

OCL *Rethinking I-81* Study  
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes  
University College  
May 15, 2008

Present: Chris Capella-Peters, Emmanuel Carter, Dennis Connors, Carol Dwyer, Bill Egloff, Steve Kearney, Rich Landerkin, Rebecca Livengood, Sarah McIvain, Clyde Ohl, Donna O'Mahoney Rohde, Joe Sammarco, Doug Sutherland, Sandra Barrett, Rachel Pollack

Committee Membership Change: SMTC staffers Jim D'Agostino, Nell Donaldson and Paul Mercurio will no longer be committee members as the OCL study takes on an advocacy role for downtown/the city; their work on SMTC's study requires them to remain impartial in the decision making process. They will make themselves available to answer questions, provide information as needed. Tim Carroll will be contacted regarding city representation on the committee.

Discussion:

- Centro leadership has begun the Federal Transit Administration New Starts, a step-by-step planning process to justify any future expenditure on rapid transit, light rail. (During this planning process, milestones must be met over a period of time.) If I-81 came down, a light rail line could potentially occupy part of the land made available.
- Review of table formulated at last meeting and reason for its development: Need to name/address concerns raised by a potential teardown of I-81, albeit in a limited fashion.
- Issues raised regarding addressing the list of concerns: Some issues may be duplicated in SMTC study, the attempt to obtain/include data may be very time-consuming, and the data may raise more questions than it answers. (Issues discussed included maintenance costs, traffic patterns, etc.) Suggestion for adding category to table regarding impact on neighborhoods around downtown along the I-81 corridor. This issue might be addressed by case studies of neighborhoods in other cities.
- Not all concerns will be addressed through data/information gathering. Some concerns will be addressed with case studies. For instance, in order to understand how land made available by a teardown could be used as open spaces in areas north and south of city, case studies of open space gains in other cities might apply. Some concerns will simply be raised, with an acknowledgment that no answer can be provided during this part of the process.
- Our mission is not necessarily to come up with a recommendation. In light of our wish to raise issues and educate, making a specific recommendation could be counterproductive.
- There is a need to be careful of wording of issues, as well as suppositions built into issues. Point raised over "economic development due to increased local traffic through city." Supposition is that local traffic will increase. This is an unknown. Suggested change to "economic development patterns due to changes in local traffic." Additionally "real estate potential created by tearing down 81," assumes acreage will be made available. Clarify that the real estate we are talking about is land adjacent to existing roadway both downtown and in neighborhoods both north and south of city.
- Issues that apply to public housing adjacent to viaduct: NYSDOT will be looking at issues such as air quality, noise, but how would an increased footprint impact public housing? Possibility of displacement?
- Could a case be made for current lack of investment in corridor around 81 due to highway? These areas are affected by noise pollution, air quality issues but in other areas this hasn't stopped redevelopment, e.g. Franklin Square, close to I-690 (although to date these have been rehabs, not new construction).
- Is taking 81 underground still an option on the table? Couldn't just a short stretch be depressed? Technically, it is on the table but cost may be prohibitive. NYSDOT will study this option among others.

- Our goal: to look at the options and to show the most obvious implications of each of those options. It is possible we will come up with tradeoffs in each scenario. We should not assume an absolute good in any of the cases. "Tradeoff" is an important concept to work into the final document.
- We are looking for a set of bullet points on each of these issues which may or may not require data. Issues may be assigned to subcommittees.
- Changes to Carousel Mall/if expansion goes forward would change local roadways but not impact 81.
- How would land use change along 481 if it became the main travel corridor? (Fast food restaurants, truck plazas, etc.)
- Value of study comes from visual presentations designed by Emmanuel Carter students, and case studies of other cities that can be applied to issues in Syracuse. Is there real value in this list of concerns other than the issue of emergency vehicles?
- In order to not have our study dismissed, we need to present ourselves as having considered these issues. We don't want to risk other parties saying, "Since you didn't consider this piece, your study should be discounted."
- Part of the job of this study is to direct SMTC and NYSDOT toward issues that need addressing.
- Should we schedule a teleconference (through Maxwell) with the Milwaukee planner (who is now in Denver)?
- Downtown employee data available from 2000 Census if we want to consider the travel patterns of commuters to downtown/Hill locations.

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 28, 3:30 – 4:45 PM**

Agenda: Emmanuel Carter will present suggested scope and structure of his student projects for discussion.