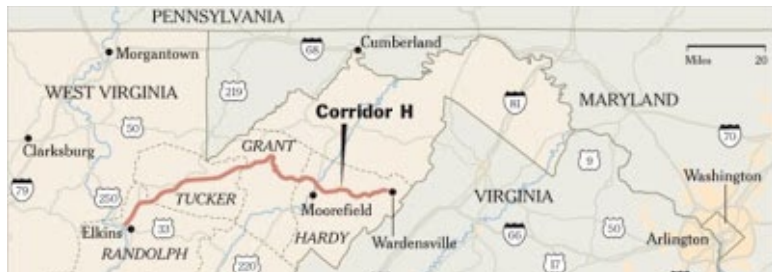


# 106 SUCCESS STORY

## Long-Term Project Aligns Highway Construction with Historic Preservation Randolph, Tucker, Grant, Hardy Counties, West Virginia



### THE STORY

Evidence of human occupation in West Virginia dates to 1100 BCE. Coal was discovered in the mid-1700s, and the fertile agricultural valleys and mountain ridges played significant roles in the Civil War. After gaining statehood in 1863, coal mining transformed West Virginia from a frontier state into an industrial one. Today, the area retains a rich tapestry of historic resources spanning thousands of years.

### THE PROJECT

In 1960, President John F. Kennedy launched an initiative to provide economic development to Appalachia, which had suffered economic hardship for many years. The Appalachian Development Highway System was created to develop a road network linking the mountainous region with the rest of the country. West Virginia benefited from the creation of several of the highway corridors, facilitating tourism, development, and travel across the Mountaineer State. The 130-mile-long Corridor H project across West Virginia was completed in stages beginning with the section from I-79 at Weston to Elkins in the 1980s. Due to funding issues and environmental concerns on the proposed routes, the project was put on hold for about six years. Efforts to finish Corridor H began in earnest in 1990 with additional federal appropriations. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the West Virginia Department of Transportation-Division of Highways (WV DOH) studied several possible corridors and determined a preferred alternative in 1996. The remaining route would run northeast from Elkins to Parsons and east from Parsons to Davis continuing toward Moorefield and ending at the Virginia state line.

### THE 106 PROCESS

The project was funded by FHWA requiring compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 requires federal agencies to identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on those properties. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have an interest in the historic property when adverse effects may occur.

The public played a significant role throughout the highway project. While considered

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“Corridor H was the most scrutinized federally funded project in West Virginia in the last quarter of the 20th century. The Section 106 review process balanced the importance of the new highway with preserving the character of the landscape and its historic resources. Through the review process, the public had a voice in the design of the highway. The focus on transportation improvements across the state ensured that promises made by President Kennedy in 1960 were kept.”

—SUSAN M. PIERCE  
Deputy State Historic  
Preservation Officer

Photos: Above, Corridor H completed highway sections (photos courtesy WV Department of Arts, Culture & History; Right, map of the region, (New York Times, provided by WV Department of Arts, Culture & History)



Photos: Clockwise from left, Willow Wall, a NR-listed resource that was within the APE; public archaeology investigations at Reed Farmstead; artifacts discovered at Reed Farmstead (photos courtesy WV Department of Arts, Culture & History)

by some to be potentially damaging to the environment, others argued the importance of easier access to emergency services and better roads for economic development. In 1992, a group of citizens organizations came together to participate in the Section 106 consultation.

In 1995, efforts to complete the Section 106 process for Corridor H began, and a Programmatic Agreement was signed to facilitate completion of the environmental process. The continued investigations identified realignments that would protect the valley bottom along the Potomac River and avoid cultural resources. Approximately 804 individual resources, including Reed Farmstead, and 13 possible historic districts were surveyed and evaluated for National Register eligibility.

With full public participation, the consulting parties reached an agreement that included required environmental studies to study alignment shifts to avoid the Civil War battle sites Corricks Ford Battlefield/Shavers Fork Valley near Parsons, and avoidance of the historic Blackwater Canyon near Thomas.

In 1999, FHWA and the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WV DOT) agreed to postpone planning as a result of a lawsuit related to violations of the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act. As a result, construction of the 5.5-mile highway section near Wardensville was postponed until 2020. Funding was included for recreational trails in Randolph, Tucker, and Grant counties and streetscape and capital improvements in Wardensville. As of 2019, major portions of the highway are complete from Wardensville to Davis. Only the Parsons to Davis and Wardensville to the Virginia line segments remain to complete the project.

## THE SUCCESS

The completed highway provides West Virginia's rural communities with access to more urban areas and opportunities for development. Corridor H has opened West Virginia's natural and cultural beauty to the region and benefited its citizens. When the 200-year-old Reed Farmstead was found, the WV DOT wanted to share the process with the public. They provided a public archaeology dig and produced an educational video illustrating the identification and preservation procedures.

In addition to the efforts undertaken to protect historic sites in Corridor H, lessons learned during the Section 106 review process are applicable to other ongoing highway projects. The thoroughness of the research and study of the cultural resources is now standard for projects such as the four lane improvements to state Route 9 and U.S. Route 340 in the eastern panhandle. Through the Section 106 consultation, WV DOH learned the importance of involving the public early in the planning process.

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Federal Highway  
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ACHP

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U.S. Department of  
Agriculture, Forest  
Service

West Virginia  
Department of  
Transportation

Virginia State Historic  
Preservation Officer

Capon Springs and  
Farms

Corridor H  
Alternatives

Association for the  
Preservation of Civil  
War Sites

Hampshire  
County Planning  
Commission, WV

For more about  
Section 106 and  
the ACHP go to  
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