

# Your Comments on I-81 in Syracuse: 'Careful what you wish for'



Construction crews build Interstate 81 in downtown Syracuse sometime around 1965. Planners and residents will discuss what to do with the aging interstate's downtown section at an open house Tuesday at the Oncenter. *(Courtesy Onondaga Historical Association)*

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Central New York residents will get their third update next week on experts' efforts to [rethink Interstate 81](#) -- and a third chance to tell transportation planners what they believe should happen with the superhighway's elevated piece in downtown Syracuse.

Officials for several years have been mulling what to do when I-81 reaches the end of its useful life in 2017. The five main options include leave it alone, fix it, rebuild it the way it is, bury it in a tunnel or depressed highway, or create a boulevard running through the city. Engineers have been asked for more answers on two choices: tear down the viaduct and reroute traffic around the

city, or replace the existing elevated highway with one that doesn't feel as though it cuts the city in half.

At an open house Tuesday, state Department of Transportation officials and Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council members are expected to present new, detailed conceptual drawings of different strategies, more specific traffic analysis and cost projections. They also plan to take comments. The session is scheduled for 3:30 to 8 p.m. at the Oncenter. Parking will be validated.

The [Onondaga County Legislature](#) already has registered its opinion, voting 16-0 with one member absent on May 7 to ask the state to keep I-81 as an interstate through the city instead of making it into a surface boulevard.

A story about the open house drew lots of comments from syracuse.com readers. Here's a selection:

From [usavet](#): *The elevated Route 81 through Syracuse was designed by forward-thinking engineers and they couldn't have done a better job. And time has proven that out. To move a very large amount traffic so well is the envy of cities around the world.*

From [opus315](#): *Despite what the Onondaga County Legislature thinks, we need to remove I-81 north through the city. Much larger cities have done this successfully, you only need to look to San Francisco and Milwaukee. We need to return the city to its residents as the downtown community goes through its renaissance. This change would remove barriers and free up valuable real estate for the meds and eds on the Hill to seamlessly integrate with the CBD.*

From [anger manager](#): *I thought the reason for it to be elevated was to keep it from dividing the city. You could walk or drive under it and it was no barrier to a unified city. Maybe it should be rebuilt higher up with the road made of some sort of glass so the light could shine through. Just think of the tourist trade.*

From [AMS1983](#): *Have you ever walked under I-81? It's a terrible place to walk through.. A street-level boulevard would be way less nasty. I am 100 percent sure that more people from Upstate and SU would make the short walk into downtown (it's only a 20 minute stroll) if you didn't have to brave the nastiness under those viaducts*

From [cusein2008](#): *It's been 10 years of "thinking." The bridge needs to come down and 81 diverted around the city. It's not like Syracuse is some mammoth city that the ride around will take you four hours. It's a 15-minute ride. You'll be left with prime city development land and reconnect the university and downtown without the eyesore and dangers of a freeway overpass. Sometimes you just have to "do it."*

From [ncCUSE99](#): *Careful what you wish for. If you re-route 81 around Syracuse, you will open up more land outside the city for development and make downtown harder to access. This could easily lead to new biz choosing not to locate inside the city and maybe more than a few current*

*ones choosing to relocate outside the city.*

*You may just leave downtown Syracuse to "die on the vine," so to speak.*

What do you think they should do with I-81? Please leave a comment below.