



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John A. DeFrancisco

Senator DeFrancisco Calls For Public Input on the Future of I-81

JOHN A. DEFRANCISCO May 15, 2013

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State Senator John A. DeFrancisco held a press conference on May 17, 2013, at the corner of Harrison and South State Streets near the OnCenter to encourage citizen involvement in the decision-making process regarding the future of I-81. Various other legislative leaders, community members and business owners joined Senator DeFrancisco to call on the general public to get involved.

The elevated section of I-81 that runs through the City of Syracuse and its suburbs is nearing the end of its “useful” lifespan. Therefore, it will need to be repaired, removed or replaced with significant cost.

The I-81 Challenge was formed by two entities, the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTTC), in order to engage the entire community in the process of developing and evaluating solutions for I-81. At this time, it appears New York state is down to two main options that include rebuilding the elevated section or replacing it with an urban boulevard.

The NYSDOT and the SMTTC will host a public meeting on **Tuesday, May 21, 2013, from 3:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. at the OnCenter** Ballroom. Attendees will be able to learn more about the strategies for the Interstate and to provide their input. For more information on the meeting, you can visit www.senatordefrancisco.org or www.thei81challenge.org/meeting.

“Interstate 81 is a vital freeway that runs through the heart of Syracuse. Its future will impact thousands of commuters who travel in and out of the city each day, as well as the economic vitality of downtown and the suburbs,” said Senator DeFrancisco. “That is why I am reminding people about the upcoming public meeting, so they can stay informed and share their thoughts on current strategies.”

“As a business owner, it is critical that I understand where my customers come from and how they arrive at my place of business,” said Ramada Syracuse Owner Tony Mangano.

“Interstate 81 is my ‘Main Street,’ and removing it will seriously imperil my business, as well as other businesses that formed based on the Interstate’s present location. Our investment and the jobs of hundreds of employees will be placed at risk should our customers be needlessly diverted away from our front door.”

Skaneateles Town Supervisor Terri Roney added, “If the elevated part of Rte. 81 is removed and replaced with a boulevard, the unintended consequences will be increased truck and commercial traffic on the roads in our community. This could have the potential to negatively impact the quality of Skaneateles Lake, our primary drinking source for the town and village and the City of Syracuse, as well as the safety of people who live and travel on those roads daily.”

“I hope people will take the opportunity to attend next week’s public meeting on I-81, so they can help drive the decision on the future of this vital corridor,” concluded Senator DeFrancisco.

For a link to the I-81 Challenge website, please click [here](#). The website offers the public more information on the history of I-81, strategies for the elevated section of the Interstate, and ways the public can submit comments.