

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

[4910-22-P]

Federal Highway Administration

**Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, Onondaga County,
New York**

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: The FHWA, in coordination with the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), is issuing this Notice of Intent (NOI) to solicit comments and advise the public, agencies, and stakeholders that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared for the proposed Central New York Forward Project (the Project) located in the Towns of Cicero and Clay, Onondaga County, New York. The Project is located within the limits of NYS Route 31 between Oswego Road (County Road 57) and South Bay Road (County Road 208); US Route 11 between Mud Mill Road (County Road 17) and Factory Street; Interstate 81 (I-81) between the Bartell Road Interchange and the I-81 Exit 96/Business Loop (BL-81) Interchange; and NYS Route 481 between its interchange with NYS Route 31 and US Route 11. The purpose of the Project is to address existing and reasonably foreseeable transportation needs, including multimodal, within the project limits on NYS Route 31, on US Route 11, and at the interchanges of NYS Route 31 with NYS Route 481 and Interstate 81. This NOI should be reviewed together with the NOI Additional Project Information document, which contains important details about the proposed project and compliments the information in this NOI. Persons and agencies who may be interested in or affected by the proposed project

are encouraged to comment on the information in this NOI and the NOI Additional Project Information document. All comments received in response to this NOI will be considered and any information presented herein may be revised in consideration of the comments.

DATES: Publication of this NOI initiates a public comment period. Comments on this NOI and the NOI Additional Project Information document are to be received through the methods below by August 14, 2026.

ADDRESSES: This NOI and the NOI Additional Project Information document are also available on the project website located at www.cnyforward.com. The NOI Additional Project Information document will be mailed upon request. Interested parties are invited to submit comments by any of the following methods:

- For access to the documents, go to the project website located at www.cnyforward.com. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.
- *Mail:* Federal Highway Administration, New York Division, Attention: Central New York Forward (PIN 3807.95), Leo W. O'Brien Federal Building, 11A Clinton Avenue, Suite 719, Albany, New York 12207.
- *Mail:* New York State Department of Transportation, Region 3, Attention: Central New York Forward Project Team (PIN 3807.95), State Office Building, 333 E. Washington Street, Syracuse, NY 13202.
- *Email:* [cnyforward@dot.ny.gov]

A summary of the comments received during the comment period will be included in the Draft EIS (DEIS).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Richard J. Marquis, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, New York Division, Leo W. O'Brien Federal Building, 11A Clinton Avenue, Room 952, Albany, NY 12207, Telephone: (518) 431-4127, Email: Rick.Marquis@dot.gov; or Tim Talbot, Project Manager, New York State Department of Transportation, Region 3, State Office Building, 333 E. Washington Street, Syracuse, NY 13202, Telephone: (315) 428-4347, Email: Timothy.Talbot@dot.ny.gov.

Interested persons can also be added to the project mailing list by sending a request to the Central New York Forward project email address referenced above.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA and NYSDOT are committed to public involvement for this study. The FHWA, as Federal lead agency, and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), as joint lead agency and project sponsor, are preparing an EIS for the Central New York Forward Project located in Onondaga County, New York, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) [42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*] and the FHWA *Environmental Impact and Related Procedures* (23 CFR part 771). The Project is classified under NEPA as an action that requires an EIS. The Project is also classified as a State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) non-Type II action under 17 NYCRR Part 15. To ensure that a full range of issues are addressed in the EIS and potential issues are identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. The NOI Additional Project Information document provides additional details on the Purpose and Need for the proposed action, alternatives considered, and expected impacts on the human

environment. The FHWA requests identification of potential alternatives, information, and analyses relevant to the proposed action. The purpose of this request is to bring relevant comments, information, and analyses to the FHWA's attention, as early in the process as possible, to enable the agency to make maximum use of this information in decision making. All public comments received in response to this NOI will be considered, and changes may be made as appropriate.

1. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of the Project is to address existing and reasonably foreseeable transportation needs, including multimodal, within the project limits on NYS Route 31, on U.S. Route 11, and at the interchanges of NYS Route 31 with NYS Route 481 and I-81. The objectives of the Project are to improve traffic operations and safety to accommodate and address potential traffic growth associated with planned economic development/land use changes; reduce commercial truck traffic on local residential streets and improve accommodations for truck traffic on the state highway system within the project limits; improve multimodal transportation features for public transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists within the project limits; and address the aging bridge infrastructure within the project limits. Detailed project need may be reviewed in the NOI Additional Project Information document available on the project website as noted in the ADDRESSES section. Comments on the Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action are welcomed during the comment period on this NOI. The Purpose and Need may be revised based on consideration of public and agency comments received during the comment period for this NOI and during the scoping process for the DEIS.

2. Preliminary Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives the Environmental Impact Statement Will Consider

The range of reasonable alternatives for detailed study in the EIS is currently being evaluated and will be refined in consideration of agency and public comments received during the comment period on this NOI. In addition to the No Action (No Build) Alternative, NYSDOT has developed three potential alternatives (or design concepts) for the Project, based on a combination of various design elements developed to address one or more of the identified project needs within the project limits. A preliminary description of these potential alternatives is provided below. Additional information on each design element and the proposed potential alternatives are included in the NOI Additional Project Information document available for review on the project website, as noted in the ADDRESSES section.

The No Action (No Build) Alternative, which assumes no improvements other than those already programmed for construction and routine maintenance, will be carried forward for study in the DEIS as a baseline for comparison to the Build Alternative(s).

Concept 1 incorporates enhancements in multimodal accommodations; operational improvements to existing interchanges and roadways; and capacity upgrades along NYS Route 31 and US Route 11.

Concept 2 incorporates enhancements in multimodal accommodations; operational improvements to existing bridge infrastructure and roadways; capacity upgrades along US Route 11; and improved access between NYS Route 481 and Micron.

Concept 3 incorporates enhancements in multimodal accommodations; operational improvements to existing bridge infrastructure and roadways; capacity upgrades along NYS Route 31 and US Route 11; and improved access between NYS Route 481 and Micron.

The alternatives may be revised based on the consideration of public and agency comments. The range of reasonable alternatives to be carried forward and documented in the DEIS will be finalized after consideration of comments received during the comment period on this NOI and after conclusion of the scoping process. Comments on the range of alternatives are welcomed during the comment period on this NOI.

3. Brief Summary of Expected Impacts

The FHWA and NYSDOT have initiated data collection and agency coordination to identify the types of environmental, cultural, and socio-economic resources present in the project area and those likely to be impacted. Based on preliminary review of existing conditions within and in proximity to the project limits, the implementation of the Project could result in effects to the following:

- **Regional and local economies:** Residential, Parks/Open Space, Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial land uses exist within the project limits and serve as employment and commerce centers that are important to both the regional and local economies in the vicinity of the Project. An assessment of the Project's potential effects on regional and local economies will be conducted, as described in Section 7 of the NOI Additional Project Information document.

- **Social effects:** Conditions will be reviewed by analyzing key indicators such as housing stability, access to schools and offices, and access to essential services within the study area. Data will be gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau, local government reports, and economic development agencies. An assessment of the Project's potential effects on social conditions will be conducted, as described in Section 7 of the NOI Additional Project Information document.
- **Wetlands and surface waters:** State and Federal regulated freshwater wetlands and waterways are present in the vicinity of the Project, including, but not limited to, Oswego River, Seneca River, Oneida River, Mud Creek, Shaver Creek, and Youngs Creek. A surface water and wetland delineation will be conducted to identify all state-regulated wetlands and Waters of the U.S. within and adjacent to the project limits. An assessment of the Project's potential effects on wetlands and surface waters will be conducted, as described in Section 7 of the NOI Additional Project Information document.
- **Floodplains:** Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Map Service data show the presence of Zone AE floodplains south of the I-81/NYS Route 31 interchange. Zone AE is part of FEMA's Special Flood Hazard Area. These areas have a 1% chance of flooding in any given year. An evaluation of potential floodplain effects will be conducted, as described in Section 7 of the NOI Additional Project Information document.
- **Endangered and threatened species:** Federally and State-listed endangered and/or threatened species have the potential to occur within the vicinity of the

