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“The I-81 Project: Then and Now” – A Documentary Tracing Interstate 81’s History and Potential Future in Syracuse

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“The I-81 Project: Then and Now” – A Documentary Tracing Interstate 81’s History and Potential Future in Syracuse

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2015

Honors Capstone Project in Broadcast Journalism

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Date: April 22, 2015

Abstract

“The I-81 Project: Then and Now” is a documentary regarding the history of Interstate 81 in Syracuse and the ongoing debate regarding the highway’s future in the city. Interstate 81 was built on top of the 15th ward, a neighborhood that was mostly demolished around the time the highway’s bridges were first built in the 1960s. Today, as these bridges reach the age of 50, the New York State Department of Transportation has decided that it is time to replace them. However, several different options are on the table for the new I-81 in Syracuse, including a boulevard replacing the bridges and turning Interstate 481 into the new I-81, building a tunnel underground near the location of the current bridges, constructing a depressed highway along the current viaduct, and rebuilding the bridges, which would need to be wider due to federal regulations. However, there are many factors to consider with each option, and the community remains divided as city residents, area suburbs, elected officials, businesses, and other groups hold varying opinions. Ultimately, there are so many competing interests, so the final decision most likely will not satisfy everyone. This is also due to the highway’s widespread impact on thousands of residents in Central New York as well as travelers through the region.

The documentary can be viewed here: <http://youtu.be/tcr26UJEh8>

A corresponding website, including bonus scenes and more information, can be found here: <https://kaeskow.expressions.syr.edu/i81project/>

Executive Summary

“The I-81 Project: Then and Now” is a 37-minute documentary examining the ongoing discussion regarding the fate of Interstate 81 in Syracuse. As the highway’s bridges running through the city of Syracuse turn 50 years old, the New York State Department of Transportation has determined that the bridges need to be replaced. However, replacing the current bridges with new bridges is only one option; there are three other main alternatives being discussed by the DOT and other elected officials. These include building a tunnel to replace the bridges, building a depressed highway to replace the bridges, and eliminating the viaduct through Syracuse by knocking down the bridges and replacing them with a street-level boulevard. For this documentary, I started telling the story of the highway where it all began, with the demolition of the city’s 15th ward in the 1950s and 1960s to make room for the then brand-new Interstate 81. I interviewed two former residents of the 15th ward to tell their story about what it was like to grow up there and later watch their neighborhood disappear.

I also made sure I included an overview of all the options being considered at this time for the highway’s future. This includes talking to supporters and opponents of each of the different options to ensure that each side of the issue is being represented fairly. This is extremely important for someone in my position as a journalist. In addition, I also wanted to include the business component to the story, seeing how the highway has impacted businesses in the city and the suburbs. Furthermore, I wanted to bring the story full-circle by discussing how the residents near the highway today might be affected.

In addition to the documentary, I have created a Wordpress website that goes along with the film. It features more information about the film and the I-81 project as well as bonus scenes

from the documentary. This is a great way for me to share perspectives and thoughts I could not include due to time constraints.

I wanted to make sure I included as many sides of the story surrounding Interstate 81 as possible. There are so many different factors to consider, and this documentary proves that even among groups of people, there is usually not a consistent view. Because the community is so divided on this issue, there are so many different perspectives that have to be taken into account when covering this story.

Ultimately, the state DOT has still not arrived at a final decision for the highway's future, even though 2017 is less than two years away. There are so many competing interests on this issue, and no matter what option is chosen, it will most likely be impossible to meet everyone's needs. While the DOT contemplates these four options, other members of the community have also stepped up and suggested new alternatives of their own, showing no end in the near future to this discussion that has gone on for several years.

This is such an important issue because Interstate 81 touches thousands of people each day in Central New York. Whether it's travelers, commuters, store customers, or city residents, the highway is used by thousands of people each day, and whatever option is chosen for the highway will have a widespread effect on the region. This documentary is meant to help the public gain a better understanding of how I-81 came to be and how it might look several years from now. Many people have opinions on I-81 but may or may not know about all sides of the issue. This documentary is meant to bring those different components of the issue together.

