



## TRANSPORTATION NEWS

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### **GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES \$1 MILLION INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE LOCAL WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION IN SYRACUSE INTERSTATE 81 PROJECT**

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"Workforce Forward: Syracuse" Program Will Help Train and Connect Local Workers for I-81 Project and Other Central New York Infrastructure Projects

State Labor Department Will Host Job Fairs and Conduct Outreach to Communities with Highest Need

Today the Governor announced the launch of "Workforce Forward: Syracuse," a collaborative \$1 million initiative spearheaded by the State Labor Department, the State Department of Transportation and other agencies to help ensure that workers in the Syracuse area benefit from the long-awaited Interstate 81 viaduct removal and other infrastructure projects in Central New York. The initiative will seek to connect workers to training opportunities and to good-paying short-term and long-term infrastructure jobs in and around Syracuse. Working with organized labor and other job training organizations, the Labor Department will host job fairs and conduct extensive marketing and outreach to recruit unemployed and underemployed workers for area infrastructure projects.

"The I-81 project represents a historic opportunity to not only improve mobility in and around the City of Syracuse, but to also reconnect neighborhoods and provide an economic shot in the arm to the entire region," the Governor said. "The innovative 'Workforce Forward: Syracuse' initiative will help ensure that those who live in the region reap the benefits of this important project and that the economic opportunities generated by this and other infrastructure projects stay close to home."

The "Workforce Forward: Syracuse" initiative will build upon the State's existing relationships with the local workforce development board, CNY Works, and other regional training providers, including labor unions, BOCES and local colleges and high schools. The Labor Department will also be hiring additional outreach staff and stationing personnel at locations in neighborhoods of highest need, including Jubilee Homes and Southwest Community Center.

Additionally, the Department of Labor, with support from DOT and other partner agencies, will conduct outreach and marketing activities related to regional infrastructure careers.

Beyond the Interstate 81 project, the initiative will also seek to recruit and provide training for workers at other Central New York infrastructure projects, like state Department of Transportation highway projects and other municipal projects. For individuals for whom direct infrastructure or construction work is not desired, Department of Labor staff will help connect them to alternative training and career options.

New York State Department of Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon said, "Job creation is a key piece of Governor's plan to revive and strengthen New York's economy as it recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. The 'Workforce Forward: Syracuse' initiative will create equitable career opportunities, especially for the underrepresented and unemployed, and the Department of Labor stands ready to help connect Central New Yorkers with great jobs in their own backyard."

State Department of Transportation Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez said, "The Interstate 81 project is a generational opportunity to modernize an obsolete transportation network and correct a historic wrong that separated the local community. Thanks to the Governor's investment in this critically important transportation project and workforce initiative, we can begin to invest in economic equity even before shovels go in the ground and ensure that the local workforce benefits from this project."

The \$1.9 billion I-81 viaduct project will enhance vehicle access from the interstate to key destinations within the city, including the downtown business district, hospitals and Syracuse University. The project aims to reverse the classic 1950s planning blunder that separated the heart of the City by providing new opportunities for inclusion and equity afforded by the construction of the Community Grid, which the State Department of Transportation has determined will best meet the objectives of the project.

The Community Grid will provide a boulevard-like setting that will support safe and ADA accessible pedestrian and bicycle amenities throughout the project. It will relieve existing traffic congestion issues on I-81, the Harrison Street/Adams Street interchange and Almond Street, by constructing a Business Loop 81 along Almond Street to improve connections to downtown and other business districts, effectively disbursing traffic at controlled intersections throughout the City.

The State Department of Transportation has been working with the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration to finalize the draft Environmental Impact Statement for the transformative project and is on schedule to release the DEIS for public comment and to conduct a public hearing later this summer. After federal concurrence is achieved, the project will break ground in 2022.

Phase 1 of the project includes work on the northern and southern sections of Business Loop 81, work on I-690 over Crouse and Irving Avenues, and the conversion of I-481 to I-81 including a number of road and bridge projects along the corridor.

For more information on the project, please visit <https://www.dot.ny.gov/i81opportunities>  
Senator John W. Mannion said, "Replacing I-81 is a once in a generation opportunity for Central New York. Given the highway's troubled history of dividing our communities, as much of the work as is feasibility possible should be done by local labor and the Central New York workforce. 'Workforce Forward: Syracuse' is an important step in connecting job seekers with the skills and opportunities they need to contribute to, and benefit from, the work to remove and replace I81 and other important infrastructure projects."

Senator Rachel May said, "The I-81 project will be one of the biggest and longest infrastructure projects in Central New York. We must make sure that as much of the money as possible stays with the City of Syracuse and its residents. By making local workforce training a priority, we are re-investing in our community and ensuring that many of the people who have been negatively impacted by the presence of this highway can reap the benefits of high-quality jobs."

Assembly Member Al Stirpe said, "I've argued for a long time that the Interstate 81 viaduct removal project would be a catalyst for economic growth for our region. That begins by making certain local workers are involved in bringing these infrastructure investments to life. This workforce participation initiative will do exactly that and will help bring good-paying jobs to traditionally underserved communities."

Assembly Member William Magnarelli said, "As I have stated on several occasions we would be working in any way possible to help with the I81 project. Preparing the local workforce to participate in these projects is essential to making sure our local workers receive the maximum benefit of this project."

Syracuse Mayor Ben Walsh said, "With investment in our local workforce, we can make the Interstate 81 project transformational for more than transportation. It can change lives for people in the City by launching new stable careers in construction and other fields related to this huge project. 'Workforce Forward: Syracuse' will accelerate what the City, the County and community partners have been doing to ready for the I-81 project. It is great news for Syracuse Build, our program to prepare city residents for construction industry jobs. Syracuse Build, working with local labor and workforce partners, has a class of students training now for apprenticeships in the trades. The Department of Labor and Department of Transportation have been active partners in our Interstate 81 Jobs Big Table program to advocate for local hiring and ensure city residents get the training and skills they need to fill the jobs that will become available. I thank the Governor, Commissioner Reardon, Commissioner Dominguez and their teams for their support."