

I-81 VIADUCT PROJECT

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the Project Area and the limitations and deficiencies of its transportation infrastructure, and identifies the Project’s purpose, goals, and objectives.

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has prepared this Final Design Report/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FDR/FEIS) for the Interstate 81 (I-81) Viaduct Project (the “Project”) in accordance with the requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality’s regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 CFR §1500-1508)¹, the FHWA’s *Environmental Impact and Related Procedures: Final Rule* (23 CFR §771 and §774), the NYSDOT *Procedures for Implementation of the State Environmental Quality Review Act* (17 NYCRR Part 15), and the NYSDOT Project Development Manual.

The Project is classified as a NEPA Class I project in accordance with 23 CFR 771. NEPA Class I projects require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to determine the likely impact that a project’s alternatives would have on the environment. FHWA, serving as the Federal Lead Agency, and NYSDOT, serving as Joint Lead Agency, are progressing the development of the EIS. In accordance with NYSDOT’s State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) regulations, the Project is classified as a “non-Type II” action, indicating that its potential for environmental impacts should be evaluated under SEQRA. In accordance with 17 NYCRR Part 15, given that a Federal EIS is being prepared, NYSDOT and other New York State agencies undertaking a discretionary action for the Project have no obligation to prepare a separate EIS under SEQRA.

After the publication of the DDR/DEIS on July 16, 2021, which began the public review and comment period that extended until October 14, 2021, including public hearings in August 2021, FHWA and NYSDOT carefully considered all substantive public comments and prepared this FDR/FEIS. FHWA and NYSDOT will subsequently issue a joint Record of Decision (ROD) in accordance with 23 CFR § 771.127 and Section 15.9 of 17 NYCRR Part 15.

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations require an EIS to specify the purpose and need to which the agency is responding in developing alternatives for a project. The purpose and need statement is the most important section of the environmental document and establishes the reason that an agency is proposing a project. In addition, the purpose and need statement justifies the expected outcome of public expenditure and allows decisions to be defensible.

Section 1.4 states the Project purpose. The needs section of this chapter (**Section 1.5**) provides the factual foundation for the statement of project purpose. This section describes the problems that the

¹ The CEQ adopted revised NEPA regulations in September 2020, codified as 40 CFR Parts 1500, 1501, 1502, 1503, 1504, 1505, 1506, 1507, 1508, 1515, 1516, 1517, and 1518. This EIS was prepared consistent with regulations in effect before September 2020, which was codified as 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508. Both sets of regulations are available at the following website: <https://ceq.doe.gov/laws-regulations/regulations.html>.

Project is intended to address and explains the underlying causes of those problems. This chapter also identifies objectives that reasonable alternatives must meet in order to satisfy the purpose of the Project. These objectives are presented in **Section 1.1**. In addition to the objectives, NYSDOT established project goals, which are more general aspirations, and guided the development of the Project alternatives. **Section 1.1** lists these goals.

1.1 PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

NYSDOT is pursuing the I-81 Viaduct Project based on the needs identified in the following sections. While it is important that the highway fulfill its primary charge of moving people and goods safely and efficiently, it is also important to consider the extent to which the transportation system can enhance economic growth and vitality within the City of Syracuse. With the project needs and local plans in mind, NYSDOT has developed the following goals for the I-81 Viaduct Project:

- Improve safety and create an efficient regional and local transportation system within and through greater Syracuse; and
- Provide transportation solutions that enhance the livability, visual quality, sustainability, and economic vitality of greater Syracuse.

The objectives of the Project are to:

- Address the transportation network structural deficiencies, particularly associated with aging bridge structures and non-standard/non-conforming design features within the project limits along I-81 and I-690.
- Address vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle geometric and operational deficiencies within the project limits.
- Maintain or enhance vehicle access to the interstate highway network and key destinations (i.e., business districts, hospitals, and institutions) within neighborhoods within and near Downtown Syracuse.
- Maintain or enhance the vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connections in the local street network within the project limits in and near Downtown Syracuse to allow for connectivity between neighborhoods, business districts, and other key destinations.
- Maintain access to existing local bus service and enhance transit amenities² within the project limits in and near Downtown Syracuse.

1.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The I-81 Viaduct Project is informed by a three-year planning study (the I-81 Corridor Study) that NYSDOT prepared in partnership with Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council and FHWA. The I-81 Corridor Study identified strategies for the long-term viability of approximately 12 miles of highway along I-81 between its southern and northern interchanges with I-481 (Exits 16A and 29, respectively), including the I-81 viaduct and the I-81/I-690 interchange in Downtown Syracuse. The

² Transit amenities that may be explored could include bus stops and shelters, bus turnouts, and layover and turnaround places.

