

OCL *Rethinking I-81* Study  
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes  
University College  
May 1, 2008

Present: Russ Andrews, Joseph Ash, Chris Capella-Peters, Megan Costa, Carol Dwyer, Karen Kitney, Rebecca Livengood, Sarah McIlvain, Paul Mercurio, Donna O'Mahoney Rohde, Van Robinson, Steve Schroeder, Doug Sutherland, Sandra Barrett, Rachel Pollack

Discussion

- Because of setup of SMTC committees, there are many points of entry to decision makers regarding I-81, not the least of which is the public.
- Correction re previous notes: Individuals, Chair of City Planning Commission and Chair of County Planning Board, (not their joint representative arm, SOCPA) are represented on SMTC Policy Committee.
- Who are the five most influential people who affect these decision makers?
- American Planning Association journal has article about this year's SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act), which may be real change in how reauthorization of transportation planning occurs, but committee members question whether real progress will be made in this direction.
- Congress for New Urbanism surveying communities considering reconfiguration of highways; Sandra submitted OCL perspective on Syracuse viaduct.
- Planned discussion with Michael Addario and other panelists regarding emergency vehicles routing, and perspectives relative to changes to I-81. Kevin McAuliffe and Van Robinson will assemble panel and will look into how other communities have handled changes to emergency vehicle routing relative to reconfiguration of highways.
- Emergency Travel Planning project on hold, per Karen Kitney.
- Looking at costs for viaduct maintenance vs. ground level roadway maintenance could be difficult, since accurate estimates are often distorted by government methods of budgeting. Is it worth attempting to get detailed breakdowns? Phil Bousquet said at last meeting he is willing to investigate. Carol Dwyer also interested in DOT figures.
- We should also try to get general comparative figures "viaduct maintenance per mile vs. roadway maintenance per mile. (Information could be obtained through DOT or other agency.) To invest a great deal of time and energy in determining actual costs may focus the discussion on costs, and this is not the desired focus.
- Determining comparative costs for construction vs. teardown could be also done in indirect ways. Look at examples from case studies such as Milwaukee. There is a way to get the financial figures across without risking getting the figures wrong.
- Is the "Concerns" model developed at the last meeting the way in which the committee should proceed? We had determined we were taking an advocacy mode for the teardown option; why should we address arguments against bringing down I-81? Reason for dealing with "concerns" is that no matter how good the advocacy, we would be faced with a litany of objections that have to be addressed.

- Can we use approximation of 60 percent local traffic, 40 percent through traffic although NYSDOT has not completed their study? (This is a NYSDOT estimation provided in presentation.)
- Importance of showing a model (through Emmanuel Carter's class) that demonstrates to local travelers that their known routes into downtown will not be displaced, and may in fact be enhanced by a removal of the viaduct/highway.
- The priority is to show viable models (class developed). For instance, showing a tunnel may not be necessary, if shown to be not viable.
- Importance of including "widened footprint" concern into last week's list, as this is one of the major issues regarding a rebuilt viaduct, creating an even greater visual and economic barrier to growth and development. Consider cost of land acquisition along 81.
- Important also to show possibility of elimination of entrance and exit ramps within city with viaduct restructure option.
- Issues regarding Upstate and 81: Pedestrian mobility and safety and institutional expansion and retention. Poor quality of Upstate campus due to Adams Street.
- If brought to ground level, would DOT own the boulevard or would it become a city street?
- At what part of process should we meet with representatives from Senator Schumer's office? Van will determine what they are looking for, what is their timetable.

**No meeting May 8; next meeting, May 15, 3:30 PM, room 405 UC (NOTE ROOM CHANGE)**