get some help with soundproofing my house. I asked the State Environmental. They told me no because they don't do soundproofing; only the federal government does. I thought the federal government was putting a lot of cash into this adventure, and I was wondering if somebody out there would see if I can get some help.

Thank you very much. Daniel Weingarth.

(Off the record, 4:39 p.m.)

(On the record, 4:50 p.m.)

MR. CARLIN: Hi, my name is Tom Carlin. My company is Technical Workplace Consulting. I'm an I.T. consultant. I have about fifty clients throughout Central New York. I have --
I have clients in Utica, in Auburn, in Cortland, in Fulton, a whole bunch in Syracuse and surrounding villages.

My clients depend on me to be able to get to them quickly in the event of a -- of a problem. It's -- it's critical for them to know that if there's a problem with their computers, I can get there quickly and get them back up and working.

I have a really serious concern that the community grid-only option is going to limit my ability to get to my clients quickly. A friend of mine, you know, says what I do is something like a bumble bee. I'm always hopping from client to client. So I could be in Auburn and somebody in Liverpool could call and say, hey I need you to get up here, and so I have to be able to -- to get up there quickly.

So like I said, I'm very concerned about the issue of being able to get to my clients quickly.

The other side of this is I've heard some people who support the community grid-only option as -- say something to the effect that Ithaca is a good model for what they want to do. Well, I
drive all over Syracuse. I have no problem driving in Syracuse. Heck, I even have no problem driving in Boston, but I cannot drive in Ithaca. It is a -- it is a total mess. And so using Ithaca as a model for what they want to do is, quite frankly, not really good salesmanship, frankly.

Finally, Syracuse and Central New York is changing. Our population is growing. We have more immigrants. We have more jobs. Where those jobs are is changing a little bit. And my big concern is that the D.O.T., when they put this plan together, used stale data, used data from ten years ago, eight years ago, whatever, and they didn't take into account what's happened in the past, you know, four or five years. I think that they really should step back and reconsider this whole plan and come up with something that meets the needs of everyone and not just certain ones. That's it.

(Off the record, 4:53 p.m.)

(On the record, 4:55 p.m.)

MR. CARROLL: I just wanted to have you folks look at the option of allowing the city of Syracuse to take the crossroads on the viaduct area where you've got the community grid, and have them go
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under or over the new highway at ground level. I think that would be an important change and addition that might make a big difference.

Let the city of Syracuse pay for it and it would be fine, but I think the proposal should include that option if the city wants to take it and they want to do that. That's it. Thank you.

(Off the record, 4:56 p.m.)

(On the record, 4:58 p.m.)

MR. BRIGHT: My name is Joe Bright, J-O-E B-R-I-G-H-T. That's all.

(Off the record, 4:58 p.m.)

(On the record, 4:59 p.m.)

MR. LAWRENCE: All right. This is a different perspective of what I've heard. I'm from -- my name is George Lawrence and I'm from Roanoke, Virginia. For those of you geographically challenged, Roanoke is five hundred and seventy-five miles south on Interstate 81. It is in the southern end of the Shenandoah Valley of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia.

Back in the '60s, the Virginia Department of Transportation came to Roanoke and said 81 is going to come through here, do you want it to
go through the city or bypass the city? And the city of Roanoke said we don't want all that traffic and pollution in our city, we want it to go by the city. And so it did.

And in the late fall or winter, if you look over into the valley you can see the city from the side of the mountain that 81 run -- runs down. Unfortunately, the city of Roanoke did not understand the volume of traffic that 81 would carry. They saw all the trucks and cars. They saw all the commerce and money driving right by the city.

So they went back to the Virginia Department of Transportation and they said we want a spur. Now, they had six exits off of 81, but none were direct. You kind of got off and wandered around for a while. So the Department of Transportation decided they'd put -- they built the spur of 581 directly into the heart of Roanoke -- downtown Roanoke.