The documentary can be viewed here: <http://youtu.be/tcr26UJEh8>

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Reflective Essay

As a broadcast journalism student with a particular career interest in long-form storytelling, I knew I wanted to create a documentary to tell a story that is not typically discussed in-depth and could be used to educate the community and help them become more informed regarding a particular issue. I wanted to combine this with two of my biggest interests, which are also my minors: political science and history. As a person who enjoys current events, I wanted to make sure I chose a topic that is central to the news in Syracuse, since I would be working on the project mostly at Syracuse University and would therefore need to interview several different people in and around the city. And I definitely wanted to choose a topic I would enjoy focusing on – after all, I knew I would be working as a one-man-band reporter, producing, shooting, and editing the documentary all by myself.

I chose to focus on the uncertain future of Interstate 81 in Syracuse, a very important topic in Central New York news today. The New York State Department of Transportation claims the highway's bridges in the city of Syracuse are reaching the end of their lifespan in 2017, when they will turn 50 years old. Therefore, something needs to be done about that portion of the highway, and many different options are on the table. The four main options are currently rebuilding the bridges, making Interstate 481 the new I-81 and replacing the bridges with a boulevard at ground level, replacing the bridges with a tunnel in the same area for Interstate 81, and building a depressed highway to replace the bridges of I-81, which is similar to the highway on the city's North Side. Each option has various pros and cons, and different groups of people are affected in different ways based on which of the alternatives would be implemented. Since there are so many different sides to this story, I felt it would be a great topic to tell a long-form narrative.

I also chose this topic because it is such an important issue to the community, and the discussion surrounding what to do with Interstate 81 has gone on in Central New York for several years. According to Gene Cilento, a state DOT spokesman who I interviewed for this documentary, 80,000 vehicles travel on the I-81 viaduct through downtown Syracuse each day, and about 100,000 travel on the highway north of Interstate 690. This decision affects a wide scope of people, and arguably, almost everyone in the community is touched by I-81 in some sort of way. Even as a student who has only lived in Syracuse for eight months of the year, I-81 has helped me get to different stories I need to cover around the city for my broadcast journalism classes and has even been part of the route to and from my house in New Jersey. For many, it is a mode of transportation to and from work in Syracuse, and for others it's a way of continuing on the highway past the city very quickly. Therefore, the highway's future does not only affect city residents, but also suburban residents and drivers visiting from anywhere in the country. I-81's reach in and around Syracuse is impossible to calculate as its drivers are from so many different backgrounds and use the highway for an endless number of purposes.

Since there are so many angles of this story to consider, I knew had to begin my project with extensive research into the topic. I began my research in November 2013, so I have been working on the entire project for roughly 18 months. I had to learn about who the key players are in helping to decide I-81's fate and also find some regular people who have been impacted by this highway. I simply began my search by reading many old articles from *The Post-Standard*, Syracuse's local newspaper, since the paper has followed the story very closely today and would likely have the best documentation for the ongoing discussion about I-81. This is where I found out about the beginnings of the I-81 discussion and how around 2001, Van Robinson was one of the first people to raise concerns about the highway and propose tearing it down in Syracuse. In

addition, I learned through my research that the I-81 bridges were built over a neighborhood in Syracuse, the city's 15th ward. My capstone advisor, Hub Brown, urged me to find people who grew up in the 15th ward and were around when the neighborhood was cleared to accommodate the new highway. I found several former 15th ward residents in *The Post-Standard* who were very active in telling others about the neighborhood's history and keeping their community alive through reunions and other activities. I was able to get in touch with two of them, Milton Fields and Marshall Nelson, who were raised in the 15th ward and left around the time of the ward's demolition. Both men, who are now in their late 70s, each spoke with me for an hour and were the first two subjects I have interviewed. They opened my eyes to a rich history behind the portion of the city thousands drive over every day, and it has been this portion of the project that was my favorite to complete.

