

# I-81 Viaduct Project

Onondaga County, New York



## Final Design Report Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Section 4(f) Evaluation

APRIL 2022



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration



Department of  
Transportation

FINAL DESIGN REPORT / FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT /  
FINAL SECTION 4(f) EVALUATION

For

P.I.N. 3501.60, Interstate 81 Viaduct Project  
Interchange 16A (Interstate 481) to Interchange 29 (Interstate 481/New York State Route 481)  
Onondaga County, New York

Submitted Pursuant To 42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c) and 49 U.S.C. 303

By

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration  
New York State Department of Transportation

And Cooperating Agencies

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

This Final Design Report/Final Environmental Impact Statement/Final Section 4(f) Evaluation documents the social, economic, and environmental effects of the Interstate 81 (I-81) Viaduct Project in Onondaga County, New York and was prepared consistent with the Council on Environmental Quality's 1978 regulations, which was codified as 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500 1508. 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. The purpose of the I-81 Viaduct 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. After careful consideration of a range of alternatives, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) have studied the No Build Alternative, the Viaduct Alternative, and the Community Grid Alternative in this document. Based on a balanced consideration of the need for safe and efficient transportation; the social, economic, and environmental effects of the project alternatives; and national, state, and local environmental protection goals, the Community Grid Alternative has been identified as the Project's preferred alternative.



Date: 4/4/22

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# I-81 VIADUCT PROJECT

## FOREWORD

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) have prepared this Final Design Report/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FDR/FEIS) for the I-81 Viaduct Project in Onondaga County, New York (the “Project”).

FHWA and NYSDOT announced the availability of the Project’s Draft Design Report/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DDR/DEIS) on July 16, 2021 and held a 90-day public comment period on that document. The public comment period ended on October 14, 2021. FHWA and NYSDOT received over 8,000 comments on the DDR/DEIS.

This FDR/FEIS incorporates the information contained in the DDR/DEIS along with revisions and new and updated information in response to public comments, design refinements, and additional commitments during construction of the Project. Revisions are noted with a black vertical line in the margin where text was changed.

The following are substantive changes that are incorporated into this FDR/FEIS:

- The cost of the Viaduct Alternative was revised from \$2.2 billion to \$2.42 billion, and the duration of construction was increased from six years to seven years.
- The cost of the Community Grid Alternative was revised from \$1.9 billion to \$2.25 billion, and the duration of construction was increased from five years to six years.
- FHWA and NYSDOT are no longer proposing a roundabout at Martin Luther King, Jr. East (MLK Jr., East) under the Community Grid Alternative. Under the refined Community Grid Alternative presented in this FDR/FEIS, a roundabout is proposed at Van Buren Street. MLK Jr., East would terminate at the rear driveway of the Dr. King Elementary School and would not intersect with Business Loop 81 (BL 81). Technical studies of traffic, visual resources, and noise were updated to reflect the change in the roundabout location. There was no need to update other technical studies, but the chapters of this FDR/FEIS reflect the modified design.
- FHWA and NYSDOT have modified commitments to implement during the construction phase in response to public comments on the DDR/DEIS.
- FHWA and NYSDOT have finalized a Programmatic Agreement pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and are circulating the agreement for signatures and subsequent execution.
- A 20-foot-wide strip, or 0.12 acres, of Wilson Park immediately adjacent to the state right-of-way would be used to create a “safety barrier” during construction, separating park users, who would not be able to access the area, from the construction zone. However, the duration of this temporary closure would be reduced from three years to two years for the Viaduct Alternative and from three years to less than one year for the Community Grid Alternative.
- NYSDOT conducted an updated search of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s IPaC and the New York Natural Heritage Program databases and identified new threatened species, endangered species, and species of special concern, which were added to this FDR/FEIS.



## **I-81 VIADUCT PROJECT**

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- FHWA and NYSDOT have coordinated with the officials with jurisdiction over Section 4(f) properties and prepared a Final Section 4(f) Evaluation.
- The FDR/FEIS describes public outreach activities undertaken since publication of the DDR/DEIS and includes substantive public comments on the DDR/DEIS with responses.