

**Blue Ball Properties
Area Transportation Improvements
New Castle County, Delaware**

Section 4(f) Evaluation

I. INTRODUCTION

The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) propose to design and construct roadway improvements in the vicinity of the U.S. Route 202 and Delaware Route 141 Corridor, in an area known historically as Blue Ball. An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared which details the potential impacts on environmental resources of a feasible and prudent alternative. The EA identifies a set of system-wide improvements for a “Preferred” Alternative. The environmental resources include socioeconomic, community, natural, historic and archaeological features. The EA provides a description of the project needs, the affected environment and identifies potential impacts on Section 4(f) resources, Avoidance Alternatives and recommends mitigation of potential impacts where appropriate.

A. Section 4(f) Requirements

This Section 4(f) Evaluation has been prepared pursuant to Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, as amended (49 USC, 303) and 23 USC, 138. Following the effective date of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1968, the U.S. Department of Transportation policy regarding Section 4(f) was implemented and states that:

“The Secretary shall not approve any program or project which requires the use of any publicly owned land from a park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, state, or local significance as determined by the Federal, State or local officials having jurisdiction thereof, or any land from a historic site of national, state or local significance as so determined by such officials unless (1) there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of such land, and (2) such program includes all possible planning to minimize harm to such park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge or historic site resulting from such use.”

B. Methodology

Section 4(f) coordination was initiated during the early stage of the Transportation Planning and Environmental Assessment (EA) process. The EA identified the need for highway improvements in the project area, specifically located approximately two (2) miles north of the city of Wilmington in New Castle County, (Brandywine Hundred) Delaware and in the vicinity of an area known as the Blue Ball properties.

The process undertaken to develop alternatives for this study was a coordinated effort between DelDOT, the Delaware Economic Development Office (DEDO), the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), New Castle County and other resource agencies. There were a series of committees that were established to assist in project development, including a Transportation Committee, Recreation and Historic Preservation Committee, Policy Committee and an Executive Committee.

Once the transportation project needs and project performance criteria were established, the existing land use features and cultural and natural resources in the project area were identified and considered in the development of the transportation improvement options. Major features include: the Nemours Historic District, (the Blue Ball Barn, the Murphy House, the Bird-Husbands House), One Rock Manor, 13 Rock Manor, Porter Reservoir, Wartime Deerhurst, Lombardy Hall, the Jewish Cemetery and several known archaeological sites, and natural resources such as wetlands and aquatic resources associated with Alapocas Run and Matson Run. Additionally, potential impacts to the communities adjacent to the project area, the Alapocas and the Deerhurst residential areas, were considered. The development of concepts were initiated in consideration of three main components; project needs, transportation and recreation facility performance criteria, and minimization of environmental impacts to cultural, natural and community resources.

Subsequently, during development of the Master Plan, transportation improvement options were developed by the project team, with substantial input from the public through the Transportation Committee, the Recreation and Historic Preservation Committee, the legislative town meeting (monthly public meetings held by the local legislature to discuss issues that affect the Brandywine Hundred area), and public open house forums. During the early Master Planning Phase, the project team presented some initial roadway concepts that met the goals of the project. The public then made comments or added additional concepts for consideration because original concepts did not meet the project needs, project performance criteria were not met or they found unacceptable impacts on the environment or surrounding community. The concepts that were retained were refined through engineering and environmental analysis and public input. Ultimately, a preferred transportation concept was recommended and carried forward for formal project development, engineering, and environmental studies. This concept lead to the development of the Master Plan Alternative.

In compliance with the Section 106 process, and in order to identify the Section 4(f) resources in the project area, extensive coordination was conducted with appropriate officials having jurisdiction or control over potential Section 4(f) resources. This coordination included the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), DNREC, Preservation Delaware, New Castle County, and the Recreation and Historic Preservation Committee.