From this point, I followed a sequential order in my mind about how I wanted to tell the story of the 15th ward and Interstate 81. Next, I wanted to reach out to an expert who knew more about the highway's construction in Syracuse during the 1960s. Dennis Connors, a historian at the Onondaga Historical Association, provided insight into why the highway was built, its original intention to benefit downtown Syracuse rather than hurt it, and the history behind the 15th ward and what it was like to live there. It was really helpful to speak with him as he gave context to Fields's and Nelson's experiences during the time the highway was built.

Next, I wanted to fast-forward to the present day and focus on today's discussion going on regarding the future of I-81 in Syracuse. First, I wanted to make sure I spoke with Van Robinson, the president of the city's Common Council. As I mentioned earlier, through my research, I learned that Robinson was one of the first people to publicly raise concerns about the highway and propose to the community the idea of tearing down its viaduct in and around the

downtown district. In addition, I wanted to interview someone who supports each of the four major options being presented to give each side of my discussion a voice in my documentary. Not only does this make the most sense when presenting an overview like this of the community's discussion, but also it is the most journalistically ethical and right thing to do. If each side was not represented, that would taint my credibility as a journalist covering this story as someone who might favor one option over another by only focusing on one or two of the main options being discussed. Van Robinson is a big supporter of the boulevard option, which he discusses during his interview. I also spoke with Jason Sperry, a geotechnical engineer who was featured in *The Post-Standard* as one of the engineers who proposed a tunnel option to the state Department of Transportation. State Senator John DeFrancisco proposed the depressed highway option and is also supporter of keeping the viaduct through the city in any form, even as new bridges, so I interviewed him as well. Finally, to get a better overall perspective of the discussion going on right now, I spoke with Gene Cilento from the New York State Department of Transportation, which is the organization overseeing the overall project and will make the decision regarding the highway's fate. He talked about how the DOT has spoken to members of the community to get feedback, explained the reasoning behind going forward with the project, the main options being considered, and the lack of a structured timeline for making a final decision on the highway's future.

As I began my project interviewing former residents of the 15th ward, I also wanted to interview current residents, who may be the people who will be most impacted by the final decision made regarding the highway. I spoke with Khalid Bey, a Common Councilor who represents those living in the 15th ward today, who explained how his constituents are concerned

about the construction that may occur in the area and whether or not they could be forced to relocate from their current homes.

Also in this neighborhood, University Hill plays a big role in the community; after all, many commuters use the highway to get to and from their work or classes at Syracuse University or Upstate University Hospital. Unfortunately, a member of SU's committee on I-81 who was supposed to speak with me was not able to meet with me for an interview, but I was able to get in touch with Tom Pelis, an administrator at Upstate, who discussed how the highway has impacted the hospital over the years. Pelis also raised the idea of enhancing public transportation as a way to supplement the new I-81 and lessen the traffic that would need the highway, especially if the viaduct disappears throughout the city.

However, I felt one last component of the discussion was missing: the potential impact on area businesses and how the highway has affected them. One outspoken member of the Central New York community regarding I-81 is Mark Nicotra, Salina's town supervisor. He helped found the organization, Save 81, a group of local business owners and political leaders who want the I-81 viaduct to remain running through the city in some capacity. He also provided a perspective of suburban residents' thoughts on the project and how his town could be affected by each of the different options. I also interviewed David Mankiewicz, who has experience working with businesses throughout the region as a senior vice president at CenterState CEO and president of the University Hill Corporation. He spoke about the various interests of businesses, proving that the I-81 project does not have a city-suburban divide; not all businesses in the city are in agreement about what should be done about the highway, and different suburbs have different interests and agendas as to how the new highway could benefit them. Furthermore, Mankiewicz discussed how businesses would be impacted by the construction, no matter which

option is selected. Overall, I felt that including the business perspective allowed my documentary to be more well-rounded and inclusive of the various competing interests surrounding the I-81 project.

