

Addendum To the I-81 Redevelopment Proposal: “Two Boulevards and a Bridge”

Carlo Moneti

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Clarification of Liverpool/Destiny Exit proposal

The “Two Boulevards and a Bridge” proposal included a section describing a simplification of the I-81 Liverpool/Destiny exit (23A) and associated roads. The DOT Scoping Report generously responded to the suggestion. However, DOT appears to have misinterpreted some aspects of the idea.

DOT concluded that the suggested changes reduced the number of effective road lanes from the current 5 to only 2, which is deemed insufficient for the projected traffic. In fact, the idea as envisioned would provide 4 lanes each way, not 2. The original description and graphic failed to state this explicitly. I apologize. As intended, Park St would be upgraded to 4 lanes (2 each way), and Onondaga Lake pkwy cum Genant Blvd would also have 4 lanes (2 each way). So, the change in lanes is from 5 to 4.

The idea presented is only a high-level concept assembled by a non-expert; there are many possible variations that can and should be explored and which would still preserve the benefits of the idea, namely:

1. gross reduction of road length;
2. elimination of bridges, traffic lights, and Stop signs;
3. the ability to actually turn right toward Liverpool;
4. and a more pedestrian, bicycle, and development friendly environment.

Below are two illustrative alternatives to help provide a better understanding of the concept: the original proposal, and a more modest change that still greatly simplifies the roadways.

