Technical analysis

Technical work for *The I-81 Challenge* has focused on:

- **Collecting data to identify the condition of I-81 and the Syracuse region's transportation system and the environment in which they operate**
- **Identifying potential strategies for I-81 that are worthy of detailed evaluation**

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

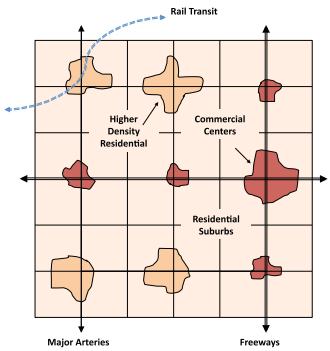
To date, the technical effort has resulted in a Physical Conditions Analysis, which analyzed:

- **Critical highway design elements**
- **Highway and bridge conditions**
- **Traffic volumes and interstate through traffic**
- **Congestion**
- **Accident rates**
- **Non-car means of travel (walking, cycling, bus)**

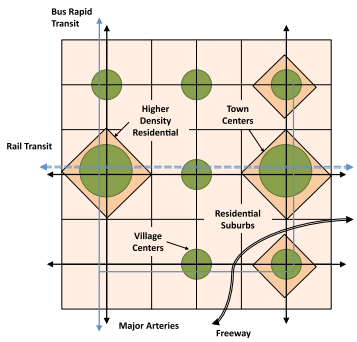
The results of this analysis are documented in Technical Memorandum #1

Transportation modeling

You've probably seen or heard about models throughout your life – whether physical models such as a train or a building or more abstract models like those used to give us weather forecasts. What they have in common is that they represent real world objects or processes.



We also use models in transportation planning. These models are a series of complex mathematical equations that represent the choices, decisions, and behavior of thousands (or millions) of individual travelers.



HOW DO THEY KNOW?

Ever heard that new transit service will take *X* number of cars off the road? Or that building a new road will cut travel time by *X* minutes? Ever wondered how planners know that?

It all comes from a model…

MODELS HELP US:

- Know where, when and how people are traveling
- Understand what and where our transportation needs are now and in the future
- Evaluate different strategies and investments to meet those needs
- Determine the impacts of strategies and investments on system performance, air quality, travel time, and land use, just to name a few

Public involvement for *The I-81 Challenge*

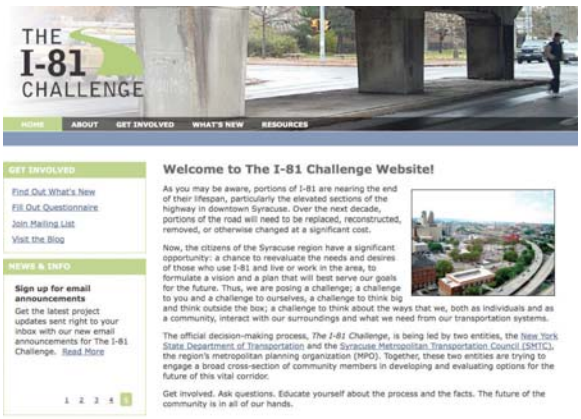
Throughout *The I-81 Challenge,* community input will help guide the development and refinement of options for the future of I-81. The SMTC and the NYSDOT have used a wide variety of tools and techniques to disseminate information and facilitate input into *The I-81 Challenge* process.

EDUCATION AND INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- Fact sheets and newsletters
- Website and social media
- Educational videos

STUDY COMMITTEES

- Study Advisory Committee
- Community Liaison Committee
- Municipal Liaison Committee



ELECTED OFFICIAL OUTREACH

- Notification to local, state, and federal elected officials


FALL 2011 **NEWSLETTER**

THE I-81 CHALLENGE

What's been happening with *The I-81 Challenge?*

The study team has been busy over the past several months. As you'll see from the focus of this newsletter, preparing for, conducting, and summarizing our May public workshops has been a major part of our work, but that is not all we have been doing. We convened our first Community and Municipal Liaison Committee meetings, where we received feedback from community organizations and municipalities about the progress of *The I-81 Challenge*. We also completed our second questionnaire. We've continued to update our website, blog, and Facebook page with new information about *The I-81 Challenge*, as well as adding relevant articles about similar projects in other cities.

Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council

New York State Department of Transportation

What is *The I-81 Challenge?*

You have probably read or heard that portions of I-81, particularly the elevated sections of the highway in downtown Syracuse, are nearing the end of their lifespan. Over the coming decades, portions of the highway will need to be replaced, reconstructed, removed, or otherwise changed.

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC), and a Study Advisory Committee (SAC) have begun a process to engage a broad cross section of community members in identifying, developing, and evaluating options for the future of this vital corridor. Over the next several years, this process, known as *The I-81 Challenge*, will advance community discussions about the future of I-81.

Using the community's input, along with information about the highway's existing conditions, a wide range of options for the future of I-81 and a set of goals and objectives are being generated. This broad range of options will be narrowed down to a small number of viable options through a combination of technical analysis and continued public involvement. The viable options will ultimately be refined and analyzed in further detail, and a formal environmental review process will begin. That process will lead to a decision, and to a project or projects that can be implemented. It takes time to make a decision of this importance, and we need the public to stay involved every step of the way. Visit **www.the81challenge.org** to find out how you can stay informed of project updates.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE OUTREACH

- Translation and interpreters
- Targeted outreach

Public involvement for *The I-81 Challenge*

Input directly from the public has also been critical for the progress of *The I-81 Challenge*. More than 2,000 people have directly participated through the various public participation activities. To date, our work has included:

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

- In May 2011, the SMTC and NYSDOT hosted the first series of public workshops
- More than 700 people participated in person, and more than 250 participated in the "virtual" workshop on the project website
- The workshop summary is available on the project website: *http://www.thei81challenge.org/*

FOCUS GROUPS

- The SMTC and the NYSDOT convened 23 focus groups throughout our region
- A total of 176 stakeholders participated

COMMUNITY EVENTS

- The SMTC and the NYSDOT have presented or distributed project information at community events throughout the region

SMALL GROUPS, COMMUNITY MEETINGS

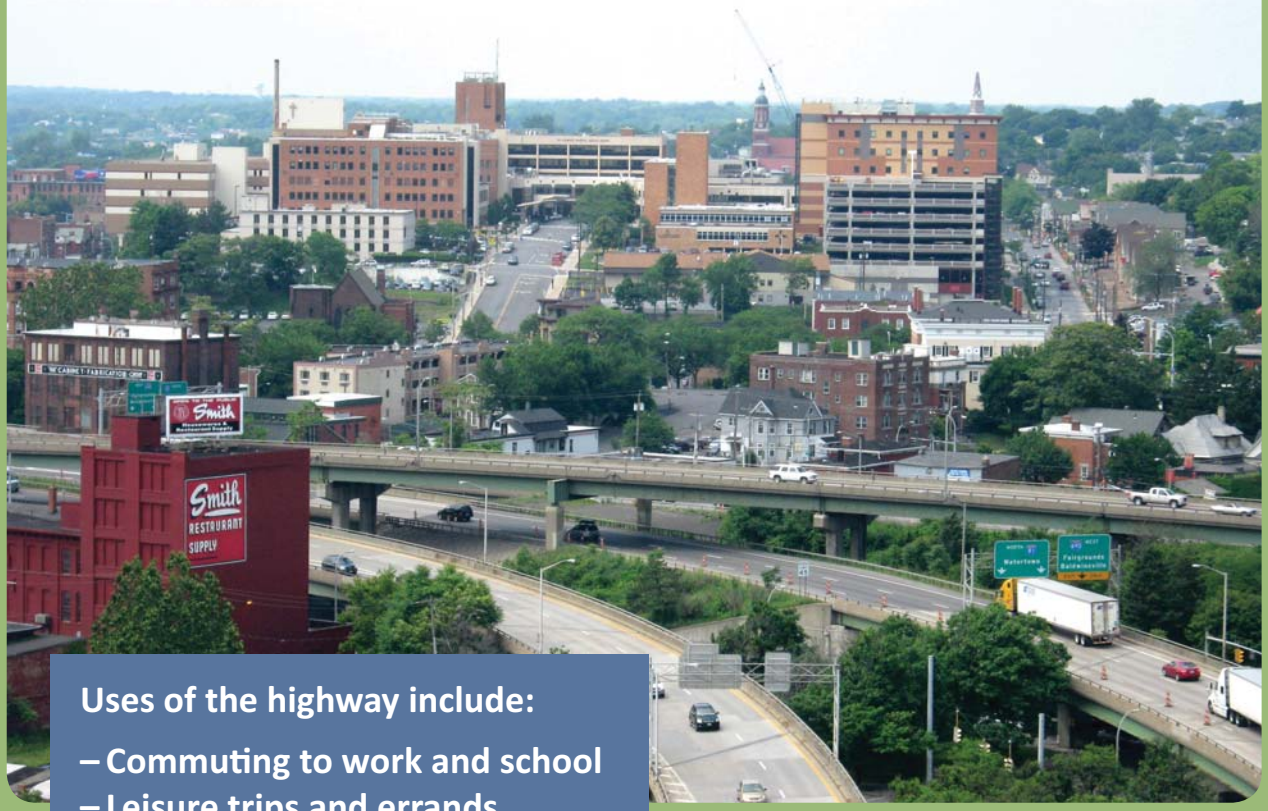
- 21 organizations accepted the SMTC's offer to discuss *The I-81 Challenge* at community meetings