I-81 VIADUCT PROJECT

I-81 Corridor Study considered the needs of the corridor, along with potential solutions to address these needs. It divided the corridor into three segments: the south outer segment (approximately 2 miles), the viaduct segment (approximately 3.5 miles), and the north outer segment (approximately 6.5 miles). Completed in July 2013, the I-81 Corridor Study concluded that there is a need for the near-term reconstruction or replacement of the travel capacity of I-81 through Downtown Syracuse, leading to the initiation of the I-81 Viaduct Project. The Corridor Study also informed the goals and objectives for the I-81 Viaduct Project.

FHWA issued a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS for the I-81 Viaduct Project in the *Federal Register* in August 2013. In November 2013, NYSDOT hosted an initial scoping meeting at the Oncenter in Downtown Syracuse. In June 2014 NYSDOT issued a draft scoping report that identified the preliminary list of alternatives and hosted a second scoping meeting in June 2014 at the same location. In April 2015, FHWA and NYSDOT issued the Project Scoping Report, which reflected comments on the Project that had been received from both the public and agencies and identified alternatives for further evaluation in the DDR/DEIS. **Chapter 3, Alternatives** provides a history of the alternatives development for the I-81 Viaduct Project.

Following the release of the Project Scoping Report in 2015, FHWA and NYSDOT continued to refine and evaluate alternatives. Several Viaduct and Community Grid Alternative options were screened and dismissed, resulting in the identification of the alternatives studied in the DDR/DEIS. As a result of public input, various tunnel options were developed, evaluated, and dismissed (refer to **Appendices B-2, B-3, and B-4** for more information about the tunnel studies). FHWA and NYSDOT also continued to enhance the design of the build alternatives to reduce or eliminate their potential adverse environmental effects. In April 2019, NYSDOT released a preliminary DDR/DEIS to bring the public up to date on the status of the Project. In that document, NYSDOT recommended the Community Grid Alternative as the Preferred Alternative.

Following the public release of the preliminary DDR/DEIS in April 2019, NYSDOT carefully considered public comments, which were summarized and responded to in the DDR/DEIS that was released on July 16, 2021. The build alternatives were further refined to address public concerns as a result of the public comments on the preliminary DDR/DEIS. Both the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives were modified to include improvements along Bear Street, and the Community Grid Alternative was also refined to include improvements at I-481 Interchange 3 (Routes 5/92) and a new northbound BL 81 exit ramp at Colvin Street.

The public comment period for the DDR/DEIS began with its publication on July 16, 2021 and extended to October 14, 2021. FHWA and NYSDOT hosted a virtual public hearing on August 17, 2021 and an in-person hearing on August 18, 2021. Following the public hearings, NYSDOT hosted a series of neighborhood meetings, where members of the public could speak directly with Project staff and submit comments using a written comment form or by dictating them to a stenographer. Throughout the public comment period, FHWA and NYSDOT accepted comments through the Project's website, by e-mail, by U.S. Mail, and via the Project's voicemail account (refer to **Chapter 9, Agency and Public Coordination**, for additional information on the public hearings and public comment period). **Appendix M-5** of this FDR/FEIS is a summary of the substantive public comments provided on the DDR/DEIS with responses. The original comments submissions are included in **Appendix M-6** of this FDR/FEIS.

1.3 PROJECT AREA

The Project Area is located within the municipalities of Syracuse, North Syracuse, Cicero, East Syracuse, and DeWitt in Onondaga County, New York (see **Figure 1-1**), and it includes portions of I-81, I-690, and I-481 where project elements may be implemented. This area includes the southern and northern interchanges of I-81 with I-481 (Exits 16A and 29, respectively); the portion of I-81 between approximately East Brighton Avenue and 0.7 miles north of Hiawatha Boulevard, including the I-81 viaduct and the I-81/I-690 interchange in Downtown Syracuse; the portions of I-690 between Leavenworth Avenue and Beech Street and between approximately Hiawatha Boulevard West and Bear Street; and I-481 between New York State Route 5 and the New York State Thruway (I-90). These are the portions of the interstate highway network that connect with and provide access to the area's key destinations and roadway network, as well as move people and goods through and around the Syracuse area. The Project Area also includes selected local roads for improvements in proximity to I-81, I-690, and I-481 in Syracuse (see **Figures 6-4-6-1 and 6-4-6-2**). The Project Area also includes segments of the existing highway network where there would be no roadway improvements but there would be new or reconstructed noise barriers (see **Section 6-4-6, Noise**). The project limits are defined as the limits of physical disturbance for all potential project activities that would occur within the Project Area (see **Figure 1-2**).

To evaluate the potential social, economic, and environmental effects of the Project, the Project Area includes four separate study areas: Central Study Area; I-481 South Study Area; I-481 East Study Area; and I-481 North Study Area. Each study area includes the project limits of the subarea as well as a 1/4-mile area surrounding the project limits unless otherwise specified.

