

CHAPTER 9

AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

This chapter summarizes the agency and public involvement that has been and will be conducted for the I-81 Viaduct Project.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Agency and public involvement are an integral part of the transportation and project development processes. Accordingly, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) provided many opportunities for open, collaborative, and meaningful agency and public participation throughout the environmental review process for the I-81 Viaduct Project (“the Project”).

The agency and public participation efforts for the Project have been developed in compliance with legislation and policies that guide public involvement in project development, including, but not limited to, the following:

- **National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)**, which requires Federal agencies to conduct the environmental review process in coordination with the public and other agencies;
- **State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)**, which requires New York State agencies to conduct the environmental review process in coordination with the public and other agencies;
- **Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)¹ Act of 2012**, the Federal transportation reauthorization law, which carries forward the public involvement principles of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005;
- **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966**, which requires that Federal agencies consider the effects of their undertakings on properties listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This consideration includes consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Federally recognized Native American tribes, and agencies, individuals, and organizations with a demonstrated interest in the project and its potential effects on properties of historic interest (i.e., Consulting Parties);

¹ On December 4, 2015, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act was signed into law. The FAST Act builds upon and carries forward the public involvement principles of the MAP-21 Act of 2012 and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005. Since the Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS for the I-81 Viaduct Project was published in the Federal Register on August 26, 2013, prior to the FAST Act, this EIS will remain compliant with MAP-21.

- **Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898 of 1994, 59 CFR Part 7629, February 16, 1994; 1997 USDOT Order 5610.2(a), May 2, 2012; FHWA Order 6640.23A, June 14, 2012)**, which requires targeted outreach to environmental justice communities that may be impacted by a Federal undertaking;
- **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Title VI regulations prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, and national origin, as well as Executive Order 13166 and Executive Order 26.** Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency [LEP],” states that people with LEP should have meaningful access to Federally conducted and Federally funded programs and activities. Executive Order 26, “Statewide Language Access Policy,” directs executive state agencies that provide direct public services to offer language assistance services (translation and interpretation) to people with LEP;
- **Uniform Relocation and Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 and the New York State Eminent Domain Procedures Law**, which require public notification of actions that may result in the condemnation and/or acquisition of property, including targeted outreach to affected property owners; and
- **Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Act of 1966**, which requires coordination with agencies of jurisdiction for the potential transportation use of properties protected under this Act.

9.2 AGENCY AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Coordination Plan

Section 6002 of SAFETEA-LU increased opportunities for the public and Federal, State, and local agencies to have active and early involvement in the NEPA process and to provide input on the project’s purpose and need, environmental study methodology, and alternatives under consideration. Section 6002 and 23 USC 139 require the development of a Coordination Plan for all highway and transit projects for which an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being prepared under NEPA. Accordingly, FHWA, the Federal Lead Agency, and NYSDOT, the Joint Lead Agency, prepared a Coordination Plan to describe the process and communication methods followed to disseminate information about the I-81 Viaduct Project, as well as to solicit and consider input from the public and other agencies.

The Coordination Plan for the Project conforms to the requirements of NEPA and specifically complies with the requirements described above. The Coordination Plan has and will continue to be in effect throughout the environmental review process, beginning with the issuance of the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS for the Project and ending with the Record of Decision (ROD). The plan is a flexible, “living” document that can be amended as needed during the project environmental review process. The Coordination Plan has been posted to the project website, www.i81opportunities.org, and has been updated as needed.

Cooperating and Participating Agencies

In accordance with the Coordination Plan, FHWA and NYSDOT have identified the appropriate agencies and invited those agencies to serve as Cooperating and/or Participating Agencies for the I-81 Viaduct Project. Cooperating and Participating Agencies are responsible for identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the Project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts that could substantially delay or prevent an agency from granting a permit or other approval.

According to Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1508.5), a "Cooperating Agency" means any Federal agency, other than a lead agency, that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposed project or project alternative. A state or local agency of similar qualifications or, when the effects are on lands of tribal interest, a Native American tribe may, by agreement with the lead agencies, also become a Cooperating Agency. CEQ also states (40 CFR 1501.6) that an agency may request that the lead agency designate it as a Cooperating Agency.

"Participating Agencies" are those with an interest in the project. The standard for Participating Agency status is more encompassing than the standard for Cooperating Agency status described above. Therefore, Cooperating Agencies are, by definition, Participating Agencies, but not all Participating Agencies are Cooperating Agencies. The FHWA and NYSDOT considered the distinctions in deciding whether to invite an agency to serve as a Cooperating/Participating Agency or only as a Participating Agency.

The roles and responsibilities of Cooperating and Participating Agencies are similar, but Cooperating Agencies have a higher degree of authority, responsibility, and involvement in the environmental review process. A Cooperating Agency with jurisdiction may adopt without re-circulating the EIS of a lead agency when, after an independent review of the statement, the Cooperating Agency concludes that its comments and suggestions have been satisfied. This provision is particularly important to permitting agencies that, as Cooperating Agencies, may adopt USDOT environmental documents.