QUESTIONNAIRES

- Two questionnaires allowed more than 1,000 people to answer questions about numerous topics, including their use of I-81 and desired goals for the future of the highway
- The questionnaire summary is available on the project website: *http://www.thei81challenge.org/*

Public involvement key findings: I-81 and the Syracuse region

I-81 is part of what defines the region



Uses of the highway include:

- Commuting to work and school
- Leisure trips and errands
- Long-distance travel

I-81's negative impacts on our region include:

- Perceived barrier and visually unappealing
- Source of pollution and promotes car-centric culture

I-81's positive impacts on our region include:

- Connections to key destinations
- Mobility and quick access
- Support for regional economy

Public involvement key findings: deficiencies and needs

Major public concerns about I-81:

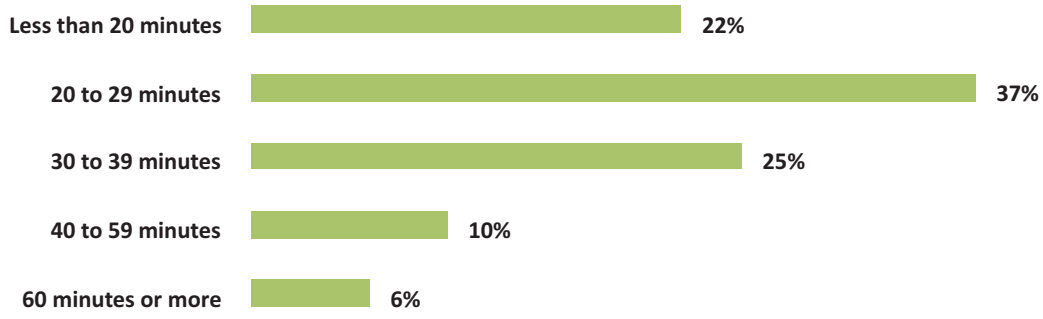
- Substandard ramps and merge lanes
- Sharp curves
- Left-hand entrances/exits
- Dangerous merges
- Dangerous and/or congested intersections
- Congestion

Public input corroborated technical analysis in Technical Memorandum #1: Physical Conditions Analysis