And today, you have six lanes, three each way, and you have a -- a viaduct partly about three-quarters the size of the one that we have. It's much wider because it follows the -- the later building regulations, but it goes right through the
city. And it also did the same thing Syracuse did. It put it through part of the Black community and changed that part of the city.

So the point I'm making is this. If you don't want to see the cars, and the trucks, and the commerce, and the money go by the city, then you should rethink what you're doing here. Thank you.

(Off the record, 5:02 p.m.)

(On the record, 5:04 p.m.)

MS. JONES: All right. My name is Patrona Jones, P-A-T-R-O-N-A. I am a south side resident, and I am speaking on behalf of the residents of the south side within -- within the 13205, 13202, and 07, possibly 04 area. Those areas are amongst the greater and great impact areas. And I was looking to see how those residents within that area would be able to take advantage of possible funds that would be eligible to them to have for facade improvements, being that the highway will come down, a lot of the homeowners in that area have been in the primary distress areas and -- and have -- had less means of securing loans that others may have been able to receive.

So for the -- for the greater impact
area, which is probably from the highway to South Salina Street, you will probably have between two hundred to three hundred homeowners and those homeowners should be able to receive funds for improvements. And at the least, most home improvements would probably cost between ten and twenty thousand dollars for facade infrastructure. Those infrastructures would be somewhere from paint jobs, sidings, roof repairs, porches, fences, tree removal, et cetera.

The further out, those projects could possibly go probably to Midland Ave. So from the highway to Midland Ave and -- and if -- and if that was to Midland Ave, you will probably have somewhere to maybe seven to nine hundred homeowners in the area. And so just looking at the amount of funds that would probably be allocated to this type of project, with other projects that have happened similar in the area have been disbursed over somewhat of a five-year plan type of thing.

So if it was a quarter of a million-dollar project solely allocated to homeowner improvements over a five-year plan, I think that that would be something that would benefit the residents
that are greatly impacted within that 13205 area.

(Off the record, 5:08 p.m.)

(On the record, 5:09 p.m.)

MR. PODKOWINSKI: Hi. It's Dave Podkowinski. For the 81 project, I would recommend making sure that the shoulders of the road are wide enough because it does snow in Syracuse. I notice that you have them coming close in some spots. And also so you can get vehicles off the road in case of breakdown.

One other thing is for maintenance for the road and for the trees and the grass and whatever is needed out there, they should be wide enough so that vehicles can park alongside the road.

Street lighting is another concern. In the northern part, I don't know if it's going to be changed any, but the lights in the middle of the road are horrendous to work on. Right now, the existing road is so narrow you can't get a vehicle off the road to work on the lights.

I guess that's it.

(Off the record, 5:11 p.m.)

(On the record, 5:49 p.m.)

MS. FLETCHER: I'm Audrey Fletcher and
I'm speaking as a resident of the city of Syracuse where I've lived for over forty years.

I strongly support development of the community grid along with replacement of the viaduct. These two solutions are not mutually exclusive. We can create a street level grid with all of its benefits, including reconnecting city neighborhoods and addressing racial and environmental justice, as well as maintain a critical elevated roadway through our city.

I have several concerns. For one, sixty days is not nearly enough time to assess a twenty-eight-thousand-page document. This just isn't reasonable. We should extend the comment period in order to review and react to the D.O.T.’s latest recommendations.

Next, the D.O.T. has been researching this matter for years. And based on early data, it concluded that the grid-only option is best, but so much has changed in just the last several years. The latest figures from Department of Labor show an increase in private sector jobs. Early 2020 census data show an increase in population for the first time in years. Local defense manufacturers are
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receiving large contracts and plan to add to the workforce. Amazon is hiring a thousand workers. If we are lucky enough to get the Intel plant, that could be another thousand plus jobs. D.O.T. must consider this new data and how it impacts the need for fast and direct transport.