Cooperating and Participating Agencies have been and will continue to be asked to submit comments during the EIS process that summarize their jurisdiction and/or special expertise related to the Project Area. FHWA and NYSDOT have collaborated with Cooperating and Participating Agencies in defining the Project's purpose and need, range of alternatives, and methodologies for documenting environmental conditions and assessing effects. Methodology memoranda and concurrence from the agencies have been and will continue to be included (as necessary) in the appendix to the Coordination Plan.

The agencies will be notified of the availability of this Draft EIS and the Final EIS and given appropriate comment opportunities. Following the Record of Decision (ROD), the appropriate agencies would be consulted to complete any necessary permits for the Project.

Table 9-1 lists the agencies that were invited to be involved in the Project, their role, and the reason for their requested involvement and particular responsibilities. For the I-81 Viaduct Project, certain transportation companies were invited as Participating Agencies since they have assets in the Project Area that could be affected by project elements.

Table 9-1

List of Invited Cooperating and Participating Agencies

Agency	Role	Involvement
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	Cooperating Agency	Section 106, National Historic Preservation Act; Section 4(f), U.S. Department of Transportation Act
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	Cooperating Agency	Section 404, Clean Water Act permit
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)	Cooperating Agency	Section 309, Clean Air Act Section 404, Clean Water Act Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*	Cooperating Agency	Section 7, Endangered Species Act
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)	Cooperating Agency	New York State environmental permits
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation—State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Cooperating Agency	Section 106, National Historic Preservation Act; Section 4(f), U.S. Department of Transportation Act
Onondaga Nation	Participating Agency	Federally recognized Native American tribe; Section 106, National Historic Preservation Act Consultation Executive Order 13175 – Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments Presidential Memorandum on Tribal Consultation USDOT Order 5301.1 – Department of Transportation Programs, Policies, and Procedures Affecting American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Tribes
Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC)	Participating Agency	Metropolitan Planning Organization; Consultation
CNY Centro, Inc.	Participating Agency	Central New York Regional Transportation Authority; Consultation
New York, Susquehanna and Western Railway	Participating Agency	Railroad in project area; Consultation
CSX**	Participating Agency	Railroad in project area; Consultation
Onondaga County	Participating Agency	Project county; Consultation
City of Syracuse	Participating Agency	Project city; Consultation
Town of Cicero	Participating Agency	Adjacent municipality; Consultation
Town of DeWitt	Participating Agency	Adjacent municipality; Consultation
Town of Salina	Participating Agency	Adjacent municipality; Consultation
Village of East Syracuse	Participating Agency	Adjacent municipality; Consultation
Village of North Syracuse	Participating Agency	Adjacent municipality; Consultation
Notes: * USFWS declined the invitation to participate as a Cooperating Agency for the Project, per Field Supervisor David Stillwell (Fall 2013). ** FHWA did not receive a response from CSX accepting or declining the invitation to participate as a Participating Agency for the Project.		

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act Consultation

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR Part 800) requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties that are listed or meet the eligibility criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Section 106 includes a public participation component. The process includes providing Consulting Parties and the public with information about the Project and its effects on historic properties and seeking public comment and input. This requirement is being satisfied in coordination with the public involvement requirements pursuant to NEPA.

Members of the public with a demonstrated interest in the Project (due to the nature of their legal or economic relation to the undertaking or affected properties, or their concern with the undertaking's effects on historic properties) may participate as Consulting Parties. For the I-81 Viaduct Project, NYSDOT, on behalf of FHWA, sent letters to the Federally recognized Native American tribe (the Onondaga Nation), public agencies, preservation groups, and other stakeholders to invite them to participate as Consulting Parties. A public notice, in English and Spanish, was published in local newspapers to inform parties with a demonstrated interest to apply for Consulting Party status. Copies of *A Citizen's Guide to Section 106 Review*, published by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), applications for Consulting Party status, and other information about the Section 106 process were available at public meetings, on the project website, and at the Project Outreach Center. Through these means, parties expressed interest to serve as Consulting Parties. FHWA and NYSDOT coordinated to identify, accept, and notify interested parties of their status as Section 106 Consulting Parties.

Information presented to the Consulting Parties has included the results of the historic and archaeological studies, as well as any potential effects to historic resources within the area of potential effects (APE). The Consulting Parties had the opportunity to comment on the identification and evaluation of historic properties, provide their views on effects to these properties, and will participate in the consideration of measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects on identified historic properties. A Consulting Parties meeting took place on June 29, 2016, a meeting and bus tour of the Project Area was conducted with the Onondaga Nation and SHPO on July 13, 2016, and briefings were held with the Onondaga Nation on October 8, 2014 and October 7, 2016. **Table 9-2** identifies the Consulting Parties for the Project.