1.4 PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the Project is to address structural deficiencies and non-standard highway features while creating an improved transportation corridor through the City of Syracuse that meets the transportation needs and provides the infrastructure to support long-range transportation planning efforts.

1.5 NEED FOR THE PROJECT

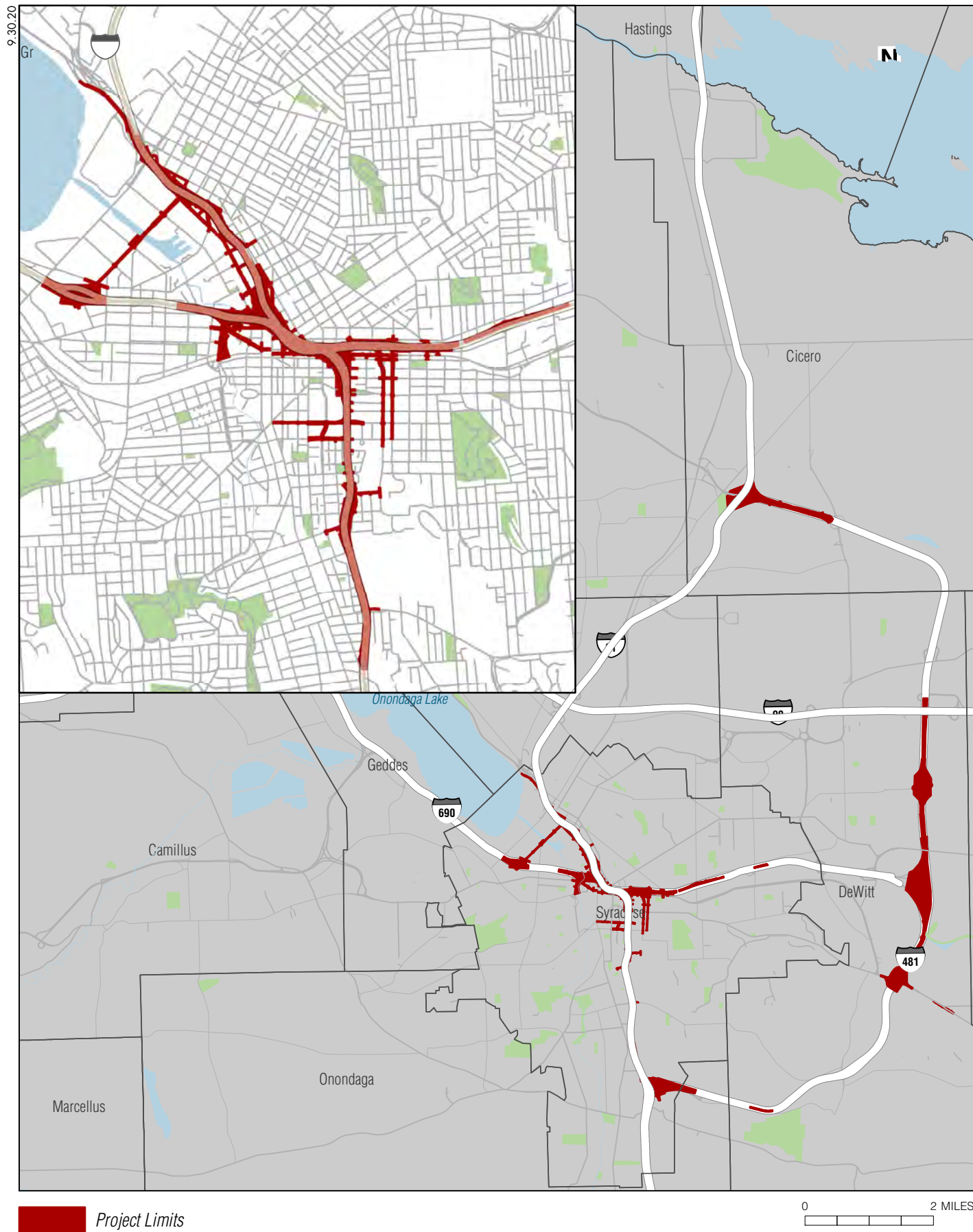
I-81 is the primary route for the movement of people and goods to the City of Syracuse and is part of the national transportation network. I-81 is an approximately 850-mile-long highway in the eastern United States. It begins at Interstate 40 in Dandridge, Tennessee, and extends northeasterly through Tennessee, Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York, terminating at Highway 401 in Ontario, Canada. It is the primary north-south highway through Central New York, serving Binghamton, Cortland, Syracuse, and Watertown, and provides an international crossing into Canada at the Thousand Islands Bridge, in Alexandria Bay, New York.

