



TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE/I-287
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

**New York State Department of Transportation
Metropolitan Transportation Authority Metro-North Railroad
New York State Thruway Authority**

Meeting Minutes

***Stakeholders' Advisory Working Groups (SAWGs)
Environmental SAWG Meeting #3
(Cultural Resources)***

***Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor
Environmental Review***



September 25, 2007

Meeting Title: Stakeholders' Advisory Working Groups (SAWGs)
Environmental SAWG Meeting #3 - Cultural Resources

Meeting Purpose: Exchange of information

Location Date: Best Western in Nyack, NY.
September 25, 2007

Agenda:

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Attendees:

Name

Richard Fagan
Melanie Golden
Klaus Jacob
John Lipscomb
Richard May
Marysue Robbins
Irene Ross
Stephen Safran
Joan Schroeder
Marion Shaw
Andrew Stewart
Kathleen Sullivan
Lee Prisament (Alternate)
Dorice Madronero (representing the Rockland County Conservation Association)

Members of the agencies and consultant team.

Agenda Item 1

Introduction

Paul Stimson of WSA, the facilitator for this meeting, welcomed attendees and introduced Jim Coyle of Earth Tech. Mr. Coyle indicated that the meeting would be focused on cultural resources studies being conducted in conjunction with the TZB/I-287 DEIS. The first part of the cultural resources presentation was presented at the Environmental SAWG on July 18, 2007. Mr. Coyle noted that it was the goal of the September 25 SAWG meeting to complete the cultural resources presentation. Mr. Coyle turned the floor over to Allison Rachleff, Senior Architectural Historian, and Nancy Stehling, Senior Archaeologist, who made the presentation.

Agenda Item 2

Presentation

Historic Architectural Resources

Ms. Rachleff indicated that the PowerPoint presentation is divided into three sections: a regulatory overview, initially presented on July 18; a historic resources overview; and an archaeological overview. Ms. Rachleff noted that the archaeological overview would be presented by Ms. Stehling.

Mr. Stimson inquired how many SAWG members attended the July 18 meeting and the majority of members indicated that they were not present. Ms. Rachleff said that she would recap her presentation for the benefit of all SAWG members.

Ms. Rachleff presented the regulatory overview, including a summary of major federal, state and local regulations that are relevant to the cultural resources study. Ms. Rachleff noted that the primary federal regulation is Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act of 1966. The regulatory overview is included in the associated PowerPoint presentation.

Ms. Rachleff also presented the preliminary study area for the historic resources survey, known as the historic architectural area of potential effect (APE). She also presented the results of the ongoing survey to date, and described various historic resources within the corridor, including National Historic Landmarks, National Register-listed resources, National Register-eligible resources and recommended National Register-eligible resources. The final category of resources is in the process of being identified and evaluated as part of the cultural resources survey being conducted for the TZB/I-287 Environmental Review.

Agenda Item 3
Questions and Comments

Questions raised by SAWG attendees concerning Ms. Rachleff’s presentation and associated matters included:

Question: Mr. Pasanello inquired whether costs of an alternative factor into a Section 4(f) analysis.

Response: Ms. Rachleff indicated that costs do factor into the analysis, which requires federal transportation agencies to examine all prudent and feasible alternatives from an environmental and economic perspective that could avoid or minimize impacts to National Register-listed and/or National Register-eligible resources.

Question: Has the historic resources survey commenced?

Response: Ms. Rachleff said that the survey has commenced and the results to date will be presented in the PowerPoint presentation. In addition, she noted that maps and reports documenting the results to date were located in the back of the room for SAWG attendees to review.

Question: What historic preservation regulations guide the historic resources survey, and which regulations are the most important?

Response: Ms. Rachleff replied that the federal regulation, namely Section 106 of NHPA, is the primary regulation that must be complied with for cultural resources studies.

Question: Ms. Golden indicated that the village of Montebello has adopted a historic preservation ordinance and the ordinance is not included in the list of Rockland County municipalities with historic preservation regulations.

Response: Ms. Rachleff indicated that she would follow up with the village of Montebello and amend the list for the DEIS.

Question: Ms. Madronero indicated that the town of Ramapo may also have historic preservation regulations, and if so, should be included in the Rockland County list.

Response: Ms. Rachleff explained that Earth Tech’s research to date did not indicate that this was the case, but she has called Phil Tisi of the town of Ramapo to determine whether historic preservation regulations have been adopted in the town.

