

SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

MINUTES of the April 29, 2022 POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Voting Members

Brian Schultz, Chair
David Smith
Robert Simpson
Corey Dunham, Vice Chair
David Bottar
Jennifer Schultz
Jeff Harrop
Stephanie Webb
James Rowley
Dan Kwasnowski
Odean Dyer
Jerrin George

Organization

CNY Regional Transportation Authority
NYS Department of Transportation
CenterState CEO
City of Syracuse, Mayor
CNY Regional Planning & Development Board
City of Syracuse Common Council
City of Syracuse Planning Commission
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
Onondaga County Legislature - Chair
Onondaga County Planning Board
Onondaga County Executive
NYS Thruway Authority

Also Attending

Mark Frechette
Scott Butler
David Roth
Chris Tuff
Hon.Helen Hudson
Sara Sherlock

NYS Department of Transportation
NYS Department of Transportation
NYS Department of Transportation
CNY Regional Transportation Authority
City of Syracuse Common Council
NYS Thruway Authority

SMTC Staff

James D'Agostino, Mario Colone, Andrew Frasier, Meghan Vitale, Michael Alexander, Alex McRoberts, Joey DiStefano, Tom Bardenett, Jason Deshaies, and Lori Irvine.

BUSINESS MEETING

Mr. D'Agostino indicates that 12 of the 13 member agencies were present for the quorum.

Chairperson Schultz called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. at the Syracuse City Hall Commons Atrium.

1. ADDITIONS AND CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Mr. D'Agostino indicated there were no additions or changes to the agenda.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairperson Schultz inquired if there were any changes to the February 10, 2022, minutes. Hearing none, Chairperson Schultz called for a motion.

Ms. Dunham moved, and Mr. Smith seconded the approval of the minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

3. **COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS**

A. **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE I-81 VIADUCT PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW, LRTP, and TIP AND SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED ON PROPOSED LRTP/TIP AMENDMENTS (PRESENTATION BY SMTC STAFF)**

Mr. D'Agostino provided the Policy Committee with some brief context for the I-81 Viaduct project in relation to the SMTC process.

Mr. D'Agostino discussed some important milestones: In September 2020 the SMTC Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) identified the I-81 Viaduct project as a regionally significant project as it was previously identified as an illustrative project as there was no funding strategy in place. In July of 2021 the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) released the I-81 Viaduct DEIS and held public hearings during the public comment period with over 8,000 comments received. In February 2022, the SMTC's 2050 LRTP was amended to identify I-81 Viaduct Project funding and related short-term projects for future addition to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as well as mid-term projects. The project was then transferred as an illustrative to an actual project in the LRTP and now had a concept of fiscal constraint and was properly funded. Soon after, the NYSDOT announced a cost increase for the project from \$1.9 billion to \$2.25 billion dollars as well as extending the project duration from 5 to 6 years. Mr. D'Agostino indicated that an additional LRTP amendment was being brought forward at today's meeting to identify additional cost increases for fiscal constraint purposes as well as adding individual capital projects. Mr. D'Agostino discussed the 13 public comments that the SMTC received during their public comment period, which were made available to the committee members and posted on the SMTC website. Mr. D'Agostino mentioned that in April 2022, the NYSDOT had released their FEIS. Mr. D'Agostino recommends that the Policy Committee adopt the TIP amendments for Phase 1 where 5 projects will be added to the TIP then 3 projects will be added for Phase 2 to the next multi-year TIP currently under development. Mr. D'Agostino indicated that the Final EIS must be in place prior to the Record of Decision.

This was an informational item only and no action is required by the Committee.

B. **I-81 PROJECT OVERVIEW PRESENTATION BY NYSDOT**

Mr. Frechette from the NYSDOT provided a presentation related to the I-81 Viaduct Project including its status, the EIS process, and next steps.

Mr. Frechette introduced the other members of the NYSDOT in attendance and advised that the reason for today's meeting was to vote on the first phase of the I-81 Viaduct Project that includes the final design work, real estate acquisition, construction, and construction inspection. Mr. Frechette thanked the SMTC for their work on the financial piece and LRTP. Mr. Frechette indicated that the NYSDOT and FHWA released the FEIS on 4/15/2022 approving the Community Grid as the preferred alternative. Mr. Frechette gave an overview of the Community Grid solution and discussed the 5 separate construction contracts being proposed in Phase 1. Mr. Frechette indicated that the work will be broken down into 8 smaller, individual construction contracts to help allow local business competition and help with job initiatives locally. Mr. Frechette indicated that Phase 1 will include 5 contracts starting by the end of this year and will be complete at the end of 2025. Mr. Frechette indicated he is asking the Policy Committee to approve \$985 million at today's meeting to complete the construction for Phase 1. Phase 2 will have 3 separate contracts estimated at \$1.2 billion dollars that will begin in 2026-2028. Mr. Frechette indicated there may be some overlap. Mr. Frechette indicated that the current I-81 through the City of Syracuse will remain active and not be decommissioned until after all 5 contracts in Phase 1 have been completed. Mr. Frechette then reviewed the timeline and asked committee members for any questions.

Hon. Hudson asked if there will be a pre-requirement for Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program (DBE) and Mr. Frechette indicated that all projects would require a DBE.

Mr. Simpson wished to go on record saying he appreciates that the NYSDOT is breaking up the construction contracts therefore providing local businesses an opportunity to bid on them.

Hon. Hudson questioned the current condition of the Bear Street bridge. Mr. Frechette indicated that the bridge is owned by the City of Syracuse and simple pavement repair work will be done prior to the substantial work to hold it until the job is complete.

Hon. Hudson asked how many commercial buildings will need to be purchased to complete the project. Mr. Frechette indicated 4 with approximately 150 strip takes.