In the Project Area, I-81 serves many of Syracuse's key destinations and employment centers. It serves Downtown Syracuse; the State University of New York (SUNY) Upstate Medical Center and SUNY Upstate Medical University; Syracuse Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center; Crouse Hospital; Syracuse University; SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF); the Carrier Dome; St. Joseph's Hospital; Destiny USA; and Syracuse Hancock International Airport. I-81 also



1 Interchanges

0 2 MILES



I-81 Viaduct Project

**Project Area
Figure 1-2**

connects to other interstates that pass through Syracuse: Interstate 90 (New York State Thruway), I-690, and I-481.

I-690 is an interstate highway extending approximately 14 miles from I-90 in Van Buren to I-481 in DeWitt, in Onondaga County. It is a primary east-west travel and commuter route, providing direct access from suburban communities to Downtown Syracuse. Like I-81, I-690 serves many employers, as well as retail and entertainment destinations in the Syracuse metropolitan area.

I-481 is an auxiliary route located east of Downtown Syracuse. It is a semicircle route, beginning at I-81 in the Brighton neighborhood of the City of Syracuse and ending at I-81 in the Village of North Syracuse. The interstate has access to I-90, I-690, and key arterial routes that serve the eastern suburbs of Syracuse.

As major highways passing through a dense urban center, I-81 and I-690 have a considerable influence on the character and economic vitality of the city and region. Syracuse is the Central New York region's largest economic center. Although I-81 is adjacent to many destinations in University Hill, access points are limited with much of the traffic concentrated at a single interchange at Harrison and Adams Streets (Interchange 18).

The construction of the existing I-81 viaduct was completed by the end of the 1960s, prior to the implementation of NEPA, and resulted in the acquisition of residential and commercial properties as well as relocation of the residents and business within its alignment through the center of Syracuse. Since then, the I-81 viaduct has been a prominent feature in Downtown Syracuse and has influenced the area's development, vehicular and pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods, and community character. **Section 6-2-1, Neighborhood Character** describes the existing neighborhoods and land uses within and near the Project limits, including aspects of community cohesion, local plans and zoning, community facilities, and planned development. There is a need to improve connectivity between the neighborhoods and land uses on both sides of the viaduct.

Highway design features within the Project Area (such as shoulder widths, median widths, interchange spacing, etc.) pre-date current design standards and, coupled with heavy traffic volumes at specific locations, have led to recurring congestion and high crash rates. In addition, the highway infrastructure is nearing the end of its intended design life, and the viaduct and other highway bridges have deteriorated due to age, wear, and harsh winter weather conditions. Although the infrastructure is maintained in a state of good repair to ensure the highway remains safe for the traveling public, continued deterioration will lead to increased maintenance costs and weight and speed restrictions on bridges. The limitations and deficiencies of the transportation infrastructure, as well as the Project's relevance to long-term planning visions, are discussed in the sections below.

1.5.1 NEED TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC FLOW AND SAFETY

Traffic congestion frequently occurs at specific locations during the morning (7:30 AM to 8:30 AM) and evening (4:30 PM to 5:30 PM) commuter rush hours (peak hours). During the morning and afternoon peak hours, commuters from the outlying suburbs travel to and from the city center using I-81, I-690, and I-481. The sections of I-81 and I-690 north and east of the I-81 interchange with I-690 are the heaviest traveled roadways in the Project Area. The two major destinations for traffic are Downtown and University Hill, Onondaga County's major economic centers. Of the 35,000 total trips made to Syracuse during the morning commuter peak period (13,000 trips originate in Syracuse and

22,000 trips originate outside of Syracuse), 6,500 trips are made to Downtown, and 7,600 trips are made to University Hill. Both locations are adjacent to the I-81 interchange with Harrison and Adams Streets. Much of the traffic along I-81, including traffic from I-690 connecting to I-81, is funneled through the I-81 interchange with Harrison and Adams Streets, which connects to Almond Street. Traffic from all four directions passes through this interchange to access University Hill. This key interchange is also used by traffic from the south to access Downtown. As a result, Harrison, Adams, and Almond Streets are congested in the morning and afternoon peak hours.

In addition, sections of I-81, including the I-81/I-690 interchange, experience crash rates that are two to three times higher than the statewide averages for similar facilities (see **Figures 1-3 and 1-4**). Upwards of 95,000 vehicles per day travel along the highway section just north of the I-81/I-690 interchange. Traffic volumes on several roadway and ramp segments in portions of the corridor reach or exceed capacity, which often results in reduced travel speeds in the range of 20 miles per hour (mph) (well below the posted 45 mph speed limit), delays, and queues. A full description of existing vehicular traffic conditions in the Project Area is presented in **Chapter 5, Transportation and Engineering Considerations**.

Traffic congestion at specific locations during the peak hours and high crash rates are a result of high traffic volumes traveling on highway segments that do not meet current highway design standards, as described below.