Project. Review of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system preliminarily identified the following threatened, endangered, and/or candidate species as having the potential to occur in the vicinity of the Project: Indiana bat; northern long-eared bat; tricolored bat; eastern massasauga, and monarch butterfly. A review of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Environmental Resource Mapper and Environmental Assessment Form Mapper database identified additional State-listed threatened and/or endangered species as having the potential to occur in the vicinity of the Project. An assessment of the Project's potential effects on threatened and endangered species will be conducted, as described in Section 7 of the NOI Additional Project Information document.

- **Historic properties:** A preliminary review of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP) Cultural Resource Information System (CRIS) identified archaeological buffer areas within or immediately adjacent to the project limits as well as eligible buildings adjacent to the project limits. An Area of Potential Effects (APE) will be established for the Project, and an assessment will be conducted to identify the potential for effects on historic properties and archeological sensitive areas, as described in Section 7 of the NOI Additional Project Information document.
- **Visual resources:** A Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) will be conducted as part of the EIS to evaluate how the proposed transportation improvements would

affect the visual environment. The methodology for conducting the VIA is outlined in Section 7 of the NOI Additional Project Information document.

- **Air quality:** Onondaga County is classified as a maintenance area for carbon monoxide (CO) as of September 29, 1993. Onondaga County is classified as “attainment” for all other National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). An assessment of the Project’s potential effects on air quality will be conducted, as described in Section 7 of the NOI Additional Project Information document.
- **Traffic noise:** Noise sensitive receptors, such as residences, schools, medical facilities, daycare centers, hotels, and trails, are present within the vicinity of the Project. An assessment of the Project’s potential effects on traffic noise will be conducted, as described in Section 7 of the NOI Additional Project Information document.
- **Construction effects:** Construction of the Project has the potential to affect noise, air quality, traffic and transportation, local and regional economies, water quality, and other environmental resources. Construction effects would be temporary and would cease with the completion of construction. An assessment of the Project’s potential construction-related effects will be conducted, as described in Section 7 of the NOI Additional Project Information document.

The analyses and evaluations conducted for the EIS will identify the expected effects; whether the anticipated effects would be adverse; and mitigation measures for adverse effects. Evaluations under Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966, 23 CFR part 774, and Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation

Fund Act of 1965, 54 U.S.C. 200302, will be prepared, and consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 54 U.S.C. 300101-307108, will be undertaken concurrently with the environmental review process. Comments on the potential impacts to be assessed in the DEIS are welcomed during the comment period on this NOI. The identification of impacts for analysis in the DEIS may be revised due to the consideration of public comments.

4. Anticipated Permits and Other Authorizations

Anticipated Federal and State permits and authorizations for the Central New York Forward Project include:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. 1344, for construction in the project area and potential impacts to Waters of the United States;
- USFWS consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), 16 U.S.C. 1536, for potential impacts to federally-listed threatened and/or endangered species;
- NYSDEC Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC) for potential impacts to water quality resulting from discharge into waters due to construction in the project area; as well as any other relevant New York State permits.

The USACE, USFWS, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), U.S. Department of the Interior – National Park Service (NPS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), NYSDEC, New York State Department of Agriculture

and Markets (NYSAGM), New York State Department of State (NYSDOS), New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), New York State Parks (NYS Parks), and Empire State Development (ESD) were invited to participate as Cooperating Agencies for the Project.

Invited Participating Agencies include U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) CHIPS Office, Onondaga County, Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency (OCIDA), Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (Centro), Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC), Town of Cicero, Town of Clay, Oneida Indian Nation, and Onondaga Nation.

