

**ACRA Industry – Public Award Nomination 2013 Synopsis**  
**Delaware Department of Transportation, Route 301 Project**

The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) is in the midst of planning to build a new 17-mile, four lane highway costing approximately \$800 million. The US Route 301 Project is located in New Castle County, Delaware, entering the state from Maryland about eight miles south of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, and trending north to intersect with US Interstate I-95. The project is federally funded and is thus governed by applicable federal laws and regulations. The project is a “megaproject” by Federal Highway Administration standards, with a memorandum of agreement governing the archeological work.

DelDOT retained nine cultural resources firms to the project, almost all of whom are ACRA member firms. The hiring of multiple firms thus allowed for an accelerated field schedule, provided DelDOT with a broad range of historical and archaeological expertise not usually found in one consulting firm, and increased the economic benefit of the state and federal dollars spent, estimated at \$12 million for the cultural resources work.

Early in the process, DelDOT examined seven route alternatives, each with its own cultural resources investigations. The Route 301 Archaeology Program took a holistic approach from the beginning of the project, including a GIS based predictive model, detailed background research, and intensive archaeological testing, to identify archaeology sites. This level of intensive research and field testing is innovative for work in the state, and was termed “front loading” by DelDOT’s preservation professionals.

The range of tasks necessary for the completion of the cultural resources investigations has included many now-standard procedures, such as GIS-based predictive modeling for precontact and historical archeological sites, application of geophysical testing, Phase IA and Phase IB archeological investigations, architectural assessments and national register determinations, Phase II archeological evaluations, and data recovery investigations. In consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office and Federal Highway Administration, DelDOT has also initiated a series of alternative mitigations projects intended to gain additional information or insights into regional history and archeology, artifact types, synthesis of geophysics for future studies, and development of historical contexts.

DelDOT has completed an astounding amount of work for the Route 301 project. DelDOT’s publicly-accessible website boasts nearly 50 documents, including not only the required Environmental Impact Statement documents, but also technical historical and archeological reports, presented papers, news media articles, and other cultural resources records. As part of the 301 project, DelDOT has organized sessions at national and regional professional conferences, where professionals from the various CRM firms present their findings to their peers. DelDOT plans a large Route 301 session at a national meeting in 2015, and to make the findings of the work available to a broader audience by publishing a public-oriented volume about the historical development of the Route 301 corridor. The interested public and school groups were invited to the various sites during field investigations for site tours, and a blog page keeps the interested public abreast of ongoing data recovery investigations, both in the field and related to the alternative mitigations.

The Delaware Department of Transportation and its preservation staff have made a commitment on the Route 301 Project to “do it right,” and has gone above and beyond the requirements of a Section 106 undertaking. The methodological approach confirmed that “front loading” saved the Federal Highway Administration money and time by having a more accurate preconceived notion of where archaeology sites were located via the detailed background research and GIS-based predictive model. The application of alternative mitigation measures rather than standard data recovery archeology, preparation of syntheses and historical contexts to more broadly disseminate the project findings, engaging the public through various media outlets, and the use of nine CRM firms, nearly all of whom are ACRA member firms, demonstrates a desire to have quality work performed, and supports the CRM industry.