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Onondaga History Association Contributes to I-81 Discussion

Posted on July 16, 2013 by Norman Seawright III

Aging Transportation Infrastructure Needs Work



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by Norman Seawright III SYRACUSE (NCC NEWS) - The [Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council](#) wants the Onondaga county community to be involved in deciding the future of Interstate 81, which cuts through downtown Syracuse.

The [Onondaga Historical Association](#) wants to get involved and help bridge the divide and help the public make informed decisions by showcasing a recent addition to the Onondaga Historical Museum.

Looking to the past

A new exhibit at the Onondaga Historical Museum is called "The Ties That Bind."

OHA Curator of History Dennis Connors said the goal is to educate the public about past decisions about the canals, highways, and railways that passed through or around the city.

"Syracuse has faced these issues of transportation corridors that

divide the city and that become outmoded," Connors said.

Connors said he wants people to know that by understanding how the transportation systems of Onondaga county have changed, they can make better decisions about the current roadways.



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"The idea was to sort of put this I-81 decision in the context of the historical past," Connors said. "Do transportation corridors always stay the same, can they change, does the world end if we move it someplace else?"

Future implications

Connors said the exhibit does not try to influence public opinion, but to help remind community members that their input has always steered the development of transportation infrastructure in Onondaga county.

"These were decisions that really engaged the community," Connors said. "They weren't made by some entity 200 miles away."

He said much of the current debate is focused on the immediate inconveniences of repairing, replacing, or removing the downtown portion of I-81, rather than long term advantages or disadvantages.

"You shouldn't be just sort of sitting back and bad mouthing one side or the other," Connors said. "You should get involved and make your feelings known."