I finished shooting my main interviews by mid-September 2014. However, as a broadcast journalism major, I know the news is always changing, and stories need to be updated as time passes and new developments emerge. In January 2015, the Syracuse Common Council came to its official position on the I-81 project, becoming the first governmental entity to fully do so. Therefore, I wanted to make sure this development was included in some form in my documentary. Since I have been studying in New York City for the spring 2015 semester, I visited Syracuse in January to complete some more work on the project, particularly to include this major development. After the meeting, I got to interview Jean Kessner, one of the common councilors who has also helped to lead the discussion on the highway's future as a major supporter of the boulevard option. The Common Council took an official position of supporting the boulevard option, arguing in a press conference that the councilors felt it would be the best option for the city's future. I also included some video of this meeting and press conference in my documentary.

Finally, after completing all of the interviews I wanted to include, I had to shoot my b-roll video, which includes the images of people, places, and things other than the interview subjects themselves. As an aspiring broadcast journalist, I know that just showing one person's face for several minutes without any other video can become quite boring for the interviewer. Also, additional video can help the viewer understand what the interview subject or narrator is talking about. For instance, when I was interviewing Van Robinson, he described his route and where he was going one of the first times he ever drove on I-81 in Syracuse. One of my friends,

Jesse Noll, graciously drove me up and down the highway in a Zipcar as I filmed shots of I-81 as we drove. Therefore, I was able to show the viewer the route Robinson was describing, allowing whoever is watching to more easily grasp what he is saying. As we always discuss in broadcasting, the viewer is not reading an article that he or she can go back and reread; instead, viewers only get one chance to hear something or see something, so they must be able to understand concepts being discussed very quickly and easily. Besides the driving shots, I drove to different businesses and streets discussed in the documentary, such as the hotels in Salina that are worried about Interstate 481 becoming the new I-81. Some of the driving shots came out shaky since it is difficult to maneuver a large camera in a moving car, so I had to select shots during the edit process very carefully. I knew this would be one obstacle I would face, so I also took some stationary shots of the highway from University Hill and near the OnCenter to show the bridges from afar as well as near and beneath the bridges to show what it is like to walk through that area, a perspective that many viewers have not seen.

While shooting b-roll, I can get more creative than when I have to shoot interviews. For interviews, there is a particular way to show an interview subject that is easiest on the viewers' eyes and looks best in the frame. However, b-roll opens many more doors, such as when I filmed the highway from the perspective of a driving car. Another example of this is when I like to put the camera on the ground, often to show a different perspective of the streets. This worked really well underneath the I-81 bridges on Adams Street as well as near the OnCenter and the Everson Museum of Art to give viewers a better idea of what the 15th ward looks like today. Furthermore, using the zoom, panning the camera – or moving the shot from side to side, and adjusting the focus are also great ways to highlight multiple objects, people, and/or places during one shot of video, linking two ideas together. Finally, using online databases, I gathered files of old

newspaper articles and photos of the 15th ward from the 1950s and 1960s to show what life was like in this neighborhood and the rest of the city during a time I could not obtain video of myself, which is when Marshall Nelson and Milton Fields were growing up in the 15th ward, and I-81 was first being constructed through the city.

With that being said, the editing process allowed me to be most creative as I began to see my documentary take its final form, deciding what to include, what to focus on, and what order different sources should appear to tell their portions of the story. My editing of the documentary began in late September 2014; I felt it was easiest to see everything I had filmed and then finally piece it all together. It might get a bit confusing if I started the editing process before most or all of the interviews are finished. After all, one person's sound bite could change the course of the story, and considering all of the people and components of the story you need to include impacts the way the story winds up being told. For instance, you would not want to spend too much time on one segment when more interviews could lead to a new segment being added; I would want to see all of the interviews first and watch what each person said, and then I would decide how much time should be spent on each source and segment topic.