Coordination with Cooperating and Participating Agencies has begun as part of the pre-NOI scoping process and will continue throughout the environmental review process. The draft Project Purpose and Need and draft Permitting Timetable were distributed to the Cooperating Agencies on [January 5, 2026], for review and concurrence. The Joint Agency Coordination Plan and Public Involvement Plan were distributed to the Cooperating Agencies for review on [January 5, 2026]. Refer to the NOI Additional Project Information document for additional information on coordination with Cooperating and Participating Agencies.

5. Schedule for the Decision-Making Process

The Project schedule will comply with 23 CFR 771.138(a)(1)(i), which requires that EISs be completed within 2 years (from the date of publication of the NOI to the date of issuance of the Record of Decision [ROD]), and 23 USC 139(d)(10), which requires that all authorization decisions necessary be completed by not later than 90 days after the

date of the issuance of the ROD, in cooperation with the FHWA. A current draft of the Joint Agency Coordination Plan and Public Involvement Plan and project schedule are included in the NOI Additional Project Information document, which is available for review on the project website as noted in the ADDRESSES section.

The anticipated project schedule is outlined below:

- Public Scoping Meeting (July 2026)
- Project Scoping Report Publication (April 2027)
- Notice of Availability of the DEIS (November 2027)
- Public Hearing (December 2027)
- DEIS Comment Period (begins with the Notice of Availability of the DEIS)
(November – December 2027)
- Issue Final EIS (FEIS) and ROD (July 2028)
- Issue all Project Permits and Authorization Decisions (if a Build Alternative is selected) (October 2028)

6. Description of the Public Scoping Process, Including Scoping Meetings

Scoping is an early and open process to determine the scope of issues for analysis in an EIS, including identifying the significant issues and eliminating from further study non-significant issues. During the scoping process, FHWA and NYSDOT will determine the range of reasonable alternatives to be studied in the DEIS for the Project, in consideration of public and agency input received. Persons and agencies who may be interested in or affected by the proposed project are encouraged to comment on the information in this NOI and the NOI Additional Project Information document during the

comment period. A formal public scoping meeting will be held after publication of the NOI. Advanced notice of the date, time, and location of the public scoping meeting will be provided to the public through the project website and in public notices published in local newspapers, as described in Attachment A of the NOI Additional Project Information document. The intent of this meeting is to provide information and gather input on the Project during this early phase of the decision-making process. Interested parties will have the opportunity to submit formal comments at the meeting.

As described in the ADDRESSES section, the NOI Additional Project Information document is located on the project website. The NOI Additional Project Information document includes the complete Draft Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action; Extent of Analysis for Resources; Identification of Cooperating and Participating Agencies; Permitting Timetable; Joint Agency Coordination Plan and Public Involvement Plan; and Project Maps/Figures.

7. Request for Identification of Potential Alternatives, Information, and Analyses Relevant to the Proposed Action

With this Notice, the FHWA and NYSDOT request and encourage State, Tribal, and local government agencies, and the public, to review the NOI and NOI Additional Project Information document and submit comments. Specifically, agencies and the public are asked to identify and submit potential alternatives for consideration and information, such as anticipated significant issues or environmental impacts and analyses relevant to the proposed action, for consideration by the Lead and Cooperating Agencies in developing the DEIS. Any information presented herein, including the Purpose and

Need, proposed potential alternatives and identification of impacts may be revised after consideration of the comments. The purpose of this request is to bring relevant comments, information, and analyses to the attention of FHWA as early in the process as possible to enable FHWA to make maximum use of this information in decision making. Comments must be received by August 14, 2026. Comments or questions concerning this proposed action, including comments relative to potential alternatives, information and analyses, should be directed to the FHWA and NYSDOT at the addresses provided in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section of this notice.

Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*; 23 CFR part 771.

Issued on:

Richard J. Marquis
Division Administrator
Albany, NY