Question: Mr. Jacob inquired how the Hudson River, which was recently designated an American Heritage River, would be handled in the DEIS.

Response: Mr. Coyle indicated that this issue would be addressed in the DEIS, although the designation primarily enables riverfront communities to implement programs and plans to benefit the river and surrounding communities. There is no formal process such as Section 106 of NHPA that pertains to that aspect of the river.

Question: Questions were raised by Mr. Lipscomb and others concerning whether the study’s historic architectural APE would cover direct and indirect impacts as required by Section 106 of NHPA. In addition, questions were raised concerning whether the historic architectural APE would be linked to noise contours for the project.

Response: Ms. Rachleff and Mr. Coyle said that the historic architectural APE would take into account both direct and indirect impacts. Mr. Coyle indicated that the historic architectural APE is flexible and could be linked to noise contours as they are developed for the project.

Question: Ms. Sullivan inquired about the APE for temporary construction.

Response: The APE for impacts during construction is undecided, but Ms. Rachleff estimated that it would be about 100 feet from the construction boundary.

Question: Mr. Lipscomb inquired about the comment period for the DEIS.

Response: Mr. Coyle indicated the standard comment period is about 45 days, but it has not been determined at this point.

Question: Mr. Lipscomb and other SAWG members said the draft historic architectural APE is too small.

Question: Mr. Jacob asked whether the draft minutes from this meeting, and others, would be circulated to the SAWG members prior to finalization.

Response: Ms. Campon said that hard copies of the meeting minutes would continue to be handed out to the SAWG members. The minutes of all SAWG meetings are posted on the project website at www.tzbsite.com.

Question: Mr. Prisament inquired about the National Register eligibility status of the Tappan Zee Bridge.

Response: Mr. Coyle and Ms. Rachleff indicated that the bridge is over 50 years old and both NYSTA and the NYS Historic Preservation Office (NYSHPO) concur that the bridge meets National Register criteria A and C (historic and structural significance). Adverse impacts to National Register-listed and eligible resources must be minimized through the development of stipulations, including a formal memorandum of agreement signed by government agencies and consulting parties.

Question: Ms. Madronero has asked whether the team had encountered historic houses in Rockland County that played a role in the underground railroad during the 19th century. Ms. Madronero suggested that Bob Goldberg, a Nyack resident who conducts walking tours, should be consulted on this matter.

Response: Ms. Rachleff said that she is not currently aware of such resources in the study area but would contact Mr. Goldberg

Ms. Rachleff completed the first two sections of the presentation at 7:25 PM. Following the formal presentation, Ms. Rachleff invited SAWG attendees to review maps and reports pertaining to the results of the historic architectural survey to date.

Archaeological Resources

Ms. Stehling said that unlike the historic resources survey, the APE for archaeological surveys is confined to direct impacts, i.e., areas where ground disturbance would be slated to occur. Ms. Stehling indicated that the archaeological study area generally coincides with the NYSTA right-of-way (ROW).

Ms. Stehling also noted that archaeological surveys conducted in compliance with Section 106 of NHPA are divided into three phases: Phase IA (determination of archaeological potential based on historic research, analysis of prior disturbance, and site walkover); Phase IB (presence or absence field testing); Phase II (additional field testing, resource identification and delineation, and determination of National Register eligibility); and Phase III (data recovery excavation and curation, if necessary).

Questions and comments on Ms. Stehling’s presentation included:

Question: Mr. Jacob asked if the project team has contacted Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and SUNY Stony Brook concerning the detailed underwater survey of the Hudson River. Mr. Jacob noted that sunken vessels have been located. Mr. Jacob also noted that NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has the most accurate survey findings.

Response: The team is aware of the survey (Lamont is a subcontractor on the study) and will review the findings on file at DEC. The findings will not be mapped in the DEIS to preserve the integrity of the sites.

Question: Ms. Golden inquired whether Earth Tech is familiar with the work of Ed Lenik because much of it concerns Rockland County outcroppings and rock shelters. She said that Mr. Lenik is slated to speak at the Frank Lautenberg Visitor Center in Sterling Forest State Park in Tuxedo, New York, on September 30, 2008.

Response: The team is familiar with Mr. Lenik’s work and has reviewed it.

Question: Mr. Safran inquired about the number and nature of prehistoric sites in or near the study area.