After compiling all of my footage, editing comes the time when I get to decide how I should tell the story of this highway and the people I have spoken with. As I went into the editing process and watched the interviews I conducted, I decided to divide the documentary into different portions based on certain topics, which I called segments. I decided it would be easiest for the viewer to understand the history and current project if I told the story of I-81 in chronological order, beginning with the historical segment featuring Marshall Nelson and Milton Fields, two residents of the 15th ward before I-81 was built. Then, I would give context to the experiences they discuss by including an expert's perspective, which comes from Dennis

Connors at the Onondaga Historical Association. Then, as Connors would continue to provide the reasoning at the time behind why the highway was built where and how it was constructed, Van Robinson would introduce the modern-day debate about what should be done with the highway as it gets older. This makes the most sense as he was one of the main people to introduce this debate to the public in Central New York in the first place. As Robinson describes why he would support knocking down the bridges in favor of a boulevard, with Interstate 481 becoming I-81, Jean Kessner would explain why the Common Council voted to support this option. Then, I would include Gene Cilento from the state DOT to explain all of the alternatives that the government is considering and why the fate of the highway is so important to the community.

This would lead into a presentation of the other alternatives: geotechnical engineer Jason Sperry would explain his proposed plan for a tunnel under Syracuse, and John DeFrancisco would voice his support for keeping the viaduct running through the city in the form of a depressed highway or bridges. Throughout this portion, I included sound bites of Robinson, Sperry, and DeFrancisco explaining the pros and cons of each of these options, sort of in a way that shows them debating each other. This ensures that several different viewpoints are heard regarding each of the four main options being considered. DeFrancisco's concerns about removing the viaduct running through the city would lead into the business segment, with Mark Nicotra, Salina's town supervisor, and David Mankiewicz from CenterState CEO and the University Hill Corporation. Nicotra also discusses his concerns for his town if the viaduct running through the city is removed. Finally, I would bring the documentary full circle by including a segment on the people who arguably are most impacted by the final decision, the city residents who live near I-81's bridges. This includes portions of my interview with Khalid Bey,

the common councilor who represents that area of the city, as well as concerns expressed by Robinson. Finally, to close the documentary, I would return to the two people I started with: Fields and Nelson, who share their thoughts regarding what could be done with the highway going forward. As I chose each source's sound bites and ordered them in ways that would most logically flow and tell a story to help the viewer understand more about the highway, I ran into several artistic decisions I had to make and also faced some obstacles along the way.

One significant artistic decision I made was to allow the interview subjects to tell the story entirely on their own. When I first approached this project, I wanted the documentary to look and feel like a *60 Minutes* story, with a reporter's narration and sound bites from interview subjects that would help tell the story and keep the piece moving with a nice flow. I have grown up watching *60 Minutes* every Sunday with my parents, and as an aspiring broadcast journalist myself, I regard it as one of the highest forms of journalism today in the United States. The correspondents and their producers always know how to tell stories really well and can make any subject interesting through great writing, interesting video, and strong sound bites from interviewees. They are also great at finding the right people to tell their stories. While a documentary of 37 minutes is much longer than a typical *60 Minutes* report, which is typically around 11-12 minutes, I still approached this project as a long-form news reporter most inspired by this television newsmagazine. Long-form reporting is one of my greatest interests for my career in broadcast journalism, and one of my dream jobs would be to work as a correspondent for *60 Minutes*. As an intern this semester for *CBS This Morning: Saturday*, I know that many people at CBS News have a great amount of respect for the staff at *60 Minutes* for producing such incredible journalism and setting the standards high for the rest of the network with each of their reports.