Table 9-2
Section 106 Consulting Parties

Organization
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation—State Historic Preservation Office(SHPO)
City of Syracuse
Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency
Syracuse Housing Authority
Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council
Town of DeWitt Historical Preservation Society
Preservation League of New York State
Downtown Committee of Syracuse
Preservation Association of Central New York
AIA Central New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects
Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board
The Erie Canal Museum
The Northside Urban Partnership
Northeast Hawley Development Association, Inc.
Onondaga Nation

Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 Coordination

In accordance with 23 CFR § 774.5, FHWA must provide opportunities for coordination and comment to the official(s) with jurisdiction over any Section 4(f) resource that may be affected by the Project as well as to the U.S. Department of the Interior, and as appropriate, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Resources protected under Section 4(f) include public parks, wildlife refuges, and historic resources. Section 4(f) historic sites are identified through the Section 106 process, in consultation with the SHPO and other Consulting Parties. **Chapter 7, Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation**, identifies and describes the potential use of Section 4(f) properties as a result of the Project and presents an analysis of avoidance alternatives. FHWA and NYSDOT are seeking public and agency comment on this evaluation as part of the public review period for this Draft EIS.

Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice

Executive Order (EO) 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, dated February 11, 1994, requires consideration of whether a proposed action would disproportionately and adversely affect prescribed minority or low-income groups (59 Fed Reg. 7629 [1994]). An environmental justice analysis was prepared for the Project to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse effects to environmental justice populations (see **Section 6.2.3, Social Groups Benefited or Harmed/Environmental Justice**). EO 12898 also requires Federal agencies to ensure public participation from communities with minority or low-income populations.

In addition to EO 12898, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 stipulates that recipients of Federal aid must certify nondiscrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Title VI specifically states that “no person in the United States shall on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, denied benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 12898, and FHWA’s Order 5610.2(a), NYSDOT has made extensive efforts to identify and engage environmental justice communities both before and during preparation of this Draft EIS. Identification of environmental justice populations is discussed in **Section 6.2.3, Social Groups Benefited or Harmed/Environmental Justice**. This section summarizes the public outreach with environmental justice communities that has occurred thus far in the EIS process.

The Project has included extensive communication with environmental justice populations as identified by the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council’s *Environmental Justice Analysis Syracuse Metropolitan Planning Area Final Report July 2012*, and confirmed by the analysis undertaken as part of this Draft EIS. In October of 2013, NYSDOT hosted a series of meetings in neighborhoods with environmental justice populations. NYSDOT provided a project introduction at each neighborhood meeting and sought the participation of attendees at the upcoming scoping meetings. The NEPA scoping meetings were held in November 2013 and June 2014, and a project update presentation was held in May 2014. The scoping meetings were held in Downtown Syracuse over a five-hour period in the late afternoon and early evening to maximize participation by the community. NYSDOT provided vouchers for public transport to the meeting location. Additionally, NYSDOT coordinated with Syracuse Housing Authority (SHA) to ensure that a shuttle service from SHA properties was provided for both scoping meetings.

Following the June 2014 scoping meeting, NYSDOT hosted a second series of neighborhood meetings, again with a focus on communities identified with environmental justice populations. The purpose of these meetings was to present information from the scoping meetings in a smaller, more informal setting, with a particular emphasis on neighborhood concerns, and engage in one-on-one conversations with attendees on topics of their concern. Attendees were offered comment sheets to submit their concerns in writing, and their questions were answered by project team members at the meetings.

In October 2016, NYSDOT held a public open house at the Oncenter to provide an update on the latest developments in the Project to the public. Following this open house, NYSDOT hosted a third series of meetings in neighborhoods with environmental justice populations, as well as suburban communities. The purpose of these meetings was to present information from the public open house in a smaller, more informal setting, and to engage in one-on-one conversations with attendees. The meetings included fifty-scale illustrations of the alternatives, presentation boards, and monitors with traffic simulations and a recorded presentation on the Project. Project team members were on hand to discuss the Project with attendees. Attendees were offered comment sheets to submit their concerns in writing.

The neighborhood and community meetings, scoping meetings, and public open house were advertised in English and Spanish language newspapers, with flyers posted at numerous locations in the neighborhoods, and through contact with community leaders and organizations. Attendees have been encouraged to register for the Project's mailing list to receive written or email updates for later public involvement activities.

NYSDOT has also engaged the participation of environmental justice communities through the formation of stakeholders' groups. The Project has two Stakeholders' Advisory Working Groups, or SAWGs (see **Section 9.8**). Numerous groups representing environmental justice organizations and neighborhoods were invited to participate in these working groups. The SAWGs meet regularly for a dialogue with NYSDOT about key considerations in the development of the I-81 Viaduct Project as well as other undertakings in its vicinity (i.e., Rezone Syracuse and the SMART 1 Study). The Stakeholders' Committee (see **Section 9.8**), which is open to the public, also has representation from environmental justice organizations and communities, as listed below. There also have been meetings with the SHA to coordinate their planning efforts with the I-81 Viaduct Project, as well as with Northside Urban Partnership (Northside UP), Urban Jobs Task Force, Center for Community Alternatives, Vision for Change, Jubilee Homes, Greater Syracuse HOPE, SUNY EOC, and others.