Over the last several years, I've made a point of asking friends, colleagues, and many total strangers their opinion on the I-81 debate. Overwhelmingly, the people I speak with are in favor of maintaining a high-speed road. The standard in this debate is consensus. If more people support replacing the bridge, then there is no consensus around a grid-only option, despite what our politicians say.

Finally, I have an issue with the process. D.O.T. did its research and made its recommendation. At no time has there been a true question and answer forum with D.O.T. in front of a large audience. It's easy to stand by your point of view when you never have to defend it. The people deserve the opportunity to hear D.O.T. answer hard questions and defend their conclusions for all to hear and judge.
In conclusion, we can meet the needs of all of our citizens with a combination of a street level grid and a new viaduct, but it's reasonable to request additional time to assess the latest D.E.I.S. It's reasonable to expect D.O.T. and grid-only proponents to keep an open mind to change based on new data. Our citizens should insist that D.O.T. answer direct questions in a public forum. And above all else, let's figure out what the consensus really is. Thank you.

(Off the record, 5:52 p.m.)

(On the record, 5:54 p.m.)

MR. BOUCOUNIS: Hi. My name is Andy Boucounis. I own and operate Andy's Produce and Food Service at the corner of 101 West Court Street and Genant Drive in Syracuse, New York. I designed and had the building built and moved in in 1994, twenty-seven years ago. And I have four driveways, two driveways on Genant Drive and two driveways on Court Street.

I only have two trailer -- tractor trailer receiving docks and I have one major driveway that they need to back into, and I want to make sure that this driveway is protected. It is on Genant
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Drive, closest south, and it's a sizeable driveway. And the docks are recessed, so I really need that dock to -- excuse me -- that driveway to stay intact.

There's also a telephone pole there that, over twenty-seven years, they've probably taken it out about eight or ten times. The D.O.T. recommended that I say maybe there's some way they can move that somewhere safer to make it also easier for the drivers to get in there.

We really would like all four driveways protected as we are -- the two in the front on the north end of the building are for retail. The two in the back are for wholesale. So we really need the entries and exits to be left intact. Thank you so much.

(Off the record, 5:56 p.m.)

(On the record, 5:57 p.m.)

MS. BILLUE: My name is Twiggy Billue, T-W-I-G-G-Y B-I-L-L-U-E. I work for Jubilee Homes of Syracuse as the workforce development coordinator. I am the president of the Syracuse Chapter of the National Action Network. I am also a candidate for Syracuse City School Board.

I want to start by saying that I am
very disappointed in the way that this process worked out. Those of us that were here before six did not get to speak. It seemed that only the status quo or those with privilege got to speak first, and those that were directly involved in the footprint had to wait until after six.

Therefore, I want to start with saying that we need jobs in our community. We need the D.O.T. and its office of civil rights to institute a C.D.L. training program immediately, so that by June 2022 we have folks ready and trained with C.D.L.s to be on this job.

We also want some mitigation funds directed to Dr. King School. We believe that the roundabout at Dr. King school will become problematic. Being from Syracuse, so living in Syracuse, I used to reside in Washington D.C. that has the highest amounts of roundabouts in any city in the country, as well as the highest amount of accidents with youth passing those roundabouts. Roundabouts are not supposed to be walkable neighborhoods. Roundabouts are traffic barriers. Roundabouts keep high speeds and it's not
a very viable way for youth or elderly to be able to
cross the street.

We also want to talk about mitigation
money for Dr. King School. So if the school needs to
be moved into another building while the highway is
under construction, that the school district does not
have to fund that or foot that bill, that there's
mitigation money from the Office of Civil Rights and
the Department of Transportation.

We also want to make sure that there's
a fund available through the Department of
Transportation for those that may have to move for no
fault of their own, that it matches the market rate
apartment prices that are out there. Put them into
high quality homes, unlike what happened at Kennedy
Square when those buildings come down.

