

THE READERS' PAGE



Courtesy Onondaga Historical Association

THIS 1960s photo shows construction of Interstate 81 along Almond Street, looking south from downtown Syracuse. Crouse Hospital's clock tower can be seen in the distance. The Clover Club, a jazz club, is the one-story building at top left. The state Department of Transportation is studying options for repairing or removing the stretch of Interstate 81 that cuts the city of Syracuse in half.

Thoughts on I-81

Decision-makers must consider many factors in highway plan

To the Editor:

The big question regarding what to do about Interstate 81 as it passes over Syracuse is who will make the final decision? Is one person charged with that, or a group of people, or a committee or a government department? And has that already been decided? Do we know "who?"

Does "who" live and work in Syracuse? Does "who" attend all public hearings about the future of I-81? Does "who" read all the letters to the editor? Is "who" an engineer, or a financial expert, or an environmentalist, or a weather expert or does "who" have power to get studies from such people regarding I-81 possibilities? Does "who" know that Syracuse University and Syracuse government are building a Connective Corridor right now that crosses under 81? What will happen to that when it crosses 81? Does "who" know that Syracuse has more precipitation than any other city of the same size or larger in the United States? What to do with all that rain and snow is a big consideration.

I hope "who" was driving from Liverpool to downtown Syracuse during rush hour recently when only one lane of 81 was open due to construction, and there was a big sports event starting at SU. "Who" would have had an hour and a half to think about the problem while he crept on his way. The streets north and south under 81 were also crowded, as were east and west streets crossing under 81. It was probably the worst traffic jam in the history of Syracuse.

The wrong choices on the options for 81 could be disastrous for Syracuse. The right choices could give Central New York an even better traffic flow than we enjoy now. The big question rests with "who."

Margaret Cunningham
Syracuse

Transformation to a boulevard would have environmental impact

To the Editor:

In theory, the Interstate 81 project is good, getting the public involved in the

planning. However, look deeper, and it's business as usual. Ostensibly it makes people believe they are an integral part of the future of what is currently the viaduct. But from what I can see, it's a predetermined decision by those in power to dismantle the viaduct in favor of another design that favors their constituents in a particular city neighborhood, or for those that have a business located near 81.

An estimated 80,000 vehicles go through the viaduct daily. One of the proposals is to turn the viaduct into a boulevard. Imagine the impact on the environment having that many cars stopped at lights daily downtown. Finally in response to a recent letter, let's close both directions of the viaduct for one week. We'll see how eager people are to amputate this section of 81 permanently or to turn it into a slow-moving, carbon monoxide-choking boulevard then!

Phillip C. Vishnesky
Syracuse

Removing interstate would create gridlock for downtown drivers

To the Editor:

No gridlock wanted.

That's what will occur if Interstate 81 is removed. The access to downtown Syracuse and its businesses will decrease, and all the traffic lights will have to be re-timed at horrendous expense to taxpayers.

There is a solution. Replicate Chicago! We cannot do subways here due to settling ground in downtown and to redo the sewers and other piping would be too costly for taxpayers. Accomplish only repair and add a safety lane shoulder for drivers and for police to pull over vehicles.

Workers' travel time to downtown would become so frustrating and tourists would not be tempted here with gridlock! And don't forget the 18-wheelers/delivery trucks sitting and burning all that expensive diesel gas!

Please give your commonsense ideas to your city councilor and the mayor. I am also asking for a referendum, so citizens who pay taxes get to vote.

Arleen Fordock
Syracuse