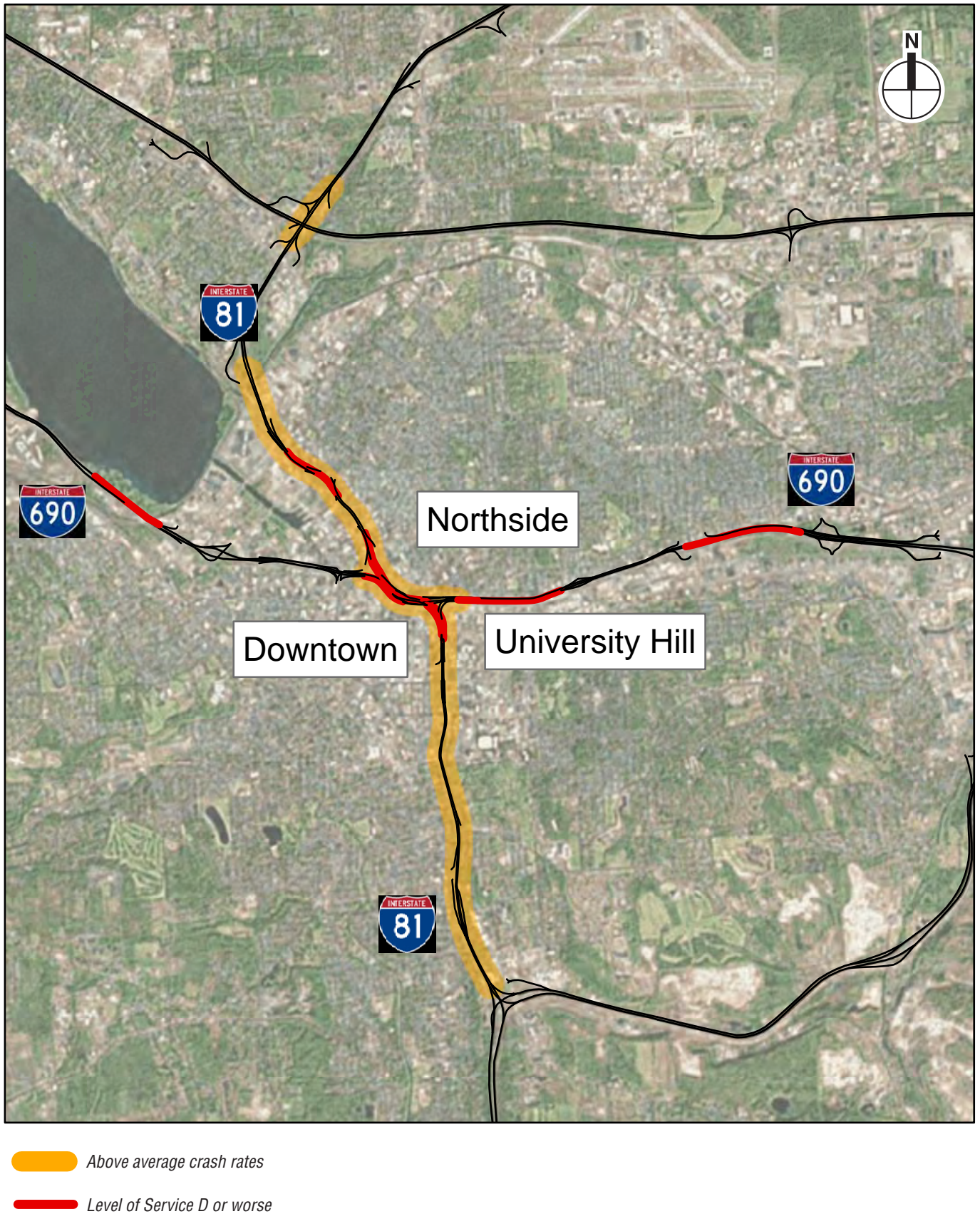
Non-Standard and Non-Conforming Design Features

To ensure safety and conformity throughout the national highway system, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) has established interstate highway design standards, which are implemented by FHWA and NYSDOT. Infrastructure that pre-dates or does not meet current design standards is considered “non-standard” or “non-conforming.” Non-standard design features include geometric aspects that are considered critical design elements, such as lane and shoulder widths, sight-line distances, and grades (i.e., slopes or steepness). Non-conforming design features include design elements that do not conform to accepted engineering practice but are not considered critical design elements, such as the spacing between interchanges and the lengths of acceleration and deceleration lanes (see **Chapter 5, Transportation and Engineering Considerations**, for additional information).

A survey of the highway infrastructure in the Project Area identified over 190 existing non-standard and non-conforming features along the sections of I-81. The highest concentrations of these include the I-81/I-690 interchange.³ The I-81/I-690 interchange is a complex intersection composed of two elevated highways and multiple entrance and exit ramps. Within the Central Study Area and I-81/I-690 interchange areas, there are a host of existing non-standard features, including inadequate sight-distances, shoulder widths, lane widths, median widths, and grades. In some areas, shoulders are non-existent and medians are narrow, with only enough space for concrete barriers that separate opposing traffic lanes. In addition, a number of ramps have inadequate acceleration/deceleration length, and ramps are too closely spaced and fail to conform to AASHTO’s recommended design standards.