However, after viewing the interviews, I decided to take a slightly different approach. I realized I had so many great sound bites from the people I interviewed, so I decided that the best idea for this topic and documentary would be to let the sources tell the story of the I-81 project and the highway's history entirely on their own. I felt that a reporter narration would break up the flow of the piece quite a bit – in my final documentary, I like how one sound bite easily flows into the next, which continues throughout the documentary. Also, for a report of this length, flow is very important, and pacing is a big factor to consider. Without the reporter track, the sound bites by themselves help maintain a relatively quicker pace. With a report that is 37 minutes long, it can be quite easy for a viewer to get bored and want to watch something else. Therefore, I need to keep the viewers' attention throughout the documentary with compelling sound bites and information to hold their attention until the very end of the piece. This involves keeping the viewer curious as to what happens next and what else is to come, so presenting information in a way that helps them learn also aids in this process.

One way I tried to get a viewer's interest and attention is with my introduction at the beginning. I asked each of my interviewees about when they were last on I-81, where they were headed, and how they regularly use the highway. I got a variety of responses, and so I chose the best ones and included them in a montage at the very beginning of the documentary, even before the title is given. Since it is an introductory montage, I realized that the pacing had to be quick, so I had to choose relatively short sound bites and use only the best ones so that the introduction did not go on too long. At first, I tried to include everyone's responses, but ultimately, this wound up being too long and feeling too slow for the very beginning of the piece. My main goal was to get the point across that the project is a big deal and will have a widespread impact as thousands of Central New Yorkers use I-81 and are impacted by the highway in some way.

As mentioned above, I had to eliminate parts of the introduction for pacing and timing purposes, and one of the biggest challenges I encountered was trying to present so much information and so many viewpoints in what turned out to be a short amount of time. When I was first editing the documentary and selected all of my sound bites, ordering them the way I wanted and creating an initial rough cut, the total length was over an hour. My capstone advisor and I set a goal for time length at 25-30 minutes. I knew I asked each interviewee a widespread selection of questions, and they all provided great insight and lots of great information I could use, but there was just not enough time to include absolutely everything. By the time I was done editing a rough cut screened with my professors, the documentary was 45 minutes in length. I spent a lot of time over the last few weeks figuring out what else to cut, and ultimately, I got the documentary down to 37 minutes long. While this did not meet my goal of 30 minutes, my advisor and I agreed that this length does not need to be a hard time limit, especially since it is not a report being aired as part of a newscast or other program, which would involve strict time limits.

It is always better to have much more content than you need than to be scrambling for interviews or other video to fill up the time of the piece. However, perhaps it may have been a good idea to have a more narrow focus going into the project. For instance, maybe I should have only focused on the history of the 15th ward where the highway was built, or maybe I really did not need to include the segment about businesses in Central New York. However, there are so many different angles to this important issue, it seems difficult to just ignore most of them and still provide for the viewer an in-depth look at the different sides behind the project. Therefore, I believe this may have been an unavoidable problem since the topic involves more than two sides to the story.

Another challenge I faced was not being able to include the University Hill aspect as prominently in my documentary. As already discussed above, it was very challenging for me to include so many different sides of the story in a seemingly short amount of time for this topic. However, I was only able to interview Tom Pelis from Upstate University Hospital; I had scheduled multiple appointments with Dean Michael Speaks after contacting the chancellor's office, which explained that Speaks is a member of SU's I-81 committee. However, Speaks's office canceled appointments with me for an interview multiple times, and eventually, I was coming up against my deadline to make a rough cut of my documentary, so I could no longer schedule an interview with him. However, this happens quite frequently in broadcast journalism, and when a source you need does not want to provide an interview, you have to move ahead with your story somehow. I tried to include Pelis in my documentary, but his voice by itself did not seem to fit anywhere into the flow I described earlier. Therefore, I decided that it would be easiest to simply only include a portion of his interview on a Wordpress site I created corresponding to the documentary. The web is great for broadcast journalism since it allows reporters to include information they could not fit into their television reports. The website I created provides the video of the full documentary plus some bonus scenes I did not get to include in the final product, as well as a description of the film and who was interviewed. With that being said, I truly came to appreciate how not every person you interview for a story will actually be included in the final report, but there is nothing wrong with that, especially since they could be included in a web version of the story if you choose.