NYSDOT also has made staff available in less formal settings to converse with the public about the I-81 Viaduct Project. Staff is available two days per week at the Project Outreach Center (335 Montgomery Street) in Downtown Syracuse, which is located in a census tract with environmental justice populations, is centrally located to environmental justice communities, and is accessible via transit. The Outreach Center includes displays and handouts provided at public meetings, and people can ask questions or submit comment sheets. In 2015 and 2016, staff was on hand at the Central New York Festival Latino-Americano and at the Westcott Street Cultural Fair, both located in census tracts with environmental justice populations. In 2014, 2015, and 2016, the Outreach Center was opened during the Arts and Crafts Festival, which took place outside the center. FHWA and NYSDOT plan participation in other community events as the Project progresses.

The methods and meetings used to encourage the participation of environmental justice communities include:

- Neighborhood meetings have been and will continue to be held in identified priority environmental justice areas (refer to Chapter 6.2.3, Social Groups Benefited or Harmed/Environmental Justice). Five of these neighborhood meetings were held in fall 2013, seven were held in summer 2014, and five were held in fall 2016 in the following neighborhoods.
 - Southside, City of Syracuse
 - Northside, City of Syracuse
 - Downtown, City of Syracuse
 - Westside, City of Syracuse
 - Eastside, City of Syracuse

- Meeting venues were identified through consultation with representatives of the environmental justice communities including elected officials, Syracuse Housing Authority representatives, and the Syracuse's Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today (TNT) Coordinators. Based on input received from this coordination, neighborhood meetings were held at multiple venues in different parts of a neighborhood to encourage broad participation. For example, the 2014 neighborhood meetings included two separate meetings in the Northside: one was held at Dr. Edwin E. Weeks School in Hawley-Green, and the other occurred in St. Peter's Parish, which does outreach to Vietnamese populations, in the Lincoln Hill neighborhood. Similarly, the 2014 neighborhood meetings in the Southside took place in separate parts of the neighborhood, at Southwest Community Center and at Toomey Abbott Towers. The Southwest Community Center provides human services to residents of an environmental justice community and functions as a central meeting place for the greater Southside. Toomey Abbott Towers is a handicap accessible assisted living facility. This venue was chosen as a venue site to bring project information to a population with limited mobility.
- In addition to notifications in local newspapers including those serving environmental justice communities (CNY Latino and the Southside's The Stand), the meetings were publicized through the following methods.
 - Distribution/posting of flyers throughout the meeting neighborhoods. Flyers were brought to community centers, churches and religious organizations, social service providers, neighborhood stores (e.g., supermarkets, barbershops, banks, etc.), and restaurants, as well as other venues. NYSDOT coordinated with the Syracuse Housing Authority and asked that they distribute flyers to their tenants (refer to Appendix M for additional detail on flyer distribution locations).
 - For the project scoping meetings, the project update presentation, and the public open house, flyers were posted in Centro buses.
 - NYSDOT coordinated with the Syracuse City School District and dropped off flyers at schools for distribution to students' families.
 - NYSDOT sent "E-flyers" to local elected officials, neighborhood representatives, school representatives, community organizations and boards, libraries, and municipal staff for posting and/or redistribution. For the 2014 neighborhood meetings, NYSDOT made phone calls to local elected officials to heighten awareness of the meetings among their constituencies.
 - Press releases were distributed to local media outlets. For the public scoping meetings, the project update presentation, and the public open house, paid print and web advertisements were included in regional and local newspapers including those dedicated to environmental justice communities.
- To facilitate attendance at public scoping meetings and the public open house, a shuttle was provided for residents of Syracuse Housing Authority properties. Transit and parking vouchers also were provided for the scoping meetings and open house.
- The scoping meetings and the public open house were advertised on variable message signs (VMS) on Interstates 81, 690, and 481.

