

DIRECTIONS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL
Summer 2021



An example of pavement on a city road that would be rated 'good.'



City of Syracuse Pavement Prioritization

It's an age-old question when it comes to municipal services: what is the best way to spend limited dollars to maximize the return for residents? The City of Syracuse has leveraged the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council to develop the Pavement Prioritization Pilot – a proof-of-concept program to select streets for maintenance based on a data-driven analysis.

SMTC staff collects a pavement rating on each block of City-owned road. The pavement rating alone is not sufficient enough to determine which roads are the best candidates for reconstruction – the City budget would not cover maintenance on nearly 180 miles of roads rated "Fair" or "Poor." The model developed as a part of the Pavement Prioritization Pilot assigns weights to other road attributes in addition to pavement ratings in order to help stratify the road network. The project goal is to provide a list of road segments which could be reasonable candidates for consideration in the reconstruction budget.

Road attributes such as traffic volumes, functional classification, land use, water main breaks, proximity to major institutions, emergency snow routes, and others were collected and used as inputs into the model. As these variables could have different values, each attribute was weighted differently based on perceived importance to the overall road network. For example, roads with higher traffic volumes and mixed land uses were weighted higher than roads with lower traffic volumes and primarily residential land uses.

From these weights, each block received a Priority Score, which the City could use in developing plans for the 2021 Reconstruction budget. The SMTC recommended focusing on those roads which fell above the 75th percentile of priority scores. Because scores could vary from block to block, and it is often not cost efficient to pave only one block of road at a time, the SMTC also developed a Weighted Average Priority

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The SMTC staff wrapped-up work on a number of studies in the past few months, and these were acknowledged as complete by the SMTC Policy Committee at their June 23 (virtual) meeting. These studies are highlighted here, and all of these final reports are now available on our website www.smtcmpo.org/all-publications. To request a copy of a report email contactus@smtcmpo.org or call the SMTC office at 315.422.5716.

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Score which determined an overall priority of road corridors, as opposed to just single blocks.

Although the SMTC's model is just one of several different options for determining how to best spend limited funds on improving pavement conditions, it is a data-driven approach which includes several variables considered important to a well-maintained road network. The technical memo outlining the model's methodology is available on the SMTC's website, at smtcmpo.org/all-publications.



City of Syracuse Safety Assessment

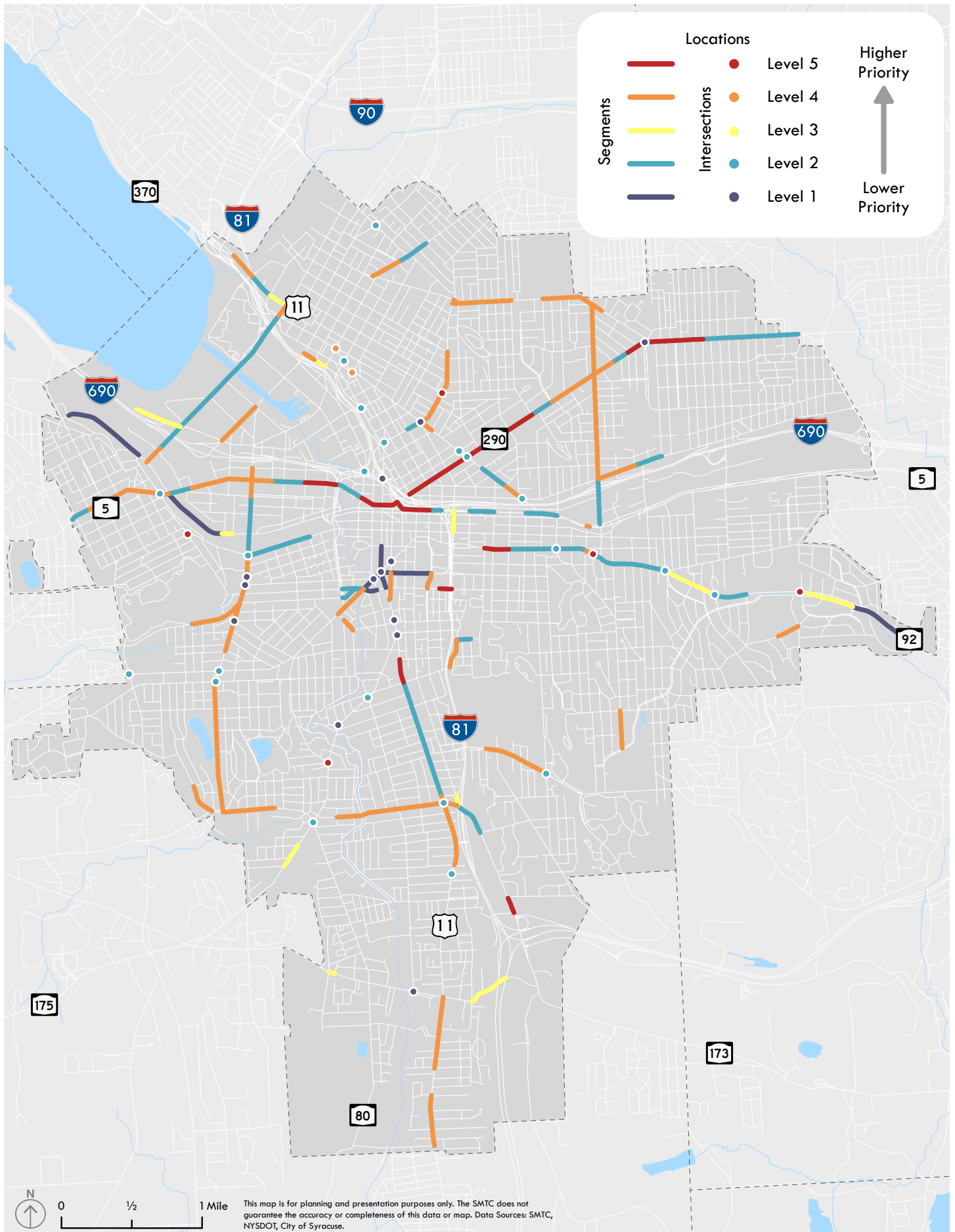
The City of Syracuse wants to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes on its 400-mile road network and improve its ability to secure safety funds for improvements.