Response: Ms. Stehling indicated that site files compiled by New York’s first state archaeologist, A.C. Parker, in the early 20th century identified approximately 12 prehistoric sites. The site locations have been indicated on project maps, but many of them may have been destroyed over time. The types of sites Parker recorded included ossuaries, burials, camp sites, and village sites. Parker conducted surveys across most NYS counties and most site locations are generally not within the NYSTA ROW. Asked what kinds of bones were found, Ms. Stehling replied that white-tailed deer bones were common.

Question: Ms. Robbins asked whether the team is aware of the historic steps associated with the former Salisbury mansion at the current site of Salisbury Point apartments in South Nyack.

Response: Ms. Stehling said that such resources would be investigated as part of the Phase IA site walkover if the sites are within the NYSTA right-of-way.

Question: Ms. Robbins inquired whether she would be able to see the NYSTA right-of-way mapped.

- Response: The NYSTA right-of-way is shown on maps on the project web site and will be mapped in the DEIS. Phase IB field testing is scheduled to begin in fall 2007.
- Question: A question was raised concerning the discovery of dinosaur tracks in West Nyack.
- Response: Ms. Stehling indicated that she was not aware of the discovery; however, the dinosaur tracks are not within the study area.
- Question: Ms. Robbins inquired how a site is classified as prehistoric or historic if one is discovered in the study area.
- Response: Ms. Stehling said that prehistoric sites are associated with Native American occupation, and historic sites are associated with European and American settlers. She described the Phase IB and Phase II testing protocol in detail. Phase III surveys, also known as data recovery excavation or archaeological mitigation, are only conducted if project plans will directly impact National Register-eligible resources identified in Phase I and Phase II surveys. Ms. Stehling directed the attendees' attention to maps and brochures in the back of the room that pertain to the TZB/I-287 project, as well as examples of brochures and pamphlets produced in conjunction with various transportation-related data recovery projects.
- Question: Has the discovery of National Register-eligible archaeological sites ever stopped a publicly funded project?
- Response: This does not usually happen. Mr. Coyle noted that a recent high profile project was the discovery of an African-American burial ground in Lower Manhattan. Ms. Stehling noted that despite the discovery, the project went forward after data recovery.
- Question: Mr. Stewart asked if archaeological sites are located beneath I-287.
- Response: Ms. Stehling said that the construction of I-287 obliterated some archaeological sites, based on a comparison of the location of the A.C. Parker sites overlaid on I-287 construction drawings. Ms. Stehling reminded SAWG attendees that at the time of construction of I-287 and the Tappan Zee Bridge, environmental regulations such as NEPA and Section 106 of NHPA did not exist, and therefore, such sites were not surveyed or protected.
- Question: A question was raised concerning the disposition of artifacts recovered during data recovery.
- Response: Ms. Stehling said that for NYSDOT projects, the artifacts are cleaned, recorded, archivally packaged, and delivered to the New York State Museum or designated local historical societies for curation.
- Question: Mr. Jacob asked what NYSTA's plans are for the recovered artifacts.
- Response: Ms. Stehling said that this would be discussed with NYSTA, and Mr. Coyle indicated that the artifacts would be stored in a publicly accessible repository.
- Question: Mr. Jacob requested that the SAWG be informed of the selected repository.
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Response: The SAWG will be informed.

Question: Mr. Fagan asked how often artifacts are found during a survey and the percentage of publicly funded projects where archaeological sites are discovered.

Response: Ms. Stehling replied that probably 90 percent of Phase IB surveys uncover artifacts; however, not all of those artifacts are significant finds. For example, often modern debris is found mixed with historic artifacts, indicating prior disturbance. She said probably half of all project areas are classified as disturbed. Sometimes parking lots and areas of fill are the best locations to find archaeological resources.

Other comments included:

Ms. Golden and Ms. Madronero suggested that the project team coordinate with a group of New York/New Jersey-based scientists and researchers who collect archaeological data on Rockland County. The group often holds meetings at the Frank Lautenberg Visitor Center in Sterling Forest State Park in Tuxedo, New York. Ms. Golden and Ms. Madronero indicated that they would provide more information to the project team concerning this group.

Mr. Stimson thanked the SAWG members for their time and reminded members that now is the time to share information with the project team, which is in the midst of preparing environmental studies.

SAWG attendees were invited to review maps and documents pertaining to the archaeological study, and examples of brochures and pamphlets related to data recovery projects undertaken for transportation improvement projects in New Jersey and Connecticut.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:25 PM.