- Coordination and briefings have been and will continue to be held with individuals, institutions, or organizations in the affected community to inform the public about the project.
- NYSDOT reached out to representatives of organizations serving environmental justice communities and asked them to become members of the project's Stakeholders' Advisory Working Groups. These organizations include Syracuse Housing Authority, Syracuse Model Neighborhood Facility, Northside Urban Partnership, Mary Nelson Youth Center, Near Westside Initiative, Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse, P.E.A.C.E. Inc., Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, Syracuse Community Health Center, People's African Methodist Episcopal Church, Southside Innovation Center, Vision Center/Mercy Works, Home Headquarters, Spanish Action League, Southside Community Coalition, Gifford Foundation, and National Action Network.
- The project's Stakeholders' Committee, which is open to the general public, includes representation from organizations serving environmental justice communities (e.g., organizations listed above as well as the Syracuse City School District, Living Waters Churches, Greater Syracuse Tenants' Network, UniteHERE, and others).
- Syracuse Housing Authority and Northside Urban Partnership are participating as Section 106 Consulting Parties.
- An informational booth, staffed with native Spanish speakers from the project team as well as an interpreter, was provided at the August 2015 and August 2016 Central New York Festival Latino-Americano in the Westside. An informational booth was provided at the September 2015 and September 2016 Westcott Street Cultural Fair in the Eastside. The project's Outreach Center, located in an environmental justice neighborhood, was open during the Arts and Crafts Festival, which took place outside the center, in the summers of 2014, 2015, and 2016.
- An informational table was provided at a citizen class hosted by Catholic Charities in the Northside neighborhood and an English as a Second Language class hosted by the Syracuse Central School District in the Westside neighborhood in summer 2014 and again in fall 2016. These classes generally are attended by refugee populations in the City.
- Project documents have been made available at several repositories in environmental justice priority areas, including three Syracuse Housing Authority properties (Administration Office, Toomey Abbott Towers office, and Pioneer Homes office), Dunbar Center, Faith Hope Community Center, Northeast Community Center Library, Southwest Community Center Library, and the Onondaga County Public Library Beauchamp, Betts, and White branch libraries.
- NYSDOT has used different meeting sizes or formats so that communications are tailored to the particular community or population:
 - Public scoping meetings, the project update presentation, and the public open house included formal presentations, as well as an open house to facilitate discussion with project staff. These presentations were repeated for the convenience of participants at each of the public scoping meetings and the project update presentation. At the

- October 2016 public open house, a recorded presentation was also presented via a looped video throughout the duration of the meeting.
- Neighborhood meetings used smaller facilities and provided opportunities for direct interaction with project staff, which was on hand to explain material on display boards, answer individual questions, and discuss the project with attendees.
 - The project update presentation and Stakeholders' Committee meetings included both formal presentations and staffed display boards for direct access to project staff.

At formal public meetings, in written comments received during the scoping comment period, and at other meetings, representatives of the environmental justice communities have raised concerns with respect to construction activities, potential for property acquisition and relocations, and the need for transit services. In response to these comments, FHWA and NYSDOT modified the project objectives to include "Maintain access to existing local bus service and enhance transit amenities^[1] within and adjacent to the I-81 viaduct priority area." NYSDOT held informational meetings about the property acquisition and relocation process in June 2016. SHA also expressed concern about the future width of Almond Street in the Southside and pedestrian movement across and along it. SHA recommended exploring an option to go under, rather than over, the New York, Susquehanna and Western Railway, in the vicinity of Renwick Street, under the Community Grid Alternative. They expressed concern about the inclusion of a ramp next to a school and church. As a result of this input, FHWA and NYSDOT developed a new concept in line with this suggestion that modified the Community Grid Alternative (see **Chapter 3, Alternatives**, for details about this concept). Stakeholders in the Northside and other parts of the city have identified emergency access to St. Joseph's Hospital as an important consideration during construction. Community leaders, the SHA, and numerous others have called for workforce training to encourage local participation in construction contracts. All of these views have been considered in the design of the project alternatives during the development of the Draft EIS and in the development of the environmental commitments identified in this document.

Outreach to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Individuals

Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English are considered "limited English proficient," or LEP. Federal laws concerning language access rights and obligations include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166. Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency," was signed on August 11, 2000 and states that people with limited English proficiency should have meaningful access to Federally conducted and funded programs and activities. The Executive Order requires Federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to LEP individuals, and develop and implement a system to provide those services that allows for meaningful access by LEP individuals.

^[1] Transit amenities that may be explored could include bus stops and shelters, bus turnouts, and layover and turnaround places.

Demographic data collected from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey were reviewed to identify the primary language(s) other than English spoken in the study area, with the goal of providing interpretation services if needed and appropriate for LEP individuals. Based on this review, as shown in **Table 9-3**, the primary language other than English spoken in the study area is Spanish. The data and plan to guide the involvement of LEP populations are summarized in the Project’s “LEP Memo” (July 2014), which is included in **Appendix M**.

**Table 9-3
Common Language Groups for LEP Populations within the
Study Area**

	LEP Population	% of Project Area LEP
Total Project Area	11,178	100%
Spanish	3,485	31%
Chinese	1,213	11%
African languages	842	8%
Other Indic languages*	733	7%
Vietnamese	676	6%
Other Asian languages**	611	6%
Serbo-Croatian	573	5%
Notes: * Other Indic languages cover those other than Hindi, Urdu, and Gujarati. ** Other Asian languages cover those other than Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mon-Khmer/Cambodian, Hmong, Thai, Laotian, and Vietnamese. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey		

The demographic data were supplemented by interviews with representatives of organizations serving LEP populations to better understand their needs and best ways to engage them in the EIS process. These organizations include:

- Catholic Youth Organization (Catholic Charities) – Citizenship program
- Spanish Action League
- Syracuse City School District – English Second Language program
- Syracuse University, Geography Department
- SUNY Upstate, Director of Interpreter Services
- Syracuse University, Chinese Students & Scholars Association