The SMTC agreed to conduct a network screening of fatal and serious injury crashes during a 5-year period. SMTC conducted a systemic assessment, in addition to the more traditional 'hot spot' assessment. During the 5-year period analyzed, approximately 25,000 crashes occurred, which included 26 fatal crashes and 409 serious injury crashes.

The 'Hot Spot' Assessment was based on crash experience. It identified the top 83 Focus Areas for fatal and serious injury crashes and sorted them into 12 priority 'Hot Spot' locations, and three Special Mention categories (Tier I-III). Additional assessment was provided for each hot spot location. Findings for each location are summarized into a one-page summary sheet with a detailed figure and table.

The Systemic Assessment was based on crash potential. It grouped similar crash types into six Emphasis Area categories and identified locations with features correlated with the crash types, rather than crash frequency. The systemic assessment identified up to 40 miles of roads and up to 100 intersections for each Emphasis Area category. A one-page summary figure is provided in the report for each Emphasis Area category that identifies locations with the greatest potential for an Emphasis Area-related crash, to target for systemic safety improvements.

Findings from the hot spot assessment and systemic assessment will help guide the City's selection of safety solutions and place the City at a competitive advantage when seeking safety funds. The City can attach the one-page summary sheets to a funding application and use them as a reference to support design and engineering efforts.



Locations with attributes that had the highest rates of lane departure crashes, City of Syracuse Safety Assessment.



Public Participation Plan Update



Participants at a public meeting in early 2020 (pre-COVID-19) were encouraged to provide comments on a study area map.

The SMTC recently updated the agency's Public Participation Plan that details approaches and procedures the agency will use to engage with the public during the development of transportation plans and studies. The update process was undertaken because of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when in-person outreach transitioned to all virtual. Although the SMTC has used a variety of different virtual public involvement techniques over the years, the new participation plan adds extra emphasis to virtual approaches. The plan also references broader use of social media and the development of public forums.

Seven goals are included that will help create public awareness of goals, objectives, and processes of various SMTC activities including the Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program, and other studies, as well as publicize the public participation opportunities and activities available throughout the development of these programs and studies.

- Understand the issues and concerns of community members.

- Seek input from the community about opportunities and possible solutions.
- Present ideas and receive feedback.
- Actively encourage involvement by underrepresented groups.
- Build community support for final plans and recommendations.
- Educate the public about the connections between transportation and land use planning.
- Build awareness of the MPO and our role in the community.