³ The I-81 Challenge Draft Final Technical Memorandum #1: Physical Conditions Analysis, January 2011.





The lack of adequate shoulders and paved and unpaved medians makes snow removal difficult since space is limited for snow storage. The effects of non-standard and non-conforming features on traffic congestion and safety are amplified in the winter months when heavy snowfall accumulations are not uncommon. Syracuse is subject to heavy yearly snowfall accumulations due to its proximity to Lake Ontario (i.e., the “lake effect” on snowfall) and routinely receives annual snow in excess of 100 inches.⁴ The non-standard roadway features in the Project Area also diminish the ability to manage or respond to incidents. For example, disabled vehicles have limited space to avoid impeding travel lanes, and emergency response vehicles have limited access during incidents (see **Chapter 2, Project Setting**).

1.5.2 NEED TO ADDRESS AGING INFRASTRUCTURE

As part of the I-81 Corridor Study, NYSDOT completed a physical conditions analysis of the bridge structures within the project limits of the Central Study Area⁵ (see **Figure 6-1-1**), which focused on I-81 due to the condition and age of its infrastructure.⁶ I-81 and I-690 are elevated through Downtown Syracuse. The I-81 and I-690 interchange and viaducts comprise 33 highway bridges, with 17 more bridges located along the interchange approaches. These bridge structures were constructed primarily in the 1960s, and many of their components are nearing the end of their design service life. Over time, these structures have experienced varying levels of deterioration from exposure to weather, de-icing salts, and heavy vehicle use. Bridges are particularly susceptible to wear and tear because many of the structural elements are directly exposed to weather conditions.

FHWA has established a National Bridge Inventory (NBI) condition rating system that classifies “structurally deficient” bridges. Similarly, NYSDOT uses a bridge inspection program to classify “deficient” bridges. Condition ratings that are deficient do not necessarily indicate unsafe traveling conditions in the near term, but are used to prioritize areas of repair and maintenance and identify areas that may need more extensive measures to address future deterioration.

Table 1-1 provides a listing of the major bridges within the I-81 and I-690 interchange area that are either structurally deficient per NYSDOT and FHWA criteria or are not built to current standards. Further details on the structural conditions of the bridges are included in **Chapter 5, Transportation and Engineering Considerations**. Within the interchange area, three bridges are classified as structurally deficient and 10 bridges were not built to current standards. Within the Central Study Area, no additional bridges are classified as structurally deficient, but 20 bridges were not built to current standards and more than 25 bridges meet the NYSDOT “deficient” condition rating of less than 5.

⁴ <http://www.city-data.com/top2/c464.html>. Accessed September 12, 2013.

⁵ The “Central Study Area” refers to the section of I-81 between approximately East Brighton Avenue and approximately 0.7 miles north of Hiawatha Boulevard; the portions of I-690 approximately between Leavenworth Avenue and Beech Street and between approximately Hiawatha Boulevard West and Bear Street; and I-481 between New York State Route 5 and the New York State Thruway (I-90). The Central Study Area also includes several local roads in proximity to I-81 and I-690 in Syracuse.

⁶ The I-81 Challenge Draft Final Technical Memorandum #1: Physical Conditions Analysis, January 2011.

I-81 VIADUCT PROJECT

Table 1-1
Structurally Deficient and Nonstandard Bridges in the
I-81 and I-690 Interchange Area

BIN	Bridge	Length (ft.)	NYSDOT Rating ^(1,2)	FHWA Structurally Deficient	Bridge Inspection Date	Current Gen Rec.
I-81 Corridor Bridges						
1008489	NB & SB I-81 over North Salina Street	163	5.757 ³	✓	2018	4
1031569	I-81 over East Adams Street (Viaduct)	4,097	4.424		2017	4
1053840	NB I-81 over Erie Boulevard (I-81/I-690 Interchange)	1,169	3.986		2018	4
1053860	SB I-81 over North Townsend Street (I-81/I-690 Interchange)	1,425	4.313		2017	4
1064590	Ramp from WB I-690 to SB I-81 (I-81/I-690 Interchange)	1,723	3.913		2018	4
1053881	SB I-81 over North State Street	1,780	4.582		2017	4
1053882	NB I-81 over North State Street	1,787	4.723		2017	5
I-690 Corridor Bridges						
1050780	Ramp from West Street to WB I-690 over I-690	269	5.129		2019	5
1050790	Ramp from WB I-690 to West Street over I-690	360	5.667		2017	5
1050800	Ramp from N. Franklin Street to West Street over Onondaga Creek	200	4.847		2018	5
1051000	EB I-690 over I-81	3,147	3.841	✓	2016	5
105100A	EB I-690 ramp to SB I-81 over North State Street	622	3.731		2018	5
1095510	WB I-690 over I-81	198	5.493 ³	✓	2019	5
Source: NYSDOT, October 2016. 1) Prior to 2016, NYSDOT rated bridges on a scale of 1 (failing condition) to 7 (new condition), and a condition rating of less than 5 was considered "deficient." 2) Beginning in 2016, NYSDOT changed to the federal condition rating scale, but since all inspections are not yet using the new rating scale, NYSDOT has utilized a translator to convert the 2016 and 2017 condition ratings back to the previous rating scale. 3) There is an anomaly with the translated condition rating for BINs 1008489 and 1095510 as the translated rating is substantially higher than the previous rating, but there were no changes between the previous and current general recommendations. Upon review, NYSDOT has determined the bridges will remain on the deficient list since no work to remove the deficiencies has been done.						

