

Depressed highway strategy: assessment

The depressed highway strategy removes the viaduct and buries I-81. This strategy requires the reconstruction of I-81 on either end of the depressed highway.

Transportation Assessment	Economic Competitiveness	Social Equity/Quality of Life	Environmental Stewardship
<p>Enhance the Transportation Network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% of geometric deficiencies would be addressed. Constructs 54 new bridges; special structure with high retaining walls; high life cycle maintenance costs. Hinders alternative mode improvements. <p>Enhance Region-Wide Mobility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional mobility would be slightly improved. Strategy would have increased hours of delay and congestion, especially at intersection locations. Connectivity is compromised as it creates gaps in the street grid system. Fewer exits would reduce downtown interstate access. Major highway improvements would improve access to key destinations. <p>Improve Public Safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipated reduction in accident patterns and rates by addressing design deficiencies and improved capacity. Added width, complicated intersections, and difficult crossings. 	<p>Maintain or Improve Economic Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment and construction would encroach on existing properties, negatively impacting business and residences. Could create a sense of disconnection between neighborhoods due to physical void between east and west. Access to urban core less convenient. Enhanced highway operations that may benefit region-wide population growth and job access. <p>Exercise Fiscal Responsibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High investment with limited community benefits and significant operational improvements. 	<p>Support Community Quality of Life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major property impacts including removal of numerous businesses, housing, portions of a park and sports fields, and a school. Does not encourage sustainable land use patterns within city or county; supports sprawl. Several major surface roads would be severed, negatively impacting connection between Northside, Downtown, and Eastside. Does not support regional land use patterns or smart growth. Improved visual environment with viaduct removal. Moderate consistency with city and county long term vision and preferred future land use patterns. <p>Share Burdens and Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits not shared equally among city neighborhoods. Greater number of property impacts with arterial road alongside depressed highway. 	<p>Preserve or Enhance Environmental Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not conflict with local, regional, or state environmental initiatives. Limited integration with city bike plan where roads are severed. Possible air quality impacts due to potentially higher emissions. Increase in noise levels due to reverberation between walls of the depressed highway. Impact to community landmarks or historic resources depending on footprint. Increases impervious areas by 11% requiring stormwater management features.
Fair	Fair to Poor	Poor	Poor

Cost Range: \$1.3-1.5 billion; Roadway: \$120-150 million, Bridges: \$480-550 million, Depressed Highway: \$700-800 million.

Recommendation/Feasibility: The depressed highway strategy in the viaduct priority area *is not feasible* and is eliminated from further consideration. Very high fiscal investment to improve system operations, safety, and capacity would have limited economic, social, and environmental benefits and significant impacts. Complex construction process with significant impacts to local and regional travel, significant utility impacts, and significant long-term maintenance costs.