

**Programmatic Agreement  
Among the Federal Highway Administration, The Vermont Agency of  
Transportation, The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the  
Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer**

In 1997, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VAOT), the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) began discussing how we could improve the Section 106 process for transportation projects in Vermont. Could we make the process easier, faster, more effective, and less redundant, while maintaining an appropriate level of protection for historic and archeological resources? The results were something of a revolution, and are embodied in the Programmatic Agreement (PA) signed on April 5, 2000. It is the first agreement of its kind in the country, and may become a model for other states to follow.

The basic premise of the PA is that VAOT will conduct reviews of its own projects, using qualified historic preservation and archeological professionals on VAOT staff, without further review or input by VDHP and the Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) except in rare instances. It is expected that the PA will enhance early project planning to avoid or minimize impact to historic and archeological resources, will result in more timely and predictable reviews, and will enhance public support for projects. The Manual is a guide to implementing the PA. It interprets and provides more detail on the provisions of the PA. Like the PA, it is the result of a lengthy collaborative effort among VAOT, VDHP and FHWA.

The Manual sets out the qualifications for the VAOT review staff, procedures for project reviews, provisions for soliciting and responding to public comment, standards for evaluating and documenting projects, an annual reporting process, and guidance on using standard mitigation measures and addressing emergency situations and unanticipated discoveries. The Manual is meant to provide guidance for professional evaluation and documentation by historic preservation and archeological professionals employed as staff or consultants for VAOT. The PA and the Manual rely on the sound professional judgement of the VAOT historic preservation and archeological professionals. The guidance in the Manual cannot substitute for professional knowledge and experience.

[Manual of Standards & Guidelines, 2000: Section 1]