Under the Community Grid Alternative, some improvements to I-481 are proposed.⁸ I-481 was constructed later than I-81 and requires less rehabilitation. Therefore, the bridge assessment in **Table 1-1** focused on the Central Study Area, which includes I-81 and I-690 roadway infrastructure. For more information on structures on I-481, refer to **Chapter 5, Transportation and Engineering Considerations** and **Appendix C**.

Given the age of the roadway infrastructure, and the structural deficiencies, the majority of the bridges surveyed in the Central Study Area need major rehabilitation or replacement by 2056. An assessment, focused on the Central Study Area, compared the cost effectiveness of rehabilitation versus bridge replacement and identified the need to replace all of the I-81 viaduct and I-81/I-690 interchange bridges within the Central Study Area. Some of the remaining approach bridges within the Central Study Area may be suitable for rehabilitation or may require replacement depending on the alternative, and are further discussed in **Chapter 5, Transportation and Engineering Considerations**.

1.5.3 NEED FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT LONG-RANGE PLANNING EFFORTS

The I-81 viaduct and I-81/I-690 interchange are prominent elevated features that have affected adjacent land uses and connectivity between them, thereby influencing the livability, sustainability, and economic vitality of Syracuse. The highway infrastructure is recognized as an important asset to the Central New York region's economic vitality. As such, in addition to the structural and design needs previously described, regional and community planning initiatives will continue to be considered.

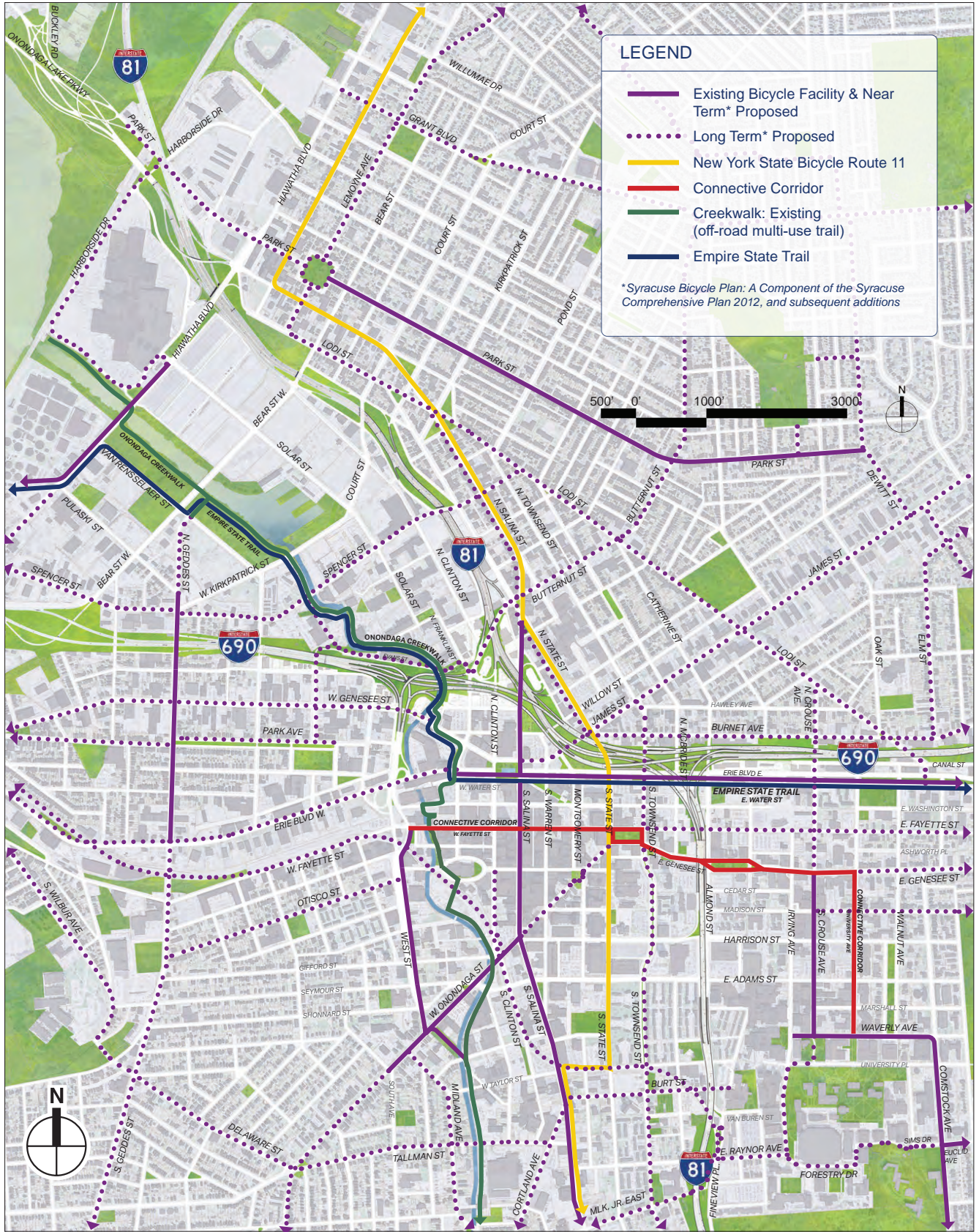
Several local and regional long-range plans have established goals for the regional transportation network and/or have identified the I-81 viaduct as an influential feature within Downtown Syracuse and adjacent neighborhoods. A number of municipalities and community planning organizations have established visions for neighborhoods and communities near I-81, I-690, and I-481 in the Project Area. These plans and community initiatives are reviewed in more detail in **Section 6-2-1, Neighborhood Character**. Common themes that have emerged from these plans in relation to the proposed action include the need to:

