

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND GOALS OF THE INVESTIGATION

In December 2000, the Delaware legislature passed a resolution directing the Delaware Department of Transportation (The Department) to undertake a feasibility study of a new North/South limited access highway in Sussex County. The purpose of the state-funded Sussex County North/South Feasibility Study (2001) was to examine the feasibility of options to address north south travel through the County. The study analyzed three existing major North/South routes within Sussex County: 1) State Route 1, 2) US Route 13, and 3) US Route 113. The Feasibility Study clarified the need to move forward with efforts to address the anticipated transportation system needs in the US Route 113 Corridor and resulted in several transportation recommendations, including 1) the continuance of the Corridor Capacity Preservation Program for US Route 113 and the modification of the existing alignment into a limited access facility; 2) planning for a Milford bypass extension to preserve the needed right-of-way; 3) initiate communication with municipalities along US Route 113 to plan for improved east-west connections and the conversion of the existing alignment to limited access; and 4) coordinate with Sussex County to better use existing ordinances to develop a policy to control access to US 113 and limit the number of additional traffic signals (WRA & RKK 2004).

In accordance with selected portions of Sussex County's Long Range Transportation Plan and Comprehensive Plan, and a previously prepared Transportation Feasibility Study (2001), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and The Department have committed to undertaking in-depth study and analysis associated with the planned upgrading of U.S. 113 from Milford south to the Maryland state line (Figure 1). Rummel, Klepper & Kahl (RK&K) has been retained by prime consultant Whitman Requardt & Associates (WRA) to prepare all necessary environmental documents for the project. John Milner Associates, Inc. (JMA) was retained by RK&K to prepare the necessary cultural resources documentation as part of the environmental documentation process. Tasks associated with this document include historic context development, documentation of existing cultural resources within the study areas, identification of potential historic properties, and sensitivity modeling for potential archeological resources.

Presently, US Route 113 is a four-lane divided arterial highway that extends from Dover, Delaware to Pocomoke City, Maryland. Within the study area, US 113 connects six municipalities (from north to south): Milford, Georgetown, Millsboro, Frankford, Dagsboro, and Selbyville. US 113 is part of the National Highway System designed to carry long-distance traffic safely at relatively high speeds (WRA & RKK 2004).

The purpose of the cultural resources documentation was to record as much current and pertinent information on cultural resources (i.e., standing structures, objects, districts, and archeological sites) as practical. With the completion of this task, FHWA and The Department possess important information regarding the nature and extent of those cultural resources wholly or partially found in the defined study area, therefore enabling sound and reasoned decisions to be made during project planning with regard to those resources. The cultural resources documentation also provides valuable information that the Delaware State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) can use. Pertinent existing conditions cultural resources information is provided in digital format using ArcGIS (ArcView 9).

Discussions among key project personnel on two occasions (October 16 and December 20, 2002) resulted in the definition of a cultural resources study area of two and one-half miles to either side of the existing U.S. 113 centerline (Figure 1). This broadly defined area therefore consists of a roughly linear strip five miles wide and approximately 44 miles long extending from north of Milford to the Maryland state line at Selbyville. Subsequent to the compilation of the cultural resources information it was determined that two separate, independent and distinct project areas encompassed within the initial study area were defined with separate, independent and distinct reports being produced; 1) the Milford Study Area, and 2) the Georgetown South Study Area (Catts et. al. 2004a, Catts et. al. 2004b).

Subsequent to the production of the two distinct project area reports detailing the existing knowledge of cultural resources within the Milford Study Area and Georgetown South Study Area, a sensitivity analysis for archeological resources, a preliminary survey of potential cultural resource survey (CRS) properties, and the development of a US 113 historic context was undertaken. The sensitivity analysis for archeological resources was broken into three distinct periods to facilitate the available data. These three periods are: (1) the prehistoric period (12,000 BC to 1600 AD), (2) the early historic period (1600 AD to 1770 AD), and (3) the historic period (1770 AD to 1960 AD). The preliminary survey of potential CRS properties was undertaken concurrent with a check of spatial data related to the existing CRS properties identified in the preceding documents. This preliminary survey of potential CRS properties is not considered a total survey of eligibility for those properties. The US 113 context is presently under review by The Department and the SHPO and was submitted under a separate cover.