The SMTC recognizes that active involvement of the community, in addition to the SMTC members, is paramount to good transportation planning and the SMTC promotes the shared obligation of the public and decision-makers to define the goals, objectives, and performance measures of transportation planning activities undertaken by the agency. Equitable and inclusive public input is valued because it can shape the direction of a study or planning activity, identify new transportation projects that are important to citizens of the area, or suggest new approaches to address issues.



Town of Skaneateles Eastern Gateway



(Image credit: Town of Skaneateles Eastern Gateway Committee)

The Eastern Gateway on US 20 as envisioned by the Town of Skaneateles.

Since 2016, the Town of Skaneateles has been working to upgrade the aesthetics and walkability of the segment of US 20 just east of the Village of Skaneateles. This improved Eastern Gateway would include sidewalks, curbs, and street trees. Some of the large commercial driveways would be narrowed and defined using curbs and vegetation.

In the spring of 2020, the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA) requested that the SMTC provide assistance to the Town, in the form of developing a planning-level cost estimate for an improved streetscape. Using similar past projects and reference materials from the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) as guides, SMTC staff developed a rough cost estimate of \$6.12 million to implement the Town's vision. This estimate

was subsequently adjusted to \$4.7 million, based on input from the Town.

In March 2021, the SMTC prepared a brief technical memorandum summarizing the Town's vision and elaborating on the cost estimate and its components, as well as ideas for design elements, such as using green infrastructure to control stormwater. In addition to being more attractive and less expensive than building a new stormwater sewer system, green infrastructure projects can be eligible for funding through State programs.

Further coordination and planning will be needed to turn the Town's vision for the Eastern Gateway into a reality – including working with the roadway's owner, NYSDOT, to develop a design that benefits all roadway users. The SMTC will continue to provide technical assistance as the Town seeks opportunities to implement its vision.



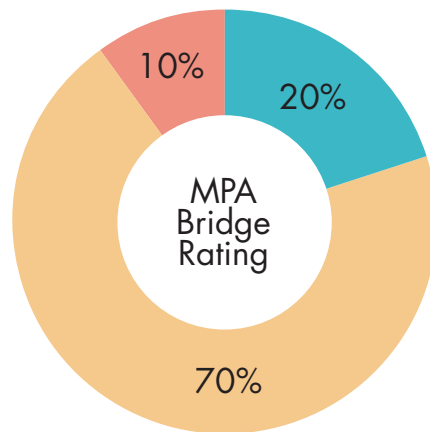
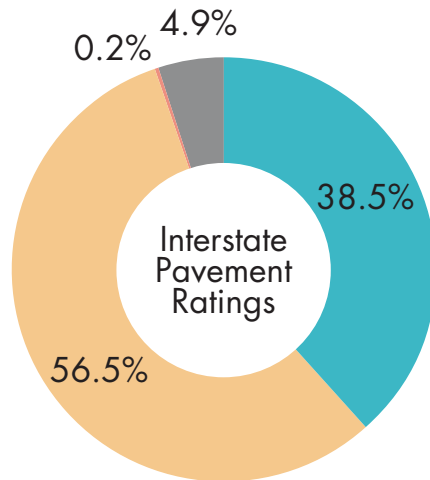
Bridge and Pavement Condition Management System Report

The SMTC's annual Bridge and Pavement Condition Management System (BPCMS) report was recently completed and is now available online in the "Publications" section of our website, smtcmpo.org/all-publications. The BPCMS report contains information on all roadway bridges and federal-aid eligible roads owned by the City of Syracuse, Onondaga County, Madison and Oswego Counties, and local towns and villages in the SMTC MPA.