Spanish interpreters and a “language line” service, which provides on-demand interpretation via telephone for numerous other languages, were available at the scoping meetings. In addition, meeting advertisements offered attendees an opportunity to request interpretation services for other languages. Spanish interpreters also were available at the Stakeholders’ Committee meetings. Spanish interpreters (and in one neighborhood, a Mandarin Chinese interpreter) were available at the neighborhood meetings. Meetings were advertised through

translated flyers and e-flyers and translated advertisements published in CNY Latino, a local Spanish-language newspaper. Comment sheets in Spanish and English were distributed at meetings and other public events. Spanish-speaking project team members and a Spanish interpreter staffed an informational booth in the Central New York Festival Latino-Americano (held in the Westside) in August 2015 and 2016 and distributed Spanish-language comment sheets as well as a Spanish-language card with project contact information, including information about the Project Outreach Center, project website, and toll-free hotline. In addition, project staff presented at English-language and citizenship classes to provide project-related information and answer questions of LEP individuals. Other outreach included the distribution of flyers (e.g., to notify those with LEP of public meetings) at religious institutions, cultural centers, and community centers. Prior to project meetings, for example, flyers and posters providing meeting notifications, in English and Spanish, as well as other information, were distributed to appropriate organizations and meeting places. Project materials and meeting notifications continue to be distributed to these centers to help inform the public about the Project and encourage public participation.

In addition to the efforts described above, the project website, www.i81opportunities.org, also includes “Language Assistance” links in Spanish, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, and Russian; these links provide LEP individuals with additional information regarding their rights under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Americans with Disabilities Act Outreach

Public meetings have been and will continue to be held in locations that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to assure that individuals with disabilities and/or who are elderly may have convenient access to meetings. Sign language interpreters have been, and will continue to be, available at formal public meetings, and other meetings if requested. Public notices announcing public meetings provide instructions for requesting other special accommodations.

Meetings with Potentially Affected Property Owners (if needed). The New York State Eminent Domain Procedure Law (Articles 1 through 7) requires the condemning agency to ensure that just compensation is paid for acquired property rights; provides an opportunity for public participation in the planning of public projects; encourages settlement of claims for just compensation; expedites payments to property owners; and establishes rules to reduce litigation and ensure equal treatment of all property owners.

Prior to the meetings with affected property owners described above, three real estate acquisition information sessions were held in June 2016 to provide an overview of the property acquisition process and relocation assistance program.

9.3 AGENCY AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

FHWA and NYSDOT are committed to an open, participatory environmental review process for the Project and will continue to inform and solicit early and frequent feedback from the public and from agencies; encourage open discussion of project details and issues; and provide opportunities for comments and questions. Opportunities for public input have and will continue to occur throughout the Project and include those described below.

Public Meetings and Open Houses

Public meetings and open houses, held at project milestones, are an important tool to keep stakeholders, in particular the general public, informed of the Project and to solicit their input. To ensure public participation in the environmental review process, major meetings have been advertised and promoted in a variety of ways, including local media (print and on-line newspapers and local news broadcasts); community message boards; local and regional civic organizations; project website and social media accounts; direct mail/e-mail to the project mailing list; notices on Centro buses; notices on variable message signs on I-81, I-690, and I-481; and distribution of meeting notices throughout the Downtown, Eastside, Northside, Southside, and Westside neighborhoods. Public meetings and open houses that have been or will be held for the Project are described below.

- **Public Scoping Meetings.** The scoping meetings, which were held on November 13, 2013 and on June 26, 2014, provided early opportunities for the public to participate in the project development. The scoping process allows the public and agencies to participate in the development and review of the project purpose and need and to suggest potential alternatives for consideration in the Draft EIS, as well as the environmental issues to be studied. Members of the public were provided the opportunity to submit written comments on the scope of the Project during the scoping comment period, which ended on September 2, 2014. Substantive comments raised during the scoping comment period were summarized and responded to in the *Scoping Report*, which was made publicly available in April 2015.

Both public scoping meetings took place in the Oncenter, a convenient, centrally located, and transit-accessible location. Each consisted of an informal open house and a presentation, which was given twice during the meetings; after each presentation, the public was provided the opportunity to comment on the scope of the EIS. Stenographers were present to transcribe the formal presentation and verbal public comments, which could be given either publicly or in private. The open house portion consisted of informational displays, with project team members available to provide information about the Project and answer questions. The meetings were accessible to persons with disabilities. Sign language services were provided. Spanish-language interpreters were available. In addition, services to provide over-the-phone language interpretation upon request were offered during both meetings; interpretation services were available in 250 languages at the November 2013 scoping meeting and 119 languages at the June 2014 scoping meeting.

