

May 7, 2013

Motion Made By Mrs. Rapp

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

MEMORIALIZING THE INTENT OF THIS LEGISLATURE REGARDING THE NEED TO  
MAINTAIN THE EXISTING ALIGNMENT OF INTERSTATE 81 THROUGH SYRACUSE

WHEREAS, for the last 50 years, Interstate Route 81 has served as a vital backbone for the economy of the Central New York region, connecting commuters, businesses, tourists, other visitors, and through-travelers alike; and

WHEREAS, among its important functions, I-81 provides vital access to downtown Syracuse, all of our hospitals, Syracuse University, Destiny USA and all of the residents and businesses clustered along its route; and

WHEREAS, although there are a variety of ways to deal with I-81's aging infrastructure, the existing "Interstate" function and designation must be preserved, because any solution which would remove I-81's vital function from its present alignment would irreparably cripple the regional economy and corresponding employment that has grown up around the highway network; and

WHEREAS, the future of I-81 presents one of the greatest planning decisions to face New York State in decades and the outcome will impact our region for the next 100 years; and

WHEREAS, quality of life is important to residents of Onondaga County, and few, if any, major cities offer the range of opportunities for our citizens and allow them the convenience to access those assets in 20 minutes or less; and

WHEREAS, the freedom to commute between work, home and leisure activities without fighting the gridlock of traffic is a major advantage to living in Central New York, and it is illogical and contrary to the best interests of our citizens to compromise one of our finest assets; and

WHEREAS, we have spent decades promoting Greater Syracuse as a destination for sports, medicine, the arts, education, recreation, shopping and commerce, and denigrating easy access to those destinations now would be unthinkable and counter-productive; and

WHEREAS, citizens require easy and quick access to emergency medical services; first-responders require expeditious routes for the public's safety and well-being, businesses need efficient routes for commercial transport and convenient access to customers; and

WHEREAS, many of our communities and businesses have grown-up because of I-81's function and alignment, it is imperative that we do not create new problems in an attempt to solve an existing problem, further, it is critical that the selected solution does not burden the taxpayers with unintended and costly consequences; and

WHEREAS, in 1947, when the decision was made to build I-81 through Syracuse it was concluded, "Syracuse is a city on the rise. The gridlock of traffic that now congests its' core is a major factor in restricting future growth", and it is important that we learn from the past and not repeat our mistakes; and

WHEREAS, I-81 and the New York Thruway are the economic lifeblood of our community, and cutting off one of our major arteries now would jeopardize an already fragile business climate; and

WHEREAS, it is the sense of this Legislature that any decision reached by the NYS DOT should satisfy function first, as form can and will naturally follow, and should be closely tailored to satisfy that function; and

WHEREAS, we support the creation of a new and welcoming entrance to Syracuse, and the integration of the hospitals and university areas with the rest of downtown, we believe it must not be accomplished by compromising one the most significant advantages of living, working, doing business and visiting Onondaga County; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Onondaga County Legislature hereby rejects the concept of replacing I-81 with a boulevard that halts traffic flow with a series of traffic lights; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that this Legislature memorializes its determination that the existing Interstate 81 alignment through Syracuse and Central New York must remain and its function and designation as an interstate highway must not be removed or impaired; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Clerk of this Legislature is hereby directed to cause a copy of this resolution to be transmitted to the New York State Department of Transportation, to the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council, and to the various legislative members representing Onondaga County at the state level.