Rethinking the urban freeway

Options for rebuilding, replacing, altering or otherwise addressing aging freeways
State Smart Transportation Initiative

Practical Solutions to Move America Forward

A network of reform-oriented state DOTs, founded in 2010 and housed at the University of Wisconsin.

- Executive-level Community of Practice
- Technical assistance
- Resource for the transportation community
Today’s Speakers

Billy Fields
Assistant Professor Political Science
Texas State University

Chris McCahill
Senior Associate
State Smart Transportation Initiative

Joan McDonald
Commissioner
New York State Department of Transportation
Rethinking the urban freeway

Detroit I-375
http://bit.ly/1fhJm7d

Rochester
FriscoCali / via Flickr

Akron Innerbelt
Alps Roads
Interstates in New Orleans: From Robert Moses to Livability

Billy Fields
Assistant Professor
Texas State University

Source: Neuman Photographic Collection University of New Orleans
Presentation Overview

- Planning history of corridor
- Building teardown coalitions: preliminary thoughts

Views of Claiborne Avenue 1966 (left) and 1968 (right)

Source: Claiborne Avenue Design Team, 1976³
New Orleans: 1930s

Source: Neuman Photographic Collection University of New Orleans
Moses’ 1946 Arterial Plan for New Orleans

- Goal of Plan: Save the city from decentralization
  Moses: “decentralization- the last thing an old, established city wants unless it contemplates suicide” (Robert Moses, 1946 p. 10).
- Moses sold plan as rational, limited approach: “The trouble with most plans is that they are too grandiose” (Robert Moses, p.11).
- Claiborne Ave widening project included belt of expressways around CBD
“This traffic congestion, in turn, brings about a gradual deterioration of economic productivity, which together with a mixture of all kinds of land uses and the growing obsolescence of many structures in the Central Business District, IS THE PROBLEM!”
(City of NO Planning Commission 1957, p.8).
“The popular understanding of the Claiborne Avenue Freeway is that it was sited through the heart of the black community as a result of preservationists’ victory in the French Quarter Expressway conflict....This historical inaccuracy has helped to foster a perception that preservation victories come at the expense of the black community (Borah 2004)” Fields 2004 p. 113 and 114.
The travel time would be lengthened by two to four minutes during off-peak hours and by three to six minutes during peak hours for most vehicles.

- Port/freight interests key missing piece from coalition
- Gentrification issues challenging

http://www.cnu.org/highways/neworleans
What about the traffic?

Urban freeways in context

Chris McCahill

Photo credit: Bart Everson via Flickr
Average daily traffic

- Before conversion
- During conversion
- After conversion

~50k

Data courtesy of Billings, Garrick, & Lownes (2013)
“Changes in travel patterns due to freeway teardown for three North American case studies.” Urban Design International 18: 165-181
San Francisco: Central Freeway

Average daily traffic

- Before conversion
- During conversion
- After conversion

~90k
San Francisco: Embarcadero
San Francisco: Embarcadero

Average daily traffic
- Before conversion
- During conversion
- After conversion

~100k
After freeway conversion

Volume / Capacity

Freeways
Streets

Milwaukee
San Francisco (Central)
San Francisco (Embarcadero)
Baltimore
Buffalo
Hartford
Indianapolis
Louisville
New Haven
Seattle
Toronto
New Orleans

Freeways
Streets
Lessons & Opportunities

• High capacity roads are magnets for traffic

• Shrinking them and reconnecting urban street networks can have a positive affect

• Important to rethink urban freeways as part of broader transportation plans and policy goals
  – Improving travel options
  – Reclaiming land, adding value, and stitching neighborhoods back together
  – New project approach and stakeholder outreach
State Smart Transportation Initiative Webinar – “Rethinking Urban Freeways” Kosciuszko Bridge Project

New York State Department of Transportation Commissioner Joan McDonald February 20, 2014
State Smart Transportation Initiative Webinar – “Rethinking Urban Freeways” Kosciuszko Bridge Project
Project Location
Project Context

View of Brooklyn

View of Queens
Comprehensive Public Outreach Program/Stakeholders Advisory Committee
Final Design Phase
Design/Build
Full Participation
Unlocking Potential
I-81 Opportunity
THANK YOU!

A recording of this webinar will be on the SSTI web site later today.

A copy of the Rethinking the Urban Freeway report is here: http://bit.ly/1fhrZn8

To find out about future SSTI webinars, subscribe to our newsletter and follow us on Twitter.

www.ssti.us

@SmartTransp