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Message from Chancellor Syverud to Students, Faculty and Staff

Kent Syverud
Syracuse University

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April 19, 2019

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff:

For many years now, the future of Interstate 81 has been one of the most discussed and debated topics within the City of Syracuse, and throughout Central New York. This is because the I-81 replacement decision represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to fundamentally transform the physical infrastructure that connects people and institutions, within and across our community.

To date, Syracuse University has not taken a formal position related to a specific I-81 replacement option. We were reluctant to endorse a specific replacement option because efforts to study and assess the implications of the various options—by New York State and numerous other stakeholder groups—were still in progress. Much of that work is now complete.

Over the past year, I have engaged with city, county, state, business and community leaders related to the myriad of factors that could potentially inform Syracuse University's position on the future of I-81. Further, I have solicited and received thoughtful input on this complex issue from faculty, staff and students representing the Syracuse University community.

After careful consideration of the options, I believe we have met our obligation to rigorously investigate and evaluate the social, economic and cultural implications associated with each of the potential I-81 replacement options. Given what we have learned through this process, it is now appropriate for Syracuse University to publicly endorse the Community Grid as our preferred option to replace the existing I-81 viaduct.

It is my view that the Community Grid option most strongly aligns with the attributes and outcomes that Syracuse University previously endorsed as central to any I-81 replacement option. These critical attributes include multiple access points to the highway and to University Hill; a robust connection between University Hill and downtown; enhanced public transportation and public space options; environmental and financial sustainability; and minimal disruption to housing, businesses and jobs, both during and after construction. The Community Grid is best positioned to drive meaningful transformation across our community, and in the heart of our City.

I thank all members of the Syracuse University and broader Central New York communities who shared their perspectives with me, as the University carefully assessed this complex issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kent Syverud". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'K' and a long, trailing flourish at the end.

Chancellor Kent Syverud