- **Public Hearing.** A public hearing will be held following the publication of this Draft EIS. The public hearing will include an open house and a presentation, as well as opportunities to submit comments on the Draft EIS orally and in writing. The public also will be invited to submit comments during the circulation of the Draft EIS. Comments raised at the public hearing and during the Draft EIS comment period, which will be a minimum of 45 days, will be considered and responded to in the Final EIS.
- **Other Meetings.** In addition to the formal public scoping meetings and public hearing, other meetings have been and are anticipated to occur to solicit input on the Project. As part of this effort, project update presentations were given on May 1, 2014 at the

Everson Museum and at the Capital for a Day event held at SKY Armory on September 30, 2015. These meetings included information on the development of the alternatives and the environmental review process as well as up-to-date project information. In addition, a public open house was held on October 6, 2016 at the Oncenter. The open house included numerous display boards, twenty- and fifty-scale illustrations of the alternatives, recorded and live presentations, a video on bicycle/pedestrian improvements, and videos of traffic simulations, which represented traffic conditions in 2050 under the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives. The purpose of the open house was to provide up-to-date information on the project alternatives. Project team members were on hand to discuss the Project with attendees. Sign language services were provided. Spanish-language interpreters were available; in addition, services to provide over-the-phone language interpretation for 368 languages upon request were offered. Attendees were offered comment sheets to submit their comments in writing.

- **Neighborhood and Community Meetings.** The neighborhood and community meetings are designed to give residents throughout the Syracuse region additional opportunities to learn about the Project and its ongoing environmental review process and voice their comments and opinions. The neighborhood meetings are held in identified areas with low-income and/or minority populations where possible. Neighborhood outreach meetings occurred in September and October 2013 throughout Syracuse and its environs, including in the Southside, Northside, Downtown, Eastside, and Westside neighborhoods. Community meetings were held in the Town of Owasco on July 23, 2013, the Town of Salina on May 1, 2013, and the Eastern Suburbs on October 13, 2013. A second round of neighborhood meetings was held in the Southside, Northside, Downtown, Eastside, and Westside neighborhoods during the summer of 2014. In addition, NYSDOT presented at a city-wide meeting of the City of Syracuse's "Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today" organization on August 14, 2014. NYSDOT also held a community meeting in the Town of Salina on December 3, 2015. In the fall of 2016, a third round of neighborhood meetings was held in the Southside, Northside, Downtown, Eastside, and Westside neighborhoods. Community meetings were held in Skaneateles on October 19, 2016, DeWitt on November 15, 2016, and Cicero-North Syracuse on December 6, 2016. Additional meetings will be scheduled as appropriate as the Project progresses.
- **Small or Individual Meetings with Stakeholders.** In addition to the larger-context meetings described above, FHWA and NYSDOT have held and will continue to hold smaller group or individual meetings on the Project's status and progress. Elected officials will be briefed through joint meetings as well as individual briefings to keep them informed of project developments. These briefings will occur regularly, at project milestones. Efforts have been and will continue to be made to hold individual group meetings with representatives from county and municipal governments (e.g., the counties, villages, and towns in the project corridor) and regional agencies (e.g., regular meetings with the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council and its member organizations); the residential, business, and commuter communities; and special interest groups as appropriate.

A list of project meetings is included in **Table 1-1** in **Appendix M**. To date, these meetings have included:

- Briefings of elected officials, in groups as well as individually;
- Meetings with staff representing Onondaga County, the City of Syracuse, and Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council;
- Meetings with representatives of the Centro and of the New York, Susquehanna & Western Railway;
- Meetings with advocacy groups and other interested parties (e.g., Downtown Committee, CenterState CEO, Near Westside Initiative, ReThink 81, Moving People Transportation Coalition, Central New York Community Foundation, American Institute of Architects, and others); and
- Meetings with the universities and hospitals (Syracuse University, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse University, SUNY Upstate Medical University, Crouse Hospital, Syracuse VA Medical Center) and meetings with employers, such as representatives of Destiny USA.

Stakeholders' Groups

Several groups have been formed to provide additional forums for active public participation. These committees, chaired by NYSDOT, have been and will be briefed prior to major milestones and as needed throughout the EIS process. At this time, the following groups have been established:

- **Stakeholders' Committee.** The Stakeholders' Committee was formed to disseminate project information and obtain input from a variety of stakeholders. This committee includes members of the general public (who are able to sign up for the committee on the project website, at public meetings, and at the Project Outreach Center), elected officials, and stakeholders who represent agencies, interest groups, and organizations. Briefings of the Stakeholders' Committee generally occur prior to major public meetings and at project milestones. The first Stakeholders' Committee meeting took place on June 24, 2014 at the Everson Museum. Members were invited to the Capital for a Day presentation on the Project, which took place on September 30, 2015. The Committee also met on June 9, 2016 at HW Smith Elementary School.
- **Sustainability and Community and Economic Development Stakeholders' Advisory Working Groups (SAWGs).** Each of the Project's two SAWGs serves as a forum for the exchange of information, discussion of issues, and solicitation of feedback that will be taken into consideration during the development of the EIS. Membership is small enough to encourage workshop-style sessions and to explore specific issues in detail. Some members were recommended by the City and County. The groups held their first meetings in April 2014 and 24 meetings have occurred as the EIS has progressed. SAWG meetings are held at the Project Outreach Center.
 - **Sustainability Stakeholders' Advisory Working Group:** To ensure that local perspectives are captured and the Project is aligned with the VisionCNY Regional Sustainability Plan and sustainability plans developed by Onondaga County and the

City of Syracuse, a Sustainability Stakeholders' Advisory Working Group was established. This group includes representatives of organizations that represent or advocate for sustainability, the environment, transportation choices for mobility and accessibility, social issues, and public health and human services.