We want to talk about social impact
financing and career impact bonds to guarantee that
on-the-job training, not just work smart. On-the-job
training is done in a different way that we get a one
stop for P.B.E.s, M.W.B.E.s, X.B.O.s, so that by the
time this program starts we have people already in
the certification process, if not already certified,
but can go somewhere very locally, get information so
that our vendors and suppliers and our construction companies can actually take part on this project and hire from within the city.

We believe that there should be a priority plus hiring initiative. That means at least twenty-five percent of all jobs must come from the footprint and another fifty percent must come from the city within itself. That's taken off of the priority source from Buffalo, but we know we can do that here.

We're also believing that a pay-for-success initiative -- there was a pay-for-success initiative with formally incarcerated folks at the tune of fifteen point five million dollars that were used for heavy highway projects and bridges between Rochester and Syracuse. We believe that if we replicate those programs, we will be able to provide training for all, for students, for adults, and for those that were formerly incarcerated.

We need the D.O.T. and the Office of Civil Rights for the D.O.T. to bring back that hazmat trainings for free, those C.D.L. trainings for free, back into the neighborhood so that people that live in the footprint can actually get some of these high-
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quality jobs that are coming through with I-81.

(Off the record, 6:02 p.m.)

(On the record, 6:07 p.m.)

MR. ERWIN: My name is Steve Erwin.

I'm the Regional Vice Chairman of the Trucking
Association of the State of New York and I want to
talk about the grid option.

I've heard the people from Salina, and
I realize the economic impact to the people of
Salina. One of the things that's been totally not
discussed is the businesses to the west of Interstate
81. All of the major food distributors are located
west of 81, G&C foods, Sysco Foods, Dot Foods, McLane
Northeast, Anheuser-Busch. There is about twenty-
five companies located west of 81 that would be
adversely affected by the grid.

I also am opposed to it being called a
grid. The definition of grid is a series of parallel
and crisscrossing lines. This is going to be a
boulevard. There's no ifs, ands, or buts about it.
The same number of cars that, today, come down off of
the interstate onto Adams and Harrison Street are
going to be using this boulevard, for the lack of a
better word.
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I'm also opposed to the D.O.T. funding any part of the business loop if that's what ends up becoming of this is it is not a business loop. It doesn't promote through transportation. It actually kind of discourages any type of through transportation, which I understand that's what we are trying to do.

The pictures being painted to the residents are very disturbing because it shows a very sparsely traveled road, and that's not going to be the case.

All the injustice that was done to the residents of the Fifteenth Ward in the '50s is going to be repeated again with the grid. They are going to end up being the bigger -- biggest losers with the grid. They're being painted a picture of this beautiful park-like setting with half a dozen cars on the street. That's not what it's going to be. There are going to be numerous -- numerous, thousands of vehicles on these streets. There will be all type of gridlock.

And all the talks of pollution, the most polluting vehicle on the road is a vehicle that has stopped at a traffic light. Vehicles travelling
at highway speed are at the most efficient point of
the combustion engine. Vehicles stopped at a traffic
light or idling and traveling at -- at extremely slow
speeds on a city street emit way more pollution than
a vehicle traveling on the highway.

The other thing I've -- I heard in
some of the other comments today was about the grid
spurring growth in the city. Yet, the D.E.I.S. has
no mention of growth, or no accommodation of growth
for at least twenty years I believe, if we've read it
right. So it kind of contradicts itself.

So the roundabout at Dr. Martin Luther
King School is a horrible idea. A roundabout,
period, is a horrible idea. Nine out of ten drivers
do not like roundabouts, and they are afraid of them.
And especially putting a roundabout at the end of an
interstate to transition into a city street makes no
sense whatsoever. It's going to be a high accident
area.

And we're concerned about the added
cost all the companies west of 81 are going to have
to endure. And these are companies that supply the
inner city, as well, with food. So it's not a
suburban -- just a suburban problem. This will
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affect the inner city.