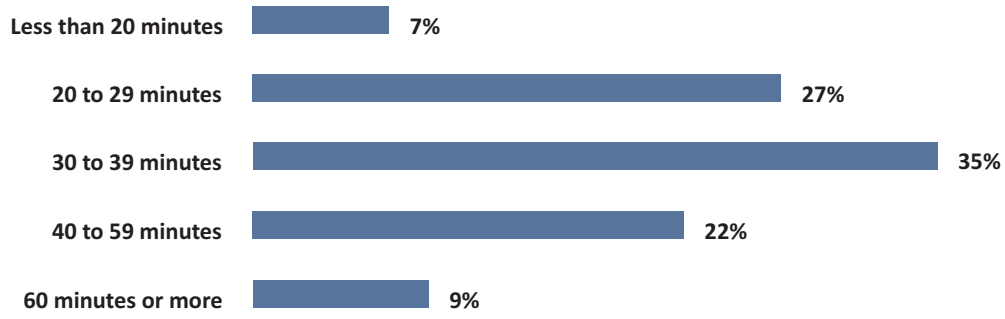
Public involvement key findings: travel time tolerance

We often refer to Syracuse as a "20-Minute City," but our 2011 questionnaire showed that is only true for less than 25% of us and that overall, the residents of our region could support a slight increase in overall travel time in the Syracuse region in the future.

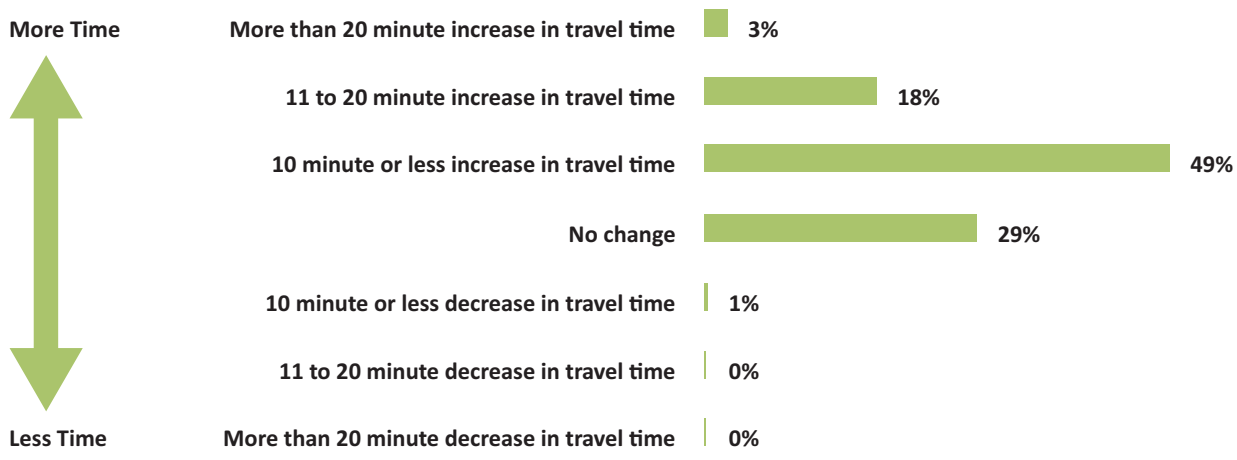
Current travel time in the Syracuse region