- **Community and Economic Development Stakeholders' Advisory Working Group:** This group was formed as an opportunity to partner with local business councils and other organizations to formulate ways to maximize return on investments while supporting the goals identified by CNY Regional Economic Development Council (REDC). This working group includes key business, real estate, planning, and economic development organizations that represent the public and non-profit, institutional, and private sectors active in the Project Area and throughout the Syracuse region.
- **Urban Design Technical Advisory Panel.** As part of the effort to produce high quality urban design for the I-81 Viaduct Project, NYSDOT has established an Urban Design Technical Advisory Panel (UDTAP). The panel comprises a group of design and design-related professionals with specialized knowledge and experience in urban design. Five of the members are architects and/or landscape architects and two represent the City of Syracuse. The panel's purpose and mission is to provide NYSDOT with guidance and ideas to improve, enhance, and augment the project designs as they are being developed. Members are asked to serve in an advisory capacity to NYSDOT and provide input and ideas on the landscape, urban design elements, and aesthetics of the I-81 Viaduct Project. To date, meetings have focused on the proposed West Street and Onondaga Creek improvements (July 6, 2016), on Almond Street and the potential southern gateway (August 9, 2016), and on the Project's proposed bicycle/pedestrian improvements and other improvements to local streets (November 17, 2016).

Other public outreach tools and efforts include:

- **Project Website.** A project website (www.i81opportunities.org) is available. Visitors can sign up for the project mailing list and Stakeholders' Committee and submit comments and questions to the lead agencies via a "Contact Us" feature. The site will continue to be updated regularly to include announcements of project meetings and access to project documents (e.g., scoping documents, Coordination Plan, and the Draft and Final EIS), which will be posted as they become available. Links to the project Facebook page and to NYSDOT's Twitter account are available from the site.
- **Mailing List.** The project mailing list, which comprises more than 4,500 contacts, was drawn initially from the contact list developed for the I-81 Challenge planning study and has been updated continually. The list includes elected officials, public agencies, stakeholder and community groups, media, and individuals. Included within the list are organizations, media, and individuals that have relevance and connections with LEP and environmental justice communities in the Project Area. The mailing list is used to distribute meeting announcements and information about the Project.
- **Project Hot Line.** A toll-free telephone number, 1-855-I81-TALK (855-481-8255), has been set up for members of the public to reach project representatives during business hours, with messages returned promptly.

- **Project Outreach Center.** Located in the Carnegie building at 335 Montgomery Street in Syracuse, this center was opened in conjunction with Onondaga County and the City of Syracuse to provide an additional resource for members of the public to access information, ask questions, and learn about the I-81 Viaduct Project. The center, which was established in 2013, was open three days a week until October 2014. It now is open Tuesday and Thursday from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Two members of the project team are available during that time to interact with visitors. Boards from recent project meetings are on display, comment sheets and project documents, such as the *Scoping Report*, are available, and visitors are guided through the displays by project staff.
- **Outreach at Local Festivals.** Staff has disseminated project-related information at popular festivals throughout the City of Syracuse. Informational booths have been installed at the Central New York Festival Latino-Americano (on August 8, 2015 and August 13, 2016) and Westcott Street Cultural Fair (September 20, 2015 and September 18, 2016). In addition, the Project Outreach Center was opened and staffed during the annual Arts and Crafts Festival, which takes place directly in front of the building, to encourage visitors to the festival to visit the center and learn more about the Project. For this event, the center was opened on July 25, 2014; July 24, 2015; and July 29, 2016.
- **Informational Materials** were produced at key points during the project development process. Content has included written information on the Project (e.g., *Scoping Initiation Packet*, *Draft Scoping Report*, *Scoping Report*, and a project newsletter), as well as visuals and contact information. Presentations, meeting handouts, and other materials have been developed as appropriate to keep the public informed about project developments. Comment sheets are made available at public meetings and the Project Outreach Center to encourage public input.
- **Media Contacts.** Press briefings and one-on-one contact with the press have taken place as needed. Press releases were issued to communicate new project developments. Outreach to the media has included newspapers serving low-income, minority, and LEP communities.
- **Project Repositories.** Local repositories enable members of the public to examine project documents, including EIS documents, and other informational materials. The repositories include agency and municipal offices, libraries, and community centers. The names and addresses of the project repositories are available in **Table 1-2** in **Appendix M**.