The market -- the regional market, all the produce that goes into the regional market comes in on truck. Those trucks will endure additional costs. I fear a lot of them will go up through the grid because it would be the most direct route to the market. And I'm afraid we're going to have all kinds of issues with the trucks on the grid. And -- and -- and the trucking industry is going to get a bad name for that, but it's the design for the D.O.T. that's going to be the problem.

So there are better options out there. I think the grid plus the skyway option kind of meets the needs of both people. But again, just the -- just the grid option, I believe the residents of Pioneer Homes are going to be the biggest losers all over again. I -- I think we're just going to repeat what was done in the 1950s.

Thank you.

(Off the record, 6:10 p.m.)

(On the record, 6:37 p.m.)

MR. DARLINGTON: Hi, my name is James Darlington. I'm a resident of the Syracuse area and have been most of my adult life and beyond, actually.
I'd like to make some comments concerning the Route 81 reconstruction.

Let me begin by saying that if the north -- I'm sorry -- if the southwest quadrant of the ring -- interstate ring road around the inner urban area of -- of Onondaga County were complete, I'd be in favor of the removal of the interstate and 81 viaduct.

However, that's not the case. It never will be the case. It will never be built. And therefore, I am in favor -- very much in favor of the maintenance of some sort of viaduct or non-street-level interstate connection through the city of Syracuse.

I -- I say this for a whole series of reasons, beginning with the fact that the interstate is -- or the -- the removal of the interstate will pose a serious commuting problem for -- and time delay for those commuting from the south of -- south of Syracuse into the city and beyond, to the north of the city, and people from the north commuting to the south beyond the city.

This is particularly true for the northwest quadrant of Onondaga County and beyond,
places like Liverpool, and Baldwinsville, and Solvay, and Camillus, and Elbridge, and Lysander, et cetera, North Syracuse. And I say this because the grid system will delay the commute substantially.

The last numbers I saw were that the delay would be approximately seven minutes. Anybody who has studied this sort of commuting calculation knows that they are consistently under -- they consistently underestimate, substantially, the commuting times. It's not something new. It's something that's just based on this project; it's uniform across North America. And there's been enough documentation of that to justify what I'm saying.

But let's just be reasonable in our -- in our time -- estimated time. I'm sure it's greater than this, but let's assume that it's just ten minutes. It's a little bit more than what they're saying, but certainly nothing outrageous. Ten minutes each way adds twenty minutes to your commute every day. That's a hundred minutes a week. That's, in a fifty-week work -- or fifty -- yes, fifty-week work schedule, that's five thousand minutes a year. That's well over three days of your life. And ten
minutes each way, that's when things are working smoothly.

To -- to use the interstate all the way around to take 690 all the way to DeWitt and around 481 is going to add substantial time. Traffic is going to be substantial. The delay is even going to be greater.

And I know that there's a substantial number of people who -- who do the commute from the north to the -- from the northwest portion of the county, south of the city on a daily basis and vice versa because I travel it myself and I see the traffic, and I see it at various times of the day. For example, students from the north who are attending O.C.C., they travel down 81 and then they get off at Colvin Street to go up to the -- to Onondaga Hill. There's no real reasonable alternative.

So commuting times for -- for -- for the general public is critical and it's being -- this isn't really being discussed as far as I am concerned and made public, the way it should be with realistic numbers. We're not talking about additional time to -- or wear and tear on the vehicles and all that sort
of thing, nor are we talking about congestion -- the added congestion it will create, greater traffic congestion within the city itself.

Let's talk about trucks and truck transport. Right now, at the present time, there are a number of major trucking firms that are based in the northwest quadrant of Onondaga County, primarily in the Baldwinsville area, McCann. Is it McCann? It's one of them. I can't think of the others off the top of my head. There's also all of the traffic that is generated by the paperboard company, WestRock in Solvay.