Tolerable future travel time



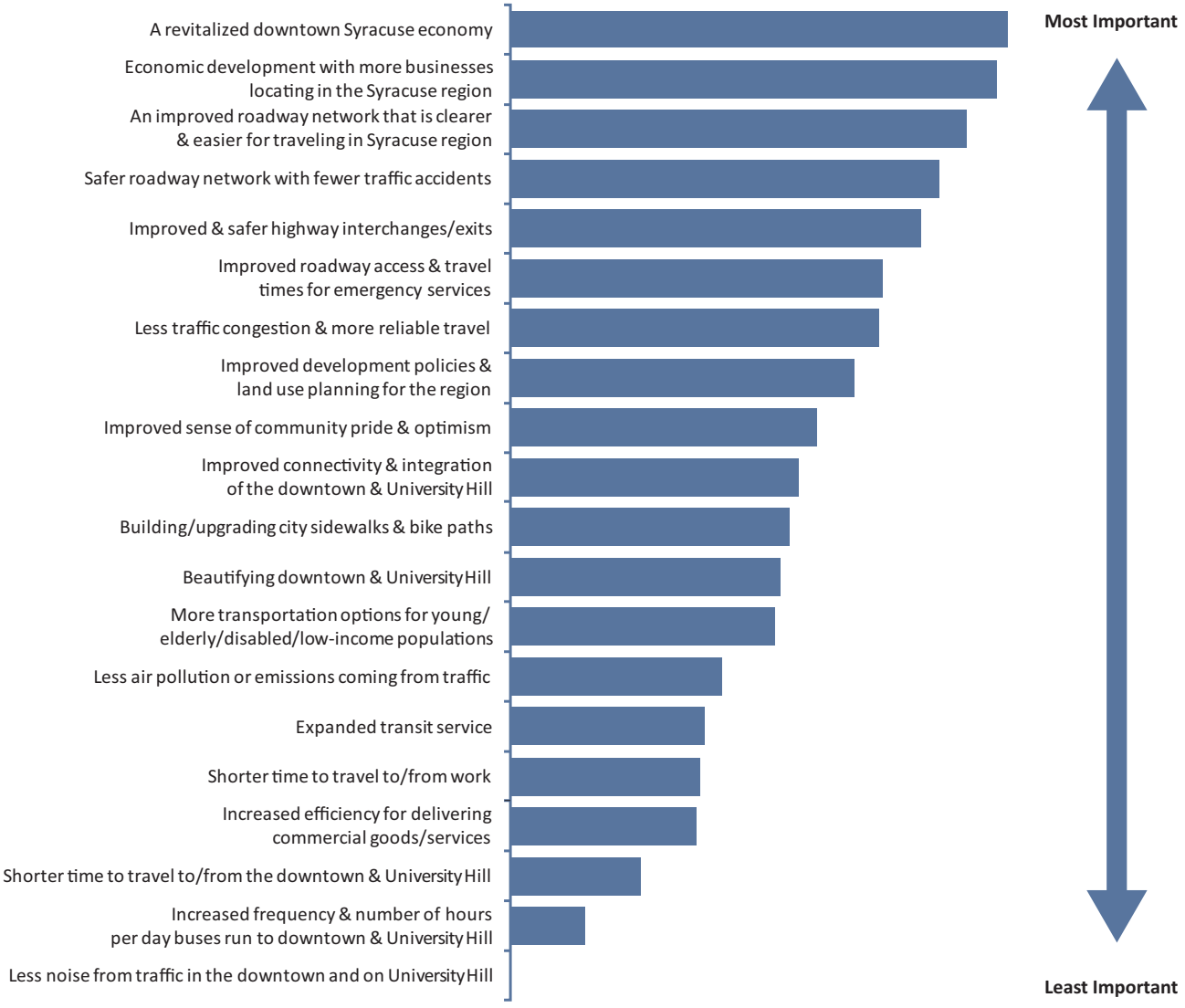
Tolerable change in travel time



Public involvement key findings: benefits of an improved I-81 corridor

Our 2011 questionnaire presented respondents with 20 possible benefits that could be realized from an improved I-81 corridor (irrespective of the specific future option selected). The graph below shows how residents of our region prioritized these benefits.

Prioritization of potential benefits



Public involvement key findings: the role of transit

Many of the visions developed at the 2011 Workshops emphasized the importance of transit to our region – from improving our current bus service to re-establishing commuter rail service to new services such as bus rapid transit and light rail.

From our questionnaire, we learned that while only a small fraction of us use public transit regularly, we are largely supportive of increasing funding for non-highway projects.

TRANSIT OPINIONS