

**PHASE IA CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY
U.S. ROUTE 301, SECTION 2**

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ABSTRACT

This report presents the data, results and conclusions of a Phase IA investigation of the archaeological sensitivity of a section of the Selected Alternative route for U.S. Route 301 in southern New Castle County, Delaware. It is one of four such studies concurrently covering the entire alignment.

The Selected Alternative mainline alignment is a four-lane, limited access roadway on a new location, extending generally northward from the Maryland/Delaware state line, west of Middletown to the vicinity of Armstrong Corner Road. From here the new U.S. Route 301 mainline alignment curves and extends northeast, crossing over existing U.S. Route 301, the Norfolk Southern Railroad, and existing SR 896 (Boyds Corner Road) before curving and extending east and tying into SR 1, north of the Biddle's Corner Toll Plaza and south of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal.

These archaeological surveys form part of agreements enshrined in the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision for the U.S. Route 301 project. These agreements reflect Federal mandates under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and other laws and regulations. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) will work closely with the Delaware State Historic Preservation Officer to ensure that significant archaeological properties within the Area of Potential Effects (APE) of the road construction will be identified, evaluated and treated to minimize any adverse effects upon them. This Phase IA report marks the first stage of intensive archaeological scrutiny of this part of the Selected Alternative, but builds upon a series of previous broader studies of cultural resources in the project corridor.

This particular report addresses the archaeological cultural resource sensitivity of Section 2 (Yellow), which runs close to the western municipal boundary of Middletown, between Station 255+60 and Station 455+00. The main section extends for approximately 21,600 feet, or just over four and a half miles, with a shorter spur section running northwards.

Physiographically, Section 2 lies on the mid-peninsular drainage divide between the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays. This is a gently undulating plateau, generally between 60 and 75 feet above sea level, intersected at intervals by the headwater branches and swamps of drainages flowing east and west.

No prehistoric Native American archaeological sites have been previously recorded within the Section 2 APE. Research therefore entailed a review of generally validated archaeological site sensitivity modeling (including models specifically developed by A.D. Marble for the project corridor), discoveries made in surveys in topographically similar nearby areas (notably along Choptank Road immediately west of the APE), specific site studies (particularly the intensively investigated Lums Pond site), and the substantial body of contextual literature for the prehistory of Delaware. This review, combined with examination of the soils, topography and land use, has resulted in the development of a refined sensitivity model and of testable predictive statements about site types and their likely locations in Section 2.

ABSTRACT (CONTINUED)

Historical research formed a substantial part of this study, and this is reflected in the length and scope of the historic background discussion in Chapter 4. The objective of the historical research has been to provide a detailed account of the histories of the landscapes and properties of Section 2, in order that specifically identified historic archaeological resources can be readily placed within their broader context. Particular attention has been placed on establishing property ownerships and boundaries in the later 17th and early 18th century. This is framed as a contribution to current statewide efforts to improve research techniques for the identification of the elusive archaeological sites of this early settlement period. Large landholdings with legal connections to Maryland characterize particularly the southern portion of Section 2 at this time, and a house site associated with one of these (the Indian Range property) may just possibly lie on the U.S. Route 301 alignment. One unexpected but noteworthy discovery during this research was a documentary reference to an apparently late 17th-century Contact Period Native American settlement on Sandy Branch, well to the west of APE.

The later history of the Section 2 vicinity is characterized by the persistence of an agricultural economy well into the later 20th century, the presence of several free African-Americans living on their own properties at least a decade before the Civil War, and the development of a small nucleated crossroads settlement (Armstrong Corner) in the third quarter of the 19th century. Subdivisions for suburbanizing housing took place along the existing U.S. Route 301 in the northern portion of Section 2 in the early 20th century. Transportation and communication history is notable for the instability of the road network well into the 19th century, with several former and now-abandoned road alignments being identified in the research. This has implications for understanding the overall settlement pattern and for predicting the location of specific historic features, particularly dwellings and farmsteads. One railroad, the 1850s Norfolk and Southern, is crossed by the Section 2 alignment.

The fieldwork component of the study involved an informed walkover survey of the alignment. One prehistoric artifact (a jasper reduction flake) and some historic building debris were noted south of Sandy Branch, but otherwise physical evidence of anticipated resources was not recorded, largely because vegetation cover generally prevented the observation of artifact scatters.

The final chapter of the report reviews and summarizes the different classes of research data and sets them into the contextual framework provided by state historic context documents. This identifies particular characteristics of the Section 2 APE that may predict the property types to be expected and also influence the research techniques to be adopted in their identification through Phase 1B investigations. A total of 20 Phase 1B investigation areas are identified and tabulated in Chapter 6. These areas are predicted to contain prehistoric sites and specific historic archaeological properties (particularly houses sites and road alignments). An investigation strategy involving a combination of surface collection, and wide- and close-interval shovel testing, is proposed for these segments of the APE. Thirteen areas where no further work is recommended are also described and their selection justified.

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