

Historic Preservation and Infrastructure



- **Preservation of our nation's historic resources and repairing our nation's infrastructure are complementary goals.** Many important parts of our nation's infrastructure system are historic resources that can and should be preserved and rehabilitated as part of a comprehensive infrastructure plan. **This can be done by using existing regulations that permit expediting the process and through funding for survey and digitization.**
- As a comprehensive infrastructure bill moves forward, it is important to remember the lessons of the past. The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 which established the Interstate Highway System and the Urban Renewal Program of the 1960s had unintended consequences including the destruction of many historic downtowns throughout America.
- **One of the principal points of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) is to ensure local input into federal decision-making processes.** Through consultation with State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs), Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), and the public, federal projects and undertakings can proceed only with cooperation, consultation, and input from states and local communities. Without this consultation, known as Section 106, Federal agency officials would have the authority to decide what is best for any state – making unilateral decisions that could have a negative impact upon that state, its residents, and its historic resources.
- Since SHPOs and THPOs maintain inventories of historic resources in their respective jurisdictions and have special expertise in this area, any infrastructure plan should maintain the consultation required under the NHPA. Sidestepping the NHPA would encourage uninformed decision-making, destroy historic resources, and mire projects in controversy - negating any efficiency gained by cutting the review process.
- **We support an efficient process for cultural resource reviews and are confident this can be done without changes to the NHPA.** Existing federal regulations authorized under the NHPA provide for a “program alternative” to Section 106 reviews. This permits the creation of a Nationwide Programmatic Agreement or other instruments that allow federal agencies to work with NCSHPO and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation on alternative processes to streamline Section 106 reviews.
- **An investment in surveying historic resources and digitizing existing survey information** would be a cost effective approach to making sure that the Section 106 review process does not get bogged down by an influx of new projects authorized under an infrastructure plan.