- Improve connectivity between Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods;
- Improve quality of life by improving pedestrian and bicycle accessibility and minimizing effects of highways and roadways on neighborhood character, such as obstructions to neighborhood connectivity and pedestrian and bicyclist mobility;
- Revitalize the region's urban core and allow for future growth that is sustainable; and
- Improve competitiveness in, and connections to, the regional, national, and global economies.

1.5.4 NEED TO IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Several initiatives have been underway in the City of Syracuse to enhance bicycle and pedestrian connectivity. As shown in **Figure 1-5**, designated bicycle infrastructure has been established or is planned throughout the city. Some of these routes are part of local bicycle and pedestrian initiatives,

⁸ Under the Community Grid Alternative, three bridges associated with I-481 would be replaced and nine bridges associated with I-481 would be widened and rehabilitated.



- Existing City Bicycle Facility
- Proposed City Bicycle Facility*

* Syracuse Bicycle Plan: A Component of the Syracuse Comprehensive Plan, 2012

Existing and Near-Term Bicycle Infrastructure
Figure 1-5

while others are part of larger regional routes, such as the New York State Bicycle Route 11 and the Empire State Trail. With respect to enhanced bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and safety, NYSDOT has identified the need to address the following:

- Incomplete routes, missing or inadequate crosswalks, and pedestrian signals under and near the I-81 viaduct, and compliance with the Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG);
- A lack of connectivity between pedestrian and bicycle generators and their destinations; and
- Inadequate lighting and pedestrian refuge locations under and near the I-81 viaduct.

1.5.5 NEED FOR IMPROVED TRANSIT AMENITIES

The Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (“Centro”) operates transit services in multiple counties of Central New York. Within the Syracuse Metropolitan Area, Centro operates fixed-route bus service, Call-a-Bus paratransit service, and park-and-ride facilities.

Centro operates a transit hub in Downtown Syracuse where many routes converge. The transit hub is an indoor facility with ticket offices, restrooms, bicycle storage, and other customer amenities, and it is easily accessible to and from nearby employers, government offices, sports and entertainment venues, and community services in the Downtown area. It also provides connections between the fixed routes that converge there.

Apart from the Downtown transit hub, Centro has few amenities for its customers. Most stops have a sign, but no seating, lighting, or shelters. Syracuse has a temperate climate with cold winters and hot summers, and the city sees substantial snowfall each year. Lacking any amenities, customers must wait for buses outdoors without the protection of shelters. Where practical, enhanced amenities for riders could provide a better experience for transit customers and facilitate their use of existing transit services.

1.6 PROJECT SCHEDULE

A Record of Decision is anticipated in 2022. NYSDOT would commence construction in 2022. Construction is expected to last approximately six years. **Chapter 4, Construction Means and Methods** provides more detail about the anticipated construction schedule for the Project alternatives.

1.7 PROJECT CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information on the Project, please visit the Project website at <https://www.dot.ny.gov/i81opportunities> or contact:

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