Hon. Hudson asked how many jobs will be available. Mr. Frechette indicated it is estimated that there will be approximately 7.7 million hours of actual construction work with 15% local hire initiative.

Mr. Bottar asked if there was enough time built into the timeline between Phase 1 and Phase 2. Mr. Frechette calls Phase 1 "preparatory work" as the "journey continues to evolve". Mr. Frechette also indicated that NYSDOT has already extended Phase 1 from 2 to 3 years.

Mr. Smith indicated that the fact they have broken the project down to seven contracts gives them the opportunity to make changes if they have concerns. Mr. Smith refers to it as a "balancing act" as they are dealing with an aging viaduct and to trying to keep it safe for the next 3 1/2 years.

Mr. Dyer asked about the wastewater treatment plant and how it will be affected due to the project. Mr. Frechette indicated that rainwater currently goes into the sanitary system and with the separation process there will be approximately 2.3 million gallons less water going to the treatment plant which will be a huge savings. Mr. Frechette indicated that NYSDOT is also working with the Onondaga County to get some global treatment systems in place. Mr. Frechette also mentioned that the current overflow issue that floods the roads when it rains will also be corrected during this contract.

Mr. Kwasnowski asked about the stormwater separation process and discussion occurred.

Ms. Schultz questioned the 7.7 million hours of construction labor needed in the field for this project and how it would affect housing in the area. Mr. Frechette indicated that of the 85%, a lot of the workforce will be from here. Mr. Frechette mentioned a saying that the DOT commonly uses "for every \$1.00 of construction, it ripples through the economy 4 times". Mr. Frechette indicated that at this time he doesn't know don't who will win the contracts or where they are from but that is the concept of staggering the contracts. Mr. Frechette indicated that if an outside the area contractor wins a contract, they will be able to use up to 15% of local labor.

Mr. Smith from NYSDOT spoke about having meeting updates and getting people trained.

Hon. Hudson spoke about not enough workforce being here and what is being done to drive it up. Discussion occurred.

Mr. Bottar questioned what were the most common 8,000 comments regarding. Mr. Frechette indicated that generally most were understanding and advocating for the Community Grid alternative with some groups that still want to maintain the interstate system through Syracuse. The skyway bridge and real estate also received a lot of comments. Mr. Frechette indicated that all comments received were condensed by topic and can be viewed in the FEIS.

This was an information item only and no action is required by the Committee.

4. **OLD BUSINESS**

None

5. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **LRTP AMENDMENT: I-81 VIADUCT PROJECT COST REVISIONS**

Ms. Vitale gave a presentation indicating how the SMTC is required to update the LRTP every five years. The most recent update to the 2050 LRTP was adopted in September 2020. That plan included The I-81 Viaduct Project as an “illustrative project” (i.e., not within the fiscally constrained portion of the LRTP). An amendment to the LRTP was adopted by the SMTC Policy Committee on February 10, 2022, which added specific projects associated with the I-81 Viaduct Project to the short- and mid-term projects lists and included additional revenues for these projects within the fiscal constraint analysis.

An additional amendment is now proposed to modify the cost estimates for The I-81 Viaduct Project and the anticipated revenue within the plan. As announced by the NYSDOT in February 2022, the total estimated cost for The I-81 Viaduct Project increased from \$1.9 billion to \$2.25 billion due to inflation and local material and labor availability. The short- and mid-term project costs in the LRTP have been adjusted accordingly in the proposed amendment to Chapter 6 (Financial Analysis).

Mr. Schultz called for a motion.

Mr. Simpson moved, and Ms. Dunham seconded the motion.

There were 11 in favor and 1 against as James Rowley, Onondaga County Legislature Chair, was opposed and asked to be on record indicating that he represents the majority of the legislature and has also met with several town supervisors with concerns regarding this project and does not feel this is the best alternative.

The motion passed.

B. **TIP AMENDMENT: ADDITION OF I-81 PROJECTS**

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) is in need of 6 TIP amendments totaling \$985.136 million related to the I-81 Viaduct Project’s community grid preferred alternative. 5 projects cover the first of two phases, while the 6th project will be used for relevant project support services such as design & construction management, and right-of-way.

Addition of project:

PIN 350190 (I-481 Conversion to I-81, I-81 North of I-690)

PIN 350191 (I-481 Conversion to I-81, I-81 South of I-690)

PIN 350192 (Business Loop 81 Northern Section, Phase 1)

PIN 350193 (I-690 over Crouse Ave & Irving Ave)

PIN 350194 (Business Loop 81 Southern Section, Phase 1)

PIN 350198 (I-81 Community Grid Support Services)

Mr. Schultz called for a motion.

Ms. Dunham moved, and Mr. Simpson seconded the motion.

There were 11 in favor and 1 against as James Rowley, Onondaga County Legislature Chair, was opposed and asked to be on record indicating such.

The motion passed.

6. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Members of the public wishing to comment during this portion of the agenda were asked to add their name to a list at the beginning of the meeting and were given 3 minutes to speak. Comments made will not be part of the official record for the LRTP/TIP amendment, nor part of the official record for the I-81 Final Design Report/Final EIS.

Jacqueline Lasonde – Indicated she is a resident of the Southside and participates in a small group that collaborates on these types of issues. She indicated that in 1999 the SMTC Long Range Transportation Plan conducted a study to help decrease the amount of traffic on the Southside that would ultimately decrease the pollution and improve their quality of life. Now with this project, she would like to know if there are any studies in place as this project will be increasing the traffic flow back into the Southside?

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Schultz called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Ms. Dunham moved, and Mr. Simpson seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:21 a.m.