

OCL *Rethinking I-81* Study  
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes  
University College  
Jan. 7, 2009

Present: Phil Bousquet, Chris Capella-Peters, Emanuel Carter, Dennis Connors, Karen Kitney, Rebecca Livengood, Tony Malavenda, Sarah McIlvain, Clyde Ohl, Donna O'Mahoney Rohde, Sandra Barrett, Rachel Pollack

Post Standard (Tim Knauss) will do an article in the Progress Edition (beginning of February) on the I-81 process (not just the study). They are seeking visuals for the story.

Next week's meeting will be a presentation on traffic patterns/changes during I-81 shutdowns, with guest Capt. Shannon Trice, traffic director of the Syracuse Police Department.

Emanuel Carter's students will further develop ideas in a post-studio project phase. They will create two more graphics. One will show the very best ideas associated with keeping the highway on its present course. The other will show the best ideas associated with having the highway go around the city.

- The goal will be to have the best case scenarios for keeping it on its present course and the best case scenarios for diverting it really look like the best case scenarios.
- They will try to show property values with each alternative.
- The graphics will not contain changes to the current 690; in both graphics it will be treated as an embanked highway in its current condition. The graphics will deal with one corridor, not both.

Would it be possible to look at before and after graphics from a series of ground-level perspectives? (Such as perspectives of Genesee, Adams or Harrison from either direction).

Discussion: Would I-81 be better if the elevation was higher? Should this be considered graphically by the design studio group? If it was at a high elevation how would it effect distance needs for exit and entrance ramps? What if there were no exits in downtown? No interchange between 690 and I-81? What is optimum height for I-81? We would need to build a transportation/traffic management reasoning as well as aesthetic reasoning in areas of environment, economics, connectivity. This might be difficult to do. In terms of aesthetics, we should consider the desolate space underneath the Buffalo Skyway.

Discussion: What are the key points that need to be covered in the report?

What are the lessons learned or findings?

- We are not in this alone. Other cities have dealt with this. We are not groundbreakers.
- The re-establishment of the street grid; the capacity of the existing grid. It also holds alternate routes that are underutilized. The grid was built when city population was at 220,000, and downtown was the retail and office center; it now serves a city of 140,000 with a decentralized business population. Find out from SMTC what they capacities are for major through streets; what those streets serve today. (Erie, Genesee, Fayette, Salina.) Ask SMTC for carrying capacities on major regional streets (principle arterials) in the core of the city. SMTC has maps online of arterial system, most recent traffic counts, and information on whether or not they are working adequately (for some level of service).
- Edit section of Physical Impacts/I-81 to include a map of every city I-81 passes through, showing how Syracuse is the only city in which I-81 does not bypass the city center. (Show how it skirts Frederick, MD, Harrisburg, PA, Wilkes-Barre, PA, Scranton, PA, Binghamton, Cortland and Watertown. Only in Syracuse does it cut through the city.) "Here is what 81 is; here is the overall

corridor." Goes with section where we discuss that Syracuse has the only 45 mph stretch of highway in the entire I-81 corridor.

- Discussion with emergency vehicles directors.
- Redevelopment of individual neighborhoods that formerly adjoined highways in other cities.
- Reknitting/reunification of formerly separated neighborhoods into of wider communities.
- The economic development possibilities for different scenarios (taking down or rebuilding.) What are the economic development possibilities in different types of areas, business districts as opposed to neighborhoods? Housing versus commercial?
- There are cities that do well without interstates running through them: Vancouver. (Businesses in Syracuse wanted I-81 to run through downtown but this was not economically productive; allowed for sprawl.)
- The impact of freeway on land along perimeter. We have vacant land cleared in the 1950s; never filled in. (Could we somehow use assessments to illustrate this impact?)
- People in other cities who thought they couldn't survive without the freeway did; both from a cultural and transportation perspective.