



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Determination of Effect on Historic Properties

Author: C. Scott Speal **Date:** January 11, 2023

Project: State No.: 103-280
F.A.P. No.: PEDS(232)
Project Title: New London Turnpike Complete Streets
Town: Norwich

Finding of Effect: No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties

Project Description:

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), with funding support from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes pedestrian and multi-modal improvements to the New London Turnpike in the City of Norwich. The project limits for this undertaking begin at Route 82 and extend northerly to Town Street for a distance of approximately 2.4 miles. At the northern end of the project, sidewalk will be constructed to fill in gaps in the existing sidewalk network between Town Street south to Asylum Street and pedestrian traffic signal equipment will be upgraded for ADA compliance at two traffic signals. From Asylum Street south to Route 82, sidewalk ramps will be upgraded for ADA compliance, pedestrian traffic signal equipment will be upgraded for ADA compliance at one traffic signal and a rectangular rapid flashing beacon will be installed at the mid-block pedestrian crossing near Glenwood Avenue. The project will also include the installation of shared lane use markings and signage from Norwichtown Commons Drive to Town Street as well as the installation of bicycle lanes from Route 82 to Norwichtown Commons Drive. A retaining wall will be constructed under the Route 2 overpass to create room for the proposed sidewalk. Seven permanent easements will be required for construction of the sidewalk improvements. Temporary easements are anticipated for construction.

Under the provisions of the Programmatic Agreement executed between CTDOT, FHWA, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer (CT SHPO), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regarding compliance with Section

106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) for minor transportation projects¹, the Office of Environmental Planning (OEP) intends to make a determination of effect on historic properties for the described undertaking.

Resources Potentially Affected:

Above Ground Architectural

The NPGallery digital asset management database maintained by the National Park Service was consulted for the purpose of locating any historic properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in the project vicinity. The northernmost project limits fall within the **Norwichtown NRHP Historic District**. The District is significant for its range of architecture and examples of urban planning (particularly the green) characteristic of the 17th through early 20th Century. Both the Norwich Public School offices at 90 Town Street and the William Raveis Real Estate office at 86 Town Street are contributing structures to the District, and both have stone masonry retaining walls running along the face of their parcel with the Turnpike where sidewalk work may occur. Opposite these structures to the north is the contributing Town Green itself.

A series of historic maps and aerial photographs obtained from the University of Connecticut Map and Geographical Information Center was examined to assess the potential for previously unidentified historic properties to be located within the project area of potential effect (APE). The 1930 Griswold-Spiess Map of reconstructed Native settlement in Connecticut circa 1625 depicts no concentrations of indigenous population in the immediate project vicinity during the period of European Contact. A prominent footpath, however, may have crossed the alignment at its crossing of the Yantic River. The 1811 Warren Map of Connecticut presents the settlement of Norwichtown firmly established at the northern project limit by the late Federal Period with the antecedent of the New London Turnpike already running close to its present course, with some degree of deviation in exact route.

The 1854 Baker Map of New London County depicts the Turnpike coursing along more or less its modern route, with some sparse rural residential settlement along its middle and southernly aspects. More dense, urban development is depicted at its northern extent within Norwichtown. The only structures possibly remaining adjacent to the APE from this period today include the former ‘O Wattles’ house at 75 New London Turnpike, and the ‘JB Clarke’ house at 479 New London Turnpike. Except at the extreme northern end, the Turnpike remained mostly rural

¹ *Programmatic Agreement among the Federal Highway Administration, the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding Implementation of Minor Transportation Projects*, signed October 26, 2012 and revised May 4th, 2018. Accessible online at: www.ct.gov/culturalresources

and undeveloped through the mid-20th Century as evidenced by Fairchild Series aerial photos from 1934.

Below Ground Archaeological

Digital site records maintained by the Office of the State Archaeologist, as well as OEP's own internal cultural resource geodatabase, were consulted for the purpose of identifying any previously known archaeological sites within the APE. At least three documented archaeological resources fall within a mile of the APE. None of these are plotted within 500 feet of the project limits, however. OEP finds no indication that any professional archaeological surveys have ever been conducted in the immediate project area.

A predictive site model developed internally by OEP based upon U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service soil classifications was consulted to assess the potential of the project area to contain undocumented archaeological resources. Large swaths of the project alignment / APE between Farnham Court and Lexington Avenue fall upon terrain predicted to be moderate and high in archaeological potential.

Recent roadside and aerial photographs were consulted to assess the present state of ground disturbance within areas likely to be affected and proximity to structures that may potentially be NRHP-eligible. Areas south of Starr Street approaching Route 82 have been extensively affected by modern suburban infrastructure that greatly reduces archaeological potential, including existing sidewalks on the east side of the Turnpike. As one approaches Route 82, however, the roadway margins are lined in many places with dry-laid stone masonry retaining walls that could be considered historic. North of Starr Street all the way to the road margins appear to consist of relatively intact, natural soils on the west side of the Turnpike, though heavily affected by road cuts and storm drainage on the east side. All corners around the intersection with Asylum Street appear to be more or less intact. The latest design proposal, however, calls only for curb-to-curb modifications with minimal off pavement impacts south of Asylum Street. Due to the minimal anticipated subsurface impacts in areas of any assessed archaeological potential, OEP sees potential for impacts to archaeological resources as low.

Determination of Effect:

Consultation was carried out with Federally-recognized Native American Tribal authorities with ancestral ties to the State of Connecticut for this undertaking in December of 2022. None of the solicited Tribes responded to the invitation to consult within the allotted time frame.

Given the involvement of a property contributing to a NRHP historic district, albeit without any substantive impacts to the structure that might compromise the qualities that render it significant, OEP hereby determines that there will be *no adverse effect to historic properties* in association with the present undertaking. With this determination, FHWA, through OEP, has concluded its responsibility to consider the potential effects of the described project on cultural resources under Section 106 of the NHPA via the provisions of the Programmatic Agreement referenced above.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Speal', written in a cursive style.

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