And I know that in their case -- I can't tell you the exact number of trucks that go down 81 every day and travel east on -- on 690 and then take the -- the connector in the city to travel south towards New York City on 81. What I do know is it's a substantial number.

Personally, I drive from Syracuse to Binghamton on a daily basis and it is not uncommon for me to overpass -- or overtake, rather, as many as three of their trucks. And the trucks that are coming out of WestRock are easily identifiable, at least many of them are. I'm sure there are maybe
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others that -- that I don’t know the characteristics
of, but many of them I do. And so it's not unusual
for me to be overtaking at least three in a eighty-
mile, seventy-mile journey.

They're traveling at seventy miles an
hour. I'm traveling at seventy-five. To overtake
three tells me that there's an awful lot of trucks
coming out of WestRock that are heading south on a
daily basis. Multiply that times five days a week or
even seven days a week because WestRock is a
continuous operation, it goes night and day, nonstop.

Okay. That said, so there's a lot of
trucks that are using that now. Authorities have
told me that the average mileage eighteen -- that an
eighteen-wheeler semi tractor-trailer gets is
approximately six miles to the gallon of diesel fuel.
They're not going to be taking the city streets.
They're not going to be taking the city grid. And
they're going to be forced to go around on 690 to the
east and then south on -- on -- on 481 and link --
link up with 81 to head south. That's going to add
at least ten miles, if not twelve or more, to their
-- to their travel distance.

That's a lot of -- that's a lot of
diesel fuel given that this is going to -- you can extend that not just for one trip but of course the hundreds, thousands of trucks that are going by using this route on a daily basis, on a weekly basis. Extrapolate that to a year and this system, this structure, or road system is going to be in place for at least half a -- half a century, that is a lot of fuel.

There's also another aspect of the trucks that I think is oftentimes not considered. One -- and one of those things is the travel time that the truckers are -- are under in terms of how many hours they can -- they can drive without having to stop and take a -- take a break.

The added congestion, which is clearly going to be there because the basic system is going still -- still be in place, it's going to impact that. To what extent, I can't say, but it's going to impact it in a -- in an adverse way.

Another aspect of the -- that will happen, or something else that will happen is if the viaduct isn't maintained is that southbound traffic for trucks is going to be forced to use 481 the old Rock Cut Road valley, if you will. The problem there
is that you're -- the trucks are now left with one alternative for getting through the city if they're southbound. Whether they're coming from the west, whether they're coming from the north, whether they're locally generated, they're all going to be taking that route. And it is not out of the realm of possibility that there will be a major accident.

And I do not mean that in the sense that because of the congestion, but because there'll will be a truck just carrying flammables that's doing this kind -- some kind of hazmat materials. There's going to be an accident. It's going to shut the whole system down. This has happened in the past. It happened several years ago down in the Binghamton area on I-88 that shut down the system there for a day or more.

Well, in the case of the Binghamton area, they could easily reroute the trucks to State Highway 7 parallels -- parallels I-80 -- I-88. In the case of if the viaduct is eliminated in Syracuse, trucks -- any -- any kind of traffic that's backed up to southbound traffic or northbound traffic as far as that goes for trucks, but more importantly southbound traffic, they're not going to have any alternatives
other than Salina Street, the old Route 11 going right through the city of Syracuse. That's just the -- that's just reality.

All the other southbound highways -- state highways, with the exception of Route 11, climb very serious grades and the trucks aren't going to be able to do that.

So for a matter of -- of just -- we need the redundancy of the -- of the viaduct in order to assure that that sort of catastrophe doesn't happen. And it easily could happen at an unpredictable time, of course. And hopefully it never happens, but I think we'd be foolish -- I think the state would be very foolish and federal government to think that it wouldn't.