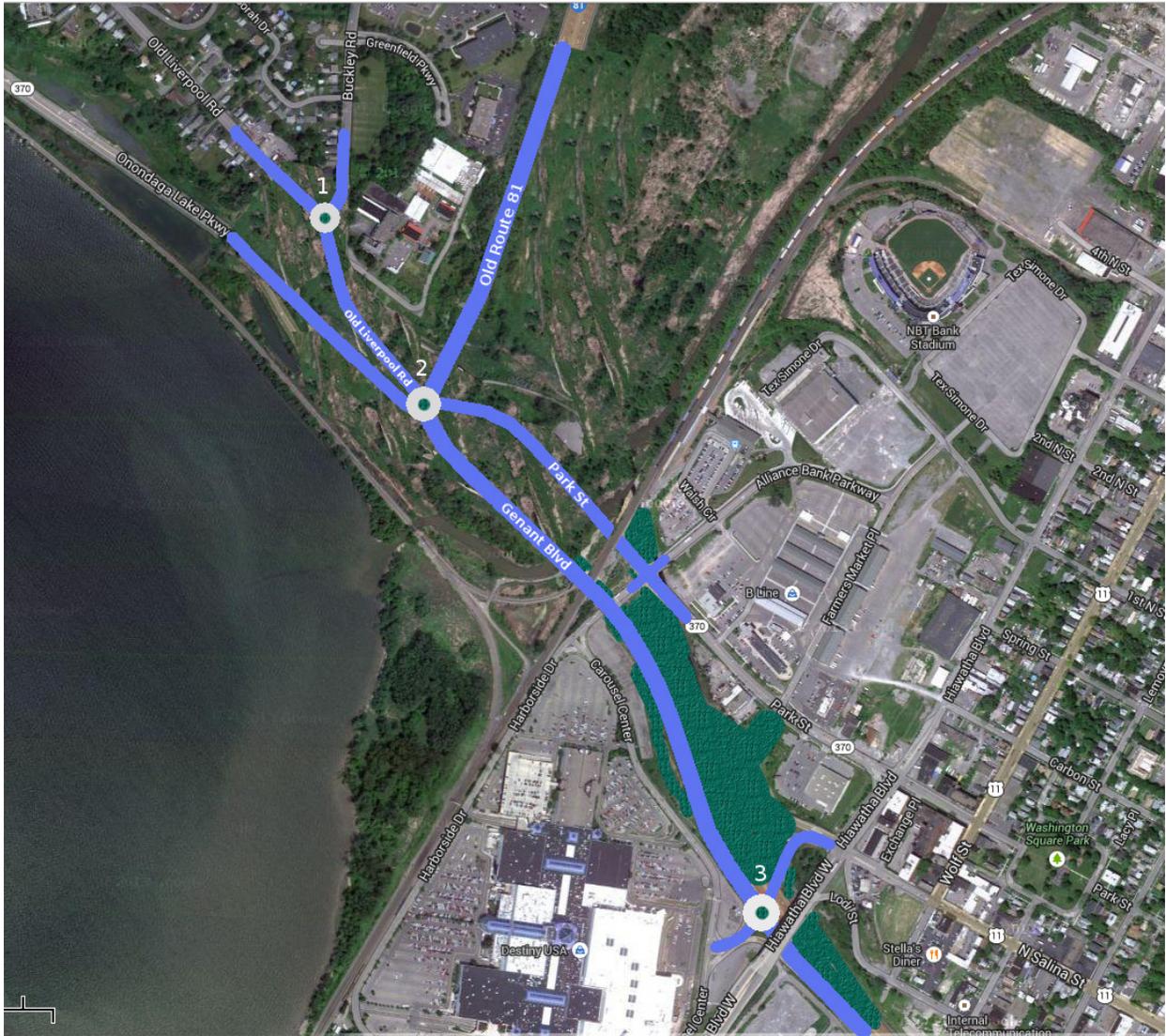


Figure 1: **Original Proposal:** As intended, Park St would be enlarged to 2 lanes each direction; Onondaga Pkwy cum Genant Blvd would have 2 lanes each direction; old route 81 would narrow to 2 lanes each way. Therefore, there are a minimum of 4 lanes southbound and northbound lanes, as opposed to 5 today. This concept may benefit from implementing two roundabouts as shown in Figure 2 (to be determined).