Ultimately, there are a few main takeaways I hope viewers of this documentary will come away with. First, I never fully appreciated until now the rich history behind a neighborhood I drive through in Syracuse all the time, located right next to the SU campus. I never realized, for

instance, that most of the African-American population at one time was concentrated in that neighborhood. Furthermore, I hope viewers will appreciate that there are still members of the community today trying to keep the 15th ward's memory alive in Syracuse. While many members of the community have passed on or left the area, there are still residents of the neighborhood from before I-81 who enjoy sharing their stories about their times growing up in the 15th ward.

In addition, I hope viewers appreciate all of the competing interests and many factors to consider for a final decision on this highway to be made. Between residents near the highway, residents in other parts of the city, suburban residents, commuters, various elected officials, travelers through the area, city businesses, suburban businesses, University Hill, downtown Syracuse, and other entities, there are so many different people with a wide variety of perspectives and backgrounds that impact their opinions on what should be done with the highway. I think one of the main things I learned after conducting all of my interviews is that there is very little chance that the state DOT will select an option for I-81's fate that will make everyone happy. With all of these different people, groups, and entities and sides of the issue to consider, there is almost no way there would be an option that practically everyone in Central New York would agree on. Therefore, this does not seem like it will be an easy decision to make. No matter which option is selected, there will be some who are satisfied and others whose needs will not be met, and unfortunately, that just seems like the nature of this kind of a project and its final outcome.

As I worked on my documentary over an 18-month period, it really struck me how few developments there were as I conducted my interviews, especially since the state DOT set 2017 as the year the highway's bridges would reach the end of their useful lifespan. Therefore, I am

sure the viewers will realize, as did I, that it seems the state DOT is nowhere close to making a final decision about what to do with I-81 in Syracuse. They have not really taken any options off the table officially, and as Mark Nicotra discussed in our interview, other members of the community are even trying to suggest new alternatives, just as he mentioned the Access Syracuse Plan. In addition, construction will take several years, so I expect it will be quite a while until we see the new I-81.

In the end, as an aspiring broadcast journalist, my main mission with this documentary is to help members of the Central New York community become better informed about one of the region's most important stories in the news for the long-term. The final decision will have social, economic, and political consequences, and it will have a lasting effect on the area, just as the original I-81 continues to do to this day, long after the disappearance of the 15th ward Milton Fields and Marshall Nelson once knew. However, as someone who follows current events closely, I believe a person should become as informed as possible about a certain topic before forming a final opinion. Therefore, I wanted to use this documentary to present as much information about the I-81 project as possible in one place so that people can find it easily and become more informed about the topic very quickly. In order to make a better-informed decision, local residents may want to consider as many sides to the issue as possible, so I wanted to cover as much as I could within a long-form report that could still hold a viewer's interest. Interstate 81 has helped make Syracuse the city it is today and many area suburbs the towns they are today. Whether those effects have been good or bad is debatable. However, officials seem to be incredibly serious about moving forward with creating a new I-81 in Syracuse, and the final decision will affect thousands of people. While many uncertainties about the project remain, I

hope my documentary leaves viewers with fewer unanswered questions about the issues surrounding Interstate 81.

The documentary can be viewed here: <http://youtu.be/tcr26UJEh8>

A corresponding website, including bonus scenes and more information, can be found here:

<https://kaeskow.expressions.syr.edu/i81project/>

Acknowledgements

Finally, special thanks to all those mentioned above who were interviewed for this project. Also a big thanks to professors Hub Brown and Randy Wenner for their time to critique my project and offer guidance and feedback throughout the process. I could not have completed my first documentary without them.