

For Immediate Release

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'Harriet Tubman Memorial Freedom Bridge' Plan Unveiled Today in Syracuse, New York

Unified Solution Connects the Community and Honors Civil Rights Icon with Strong Ties to Syracuse and Central NY Region, A Living Tribute to an American Icon

SYRACUSE, NY: AUGUST 26, 2021 - Relatives of abolitionist and civil rights pioneer Harriet Tubman gathered today at Wilson Park in Syracuse to show solidarity and support for the proposal to construct the Harriet Tubman Memorial Freedom Bridge in downtown Syracuse – an iconic structure destined to become an architectural and historic landmark that will reconnect and drive redevelopment of Syracuse's urban core, while paying tribute to the renowned abolitionist and political activist, who lived and died in Central New York and exemplified the American values of courage, freedom and perseverance.

As a supplemental part of the Community Grid-only plan, the Harriet Tubman Memorial Freedom Bridge would provide a much-needed symbol of hope and inspiration. Tubman family members were joined today by 3rd generation Garland Brothers Funeral Home business owner and 16th District Onondaga County Legislature candidate Charles Garland, and local community members in Syracuse at today's unveiling event. The objective of the Harriet Tubman Memorial Freedom Bridge is to help provide racial equity for local residents and to reconnect the community by all modes of transportation.

"The addition of the Harriet Tubman Memorial Freedom Bridge to the community grid represents a comprehensive solution that knits our community and neighborhoods *back together*, said Pauline Copes Johnson, Tubman Family Matriarch. "Not only would the Harriet Tubman Memorial Freedom Bridge create something that all residents can be proud of, but it would also honor one of the most influential civil rights icons in American history. I am proud to be here today with other relatives of Harriet Tubman to propose this exciting new project to the residents of Syracuse who would benefit most from a unified skyline solution here."

The genesis of the Harriet Tubman Memorial Freedom Bridge concept dates back to 2008 when the New York State DOT announced a now outdated 'Community Grid' stand-alone plan to demolish and a segment of the arterial highway Interstate 81 that 60 years ago was built through three predominantly African-American neighborhoods in Syracuse - Pioneer Homes, Central Village and McKinney Manor. While the future of I-81 is vitally important, so too is the future of Syracuse's urban core which has historically been inhabited by African-Americans and low-income individuals and families. The Harriet Tubman Memorial Freedom Bridge enhances the reconnection of the community by keeping thousands of cars a day off the local streets in Syracuse.

Charles Garland commented, "The Harriet Tubman Memorial Freedom Bridge is a comprehensive solution that responds to the concerns of everyone in the community including local businesses. By keeping thousands of cars off of our urban neighborhoods' streets and thereby reducing air pollution among one of the most vulnerable populations in our city, too, the Harriet Tubman Memorial Freedom Bridge will directly improve the lives of the residents here. The symbolic value of the bridge also effectively reconciles our past, present and future while serving as a beacon of hope and inspiration. We

look forward to working with Governor Kathy Hochul and our federal representatives to bring this to fruition.”

Also significant are the potential economic benefits to the area. The Bridge would boost the region as a draw for both national and international tourists seeking destinations with historical value. With the existing Harriet Tubman National Historic Park in Cayuga County, the Harriet Tubman Memorial Bridge will become a true gateway into American civil rights history – leading visitors over a beloved African American neighborhood and into the Finger Lakes region where Tubman spent her final years. In addition, it’s anticipated that seasonal events such as the Juneteenth celebration – now a national holiday - would generate an increase in tourism and economic activity for the Southside of Syracuse each year around that time.

More than eighty (80) family members signed the attached letter to President Biden, Secretary Buttigieg, Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand, Congressman Katko and other federal, state and local officials indicating their strong support for the future of I-81.

Images of what the Harriet Tubman Memorial Freedom Bridge could look like (along with additional details about the plan) can be accessed here: <https://harriettubmanbridge.com/>

For additional questions about the Harriet Tubman Memorial Freedom Bridge, please contact Charles Garland at 315-243-5941 or garland.bros@verizon.net.

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