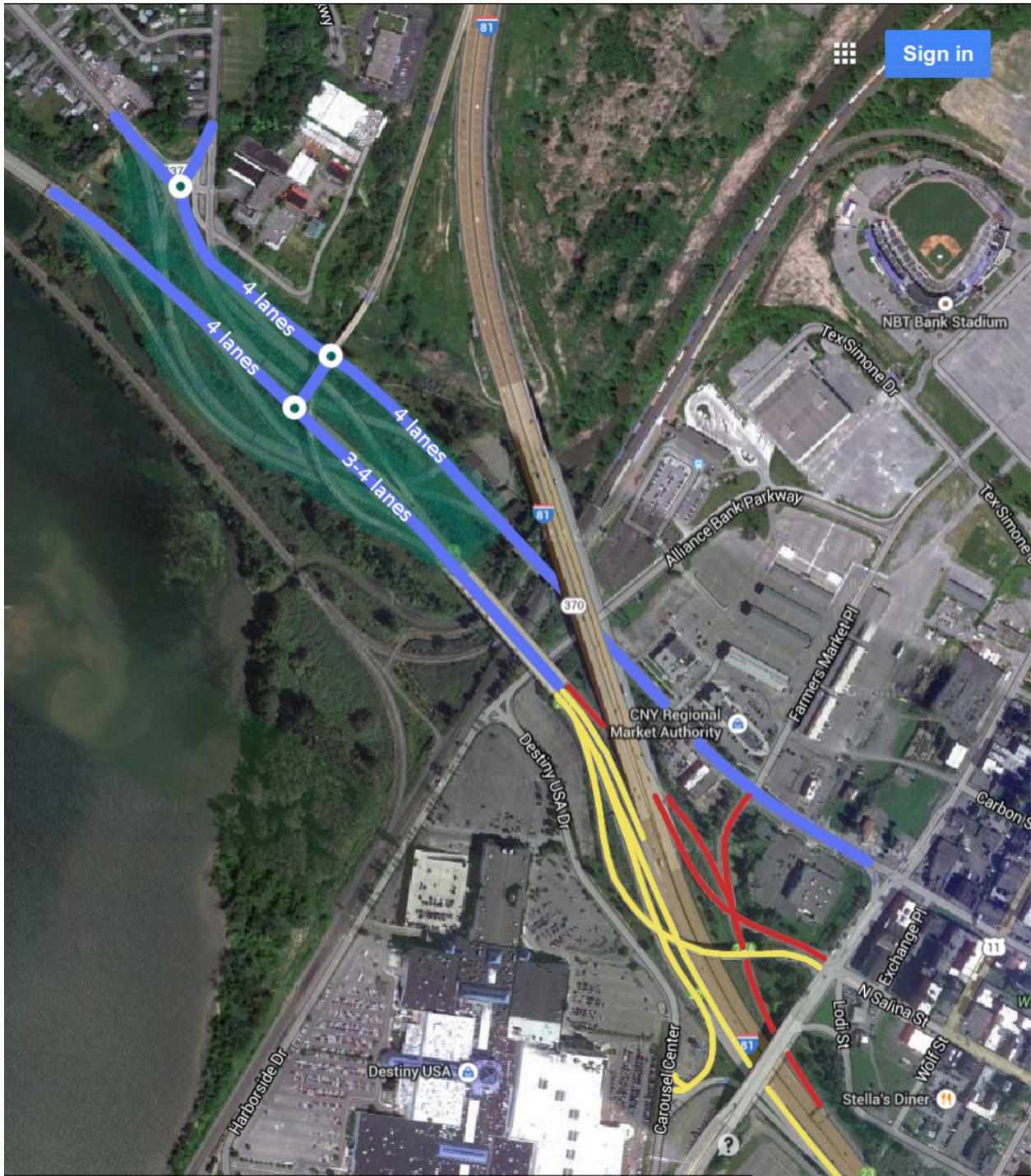


Figure 2: **Minimal Change:** I-81 and its connections remain unmodified, but the spaghetti junction at Liverpool Exit is eliminated by using roundabouts. Also, existing traffic lights and Stop signs are eliminated. The existing (unchanged) lanes, southbound (yellow) and northbound (red) are shown for clarity. This version shows 2 roundabouts where there was 1 in the original proposal; an alternative that may possibly add to efficiency and/or improve the future development potential of the area (to be determined).



Figure 3: Liverpool Exit Today: Traffic lights and Stop signs exist despite the complexity to smooth traffic.

Conclusion

The original idea—correctly understood—continues to appear most preferable, if workable. It is the cleanest solution as it simplifies and calms the roads around Destiny, and provides additional developable land. “Correctly understood” means not looking at the I-81 road through the city as an Interstate, but instead as simply a boulevard, a major city street, as the “distributed grid” option implies; that the new road will share traffic with other streets (possibly upgraded); that roundabouts can be effectively employed here; that a limited access road creates areas of congestion and is incongruous with the “distributed grid” concept; that easy access, such as the ability to turn right toward Liverpool from the highway, and calmer, developable, bicycle and pedestrian friendly streets are desirable. I urge DOT to take another look at these concepts with the corrected information and in the context described here.

I would like to re-emphasize to DOT that the Liverpool junction concept and the whole “Two Boulevards and a Bridge” proposal is based on converting I-81 through the city both north and south of I-690 into a boulevard, which would eliminate the need for the downtown interchange, and would permit better use of the street grid. I believe, the current limited scope of converting just the viaduct section is an error of historic proportions. The spaghetti junction downtown will remain; most of today’s I-81 and I-690 traffic will continue to flow much the same way; points of congestion will be little affected; we will loose an opportunity to actually dramatically improve traffic through the central city; Erie Blvd and Water St may need to be bridged, adding complexity rather than reducing it; and we will forgo opening up many dozens of acres of desirable land for development that would initiate a very great momentum in the city’s economic growth. Taking down the viaduct will surely help beautify that area; but no-longer needing and so removing the I-81/I-690 interchange from downtown is an even bigger prize. That will be possible only if I-81 both north and south of I-690 is converted to a boulevard.

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