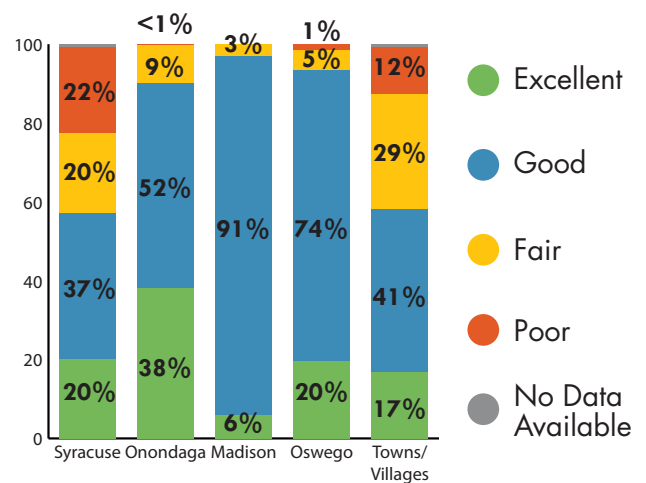
Bridge conditions are rated using a scale of Good-Fair-Poor, a classification which is derived from four element ratings contained in the National Bridge Inventory: deck, superstructure, substructure, and culvert. A rating of "Poor" does not indicate that a bridge is unsafe, but that additional maintenance is needed to improve its condition.

In this report, pavement is scored on the New York State Department of Transportation's (NYSDOT) scale of 1-10, based on the frequency and severity of surface cracking. Pavement ratings using this scale were collected in 2020. Each number on this scale correlates with a rating of either Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor. Consistent with federal performance measures, pavement ratings are provided on the Interstate System (from 2018) using a Good-Fair-Poor scale similar to the bridge ratings.

The charts at right show bridge ratings by deck area in the SMTC MPA, as well as pavement ratings by owner where data is available. SMTC staff also rates every road owned by the City of Syracuse, and maintains a web-based application which allows the viewing of pavement scores along with a photo and additional road information. That application is available at smtcmpo.org/syracuse-pavement-ratings.



- FHWA Good
- FHWA Fair
- FHWA Poor
- No Data Available



Pavement rating by road owner



The Empire State Trail is complete!

The 750-mile Empire State Trail was completed in December 2020. Locally, this includes two significant recent projects:

- A 3-mile section of the Erie Canalway Trail constructed by the NYSDOT in the median of Erie Boulevard East, along with connections to other local segments of the trail.
- A new section of the Onondaga Lake Trail connecting the New York State Fair Orange Lot parking area to Hiawatha Boulevard, which was constructed by Onondaga County. This includes the new 1,000-foot long pedestrian bridge over the CSX railroad tracks to bring trail users to the southern shore of Onondaga Lake.

Find maps and more information to plan your trip along the Empire State Trail at empiretrail.ny.gov.



A cyclist on the new bridge over the CSX railroad tracks.

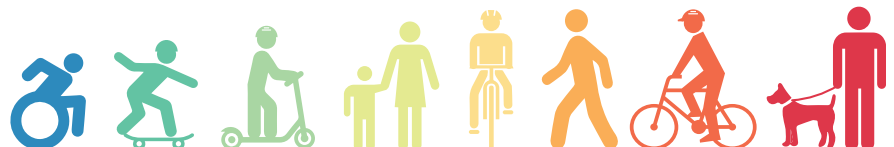


SMTC expands outreach with public forums

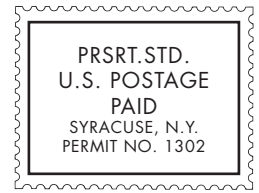
The SMTC has begun holding periodic Forums on Active Transportation (FOAT) to expand our community engagement. The first of these forums was held in March 2021, and a second was held on June 15. We are aiming to hold the next meeting in September. To date, the meetings have been held virtually, using Zoom, and are also live-streamed on our YouTube channel. Staff from NYSDOT, Onondaga County, and the City of Syracuse have participated, to talk about their current and upcoming bicycle and pedestrian-related projects. You can watch recordings of previous meetings on our YouTube channel at smtcmpo.org/watch.

We are also working on creating two additional public outreach forums similar to the FOAT. One forum will focus on transportation for job access, and the other will focus on more general traffic and regional travel concerns.

Keep an eye on our Facebook page and sign up for the email edition of our newsletters to make sure you see future meeting invitations! To sign-up for our emails, go to <https://smtcmpo.org/about-us/contact/>, or email us at contactus@smtcmpo.org.



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Directions is a publication of the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC). Formed in 1966 as a result of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1962, and the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, the SMTC serves as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Syracuse metropolitan area, and provides a forum for cooperative decision making in developing transportation plans and programs. Its committees are comprised of elected and appointed officials, representing local, state, and federal governments or agencies (member agencies) having an interest in or responsibility for transportation planning and programming.



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