So we've got fuel issues with the trucks, we've got possible hazmat problem that would result in a major delay and forcing the trucks to -- to -- to either take a very long detour to -- to Albany or wherever, to the -- to the east -- I guess maybe they wouldn't have to go to Albany, but they'd have to go east substantial distance. It would be a major delay. We've got travel times with the truckers, just to summarize that.
Finally, perhaps even most importantly, the towns, villages in the northwest quadrant of Onondaga County and, for that matter, beyond will be very much ill-served by the elimination of the viaduct, economically ill-served because, as we all know, transportation is crucial and the location and somebody choosing a location for a business. Good connections are important, are very important, they're critical. And if -- if we eliminate the viaduct, it's going to put the northwest quadrant of Onondaga County and the towns there and villages at a severe disadvantage in competing with other locations here in Central New York, and in Onondaga County and beyond because they're simply not going to have the same efficient connection that they have now.

I say all this thinking also of NEPA and the guidelines of NEPA. NEPA's regulations require that the impact, the negative impacts on any transportation decision not significantly -- adversely significantly impact the community. It's hard to imagine that, for reasons I've stated, that the elimination of the viaduct will not seriously, significantly adversely impact the citizens, private
citizens, the communities as a whole from an economic standpoint, and businesses, particularly those that are very much dependent on transportation.

I could say more but the stenographer's hand is getting tired, I'm sure. So I'll -- I'll -- I'll close with that.

Thank you.

(Off the record, 6:55 p.m.)

(On the record, 7:08 p.m.)

MR. VAZILLE: Hello. My name is Giovanni Vazille. I'm a city resident of Syracuse, New York. And I would just like to say it's -- I have been fortunate to be a part of a group that has been canvassing every section of Syracuse for the past eight weeks.

And the stories that the residents have been telling us is hurt -- it's hurtful, heartful, and surprising, but they all hold a common ground. That is these people have been trained, they have their certifications; yet, they are being overlooked for jobs, jobs that will give -- will provide their family so much. And I just want to say, because all these stories are very much the same, something is clearly wrong.
Being overlooked for jobs when you clearly have certifications, when you're ready to work is just not cool. And I would hope that all these jobs coming to the city of Syracuse -- or with the construction, I would hope at least -- at the very, very least, that twenty percent of these jobs will go to the city of Syracuse residents because they desperately need them. Communities are being destroyed. Families need jobs. They need money to survive, overall. So yes, thank you.

(Off the record, 7:10 p.m.)

(On the record, 7:18 p.m.)

MR. LAW: Yeah, my name is Tom Law. I finished about twenty minutes ago in the open hearing here in Syracuse. I want to add to my final comment on using the old concrete. I suggested it could be used in lining the Inner Harbor Canal, but also, it could be used in lining the end -- the mouth of Ley Creek, not far from there on -- on Onondaga Lake.

Also, as a possibility of other points along the lake being used to stabilize or build dock works, say, at the western part of the -- of the lake, or again lining Nine Mile Creek as it goes through the Solvay waste beds. So what I'm -- and
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there’s stockpile room down near the Inner Harbor, a few blocks, large tracts that aren't used to date that could be a stockpile for working this forward, so long as it hasn't got chemicals in it, adjudevants (phonetic spelling) they're called, from the mix that they used on the bridges prior. Adjudevants weren’t used a lot, I believe, in the 1960s. So I'm not saying this is a perfect solution to -- for construction debris, but it possibly has some merit.

And the area that I've said, the Inner Harbor and Ley Creek are very close in terms of transportation time and potentially could be a -- what do you call it -- a repurposing of a lot of concrete so long as it doesn't pollute.

That's it. Thank you.

(The hearing concluded at 7:20 p.m.)
STATE OF NEW YORK

I, ROBERT WURTZ, do hereby certify that the foregoing was reported by me, in the cause, at the time and place, as stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1 hereof; that the foregoing typewritten transcription consisting of pages 1 through 41, is a true record of all proceedings had at the hearing.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name, this the 2nd day of September, 2021.

ROBERT WURTZ, Reporter