

OCL *Rethinking I-81* Study  
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes  
University College  
April 3, 2008

Present: Joe Ash, Emmanuel Carter, Nell Donaldson, Bill Egloff, Tony Malavenda, Karen Kitney, Rebecca Livengood, Sarah McIlvain, Donna O'Mahoney Rohde, Van Robinson, Sandra Barrett

Presentation: Film

### **Removal of the Embarcadero Freeway: Lessons from San Francisco**

<http://www.streetfilms.org/archives/lessons-from-san-francisco/>

(Local and national transportation authorities, freeway removal supporters explain what happened in cases of San Francisco freeway removals, removal of New York City's West Side Highway.)

What are objective measures of economic development that can be specifically tied back to freeway removal?

- There were concerns by those in San Francisco's Chinatown that freeway removal would affect their businesses. Short-term losses were offset by long-term economic growth. Growth due to freeway removal cannot be easily segmented from general growth.
- Difficult to attribute economic growth to one cause because numbers can be skewed different ways. The successes of San Francisco's experiment with freeway removal hard to compare to what might happen in Syracuse since the economies are so different. Development of any available land in San Francisco was bound to be quick and profitable. (The sale of land made available by the freeway removal paid for removal project.)

Comments:

- I-81 has too many substandard features. If we were going to rebuild it today, it would have to change.
- Since it may be 10-15 years before actual measures are taken regarding I-81, should the committee consider mitigating measures that might be taken in the interim?
- Will footprint of I-81 definitely have to be larger? This may not be the case. Consider Marquette Interchange, in Milwaukee, south of the freeway removal project, where community involvement is a part of a freeway interchange rebuilding project. Spaces have been created for economic development to take place, where links to the local street network were eliminated. The footprint of the reconstruction is smaller than previous interchange. (Bill Egloff may do presentation).
- It cannot be stated with certainty that a rebuilt I-81 will have a larger footprint (for instance some on-ramps and off ramps would have to be eliminated) but it will definitely have to be reconfigured.
- The viaduct could become an interchange between 690 and I-81 without any on or off ramp at that location.

Emmanuel Carter is gathering a group of students to visualize several alternatives, to elucidate both the configurations and implications for each of those alternatives (which would also include

linkages to Centro, Park and Rides, etc.)

As part of SMTC's work, there will be alternatives modeled and Nell Donaldson suggested that the work of Emmanuel Carter's students might be prototypes for several of those.

Comments:

- Can commute times be figured into these models? This is unlikely, since traffic counts, etc. will not be available to this group.
- Our mission, based on the mission statement is not necessarily to draw a conclusion but to foster creative thinking and to create awareness of what needs to be addressed in the official process.
- Discussion of mission statement: study will consider potential economic *opportunities* (v. impacts)
- Need to help define the different alternatives for Emmanuel Carter's project; Emmanuel Carter sees his starting point as looking at the current condition of I-81; looking how small ameliorations to I-81, a slightly smaller corridor, will likely not have any real positive impact; look at different alternatives that have been tried in other locations; look at various impacts on cityscape; look at where acreage/land could be gained for economic development if I-81 came down. Study committee will consider range of alternatives and criteria to be met before project proceeds. (Some alternatives may be presented just to show that they were considered, such as tunneling.) Possible presentations: current condition, bringing to grade, putting I-81 in a depression, taking out the existing corridor all together.
- Need to consider short term efforts to ameliorate existing I-81? Looking at short term efforts may throw the study off track and some of this will be considered by SMTC.
- If we have access to statistics on where downtown workers (Upstate, University Hospital, etc.) live could we map their routes?
- Include case studies of local leadership of freeway removal project in different cities selected for the report.

April 10th meeting cancelled. Next meeting, April 17 3:30 - 5PM, room 307 University College.