



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Walk Bridge Program Uncovers Ancient Fort

NORWALK—August 09, 2018. An archaeological investigation associated with the Connecticut Department of Transportation’s Walk Bridge Program recently uncovered a Contact Period Native American fort site. The site is on top of a 3,000-year-old site, indicating Native American use of this area for many generations before the arrival of European traders and settlers.

This discovery is a result of the Walk Bridge Program’s due diligence in conducting preliminary archaeological surveys during the Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Evaluation. These surveys revealed the possibility of historically significant sites within the program’s work area, and further investigation revealed remnants of the pre-Contact and Contact Period fort. “Contact Period” refers to the period when Europeans first began coming in contact with Native Americans, generally understood to be 1500 to 1700.

“This is a highly significant discovery that represents some of the only real information we have on the Norwalk Native Americans,” said Dr. Ross K. Harper, Senior Historic Archaeologist, Archaeological and Historical Services, Inc., the Connecticut-based cultural resources firm completing the archaeological recovery effort. “Sites like this one are very rare. Less than a half-dozen have been discovered in Connecticut and Long Island Sound combined. If not for the CT Department of Transportation and the Walk Bridge Program, we may have lost this important opportunity to deepen our understanding of these people and their role in Connecticut history.”

The fort is believed to have been used primarily for trade between Native Americans and early Dutch settlers somewhere between 1615 and 1640 and is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Artifacts uncovered from this period include wampum, glass and copper beads, stone arrow points, European flint, and iron trade tools. Artifacts from the pre-Contact period include an Orient Fishtail point and a Lamoka point. No evidence of human remains or characteristics of a human burial has been found.

“This discovery is an exciting development of the Walk Bridge Program,” said Connecticut Commissioner of Transportation, James Redeker. “We are delighted to make this contribution to the existing body of knowledge surrounding the rich history of our state. As important as the preservation of these historical artifacts is to understanding our past, so is the preservation of our railroads to securing our future. Our railroad system is a vital transportation asset that contributes to the Connecticut Shoreline and the City of Norwalk’s status as one of the most sought after places to live, work, and do business in the country.”

Following consultation with the Federal Transit Administration, State Historic Preservation Office, and federally recognized tribes, the Department of Transportation will complete the removal and preservation of the site. Artifacts will be conserved and analyzed to develop and present an understanding of what occurred at the site. Although the site will be physically removed, the excavation will preserve what is most important: the story it tells about Native American peoples here.

This area is an active construction site, and the public is asked to refrain from trespassing for their own safety and for the preservation of the archaeological site.

About the Walk Bridge Program



The Walk Bridge Program consists of several inter-related rail and infrastructure construction projects in Norwalk, CT. The centerpiece of the program is the replacement of the 122-year-old Norwalk River Railroad Bridge (the Walk Bridge) which accounts for approximately half of the program's budget.

A 240' Vertical Lift Bridge has been chosen to replace the current four-track swing bridge. This option was chosen out of more than 70 alternatives considered, due to having the smallest environmental footprint, the shortest overall construction schedule, the shortest period of navigation and rail restrictions, and the lowest cost of all other movable alternatives.

Other projects in the Walk Bridge Program include the [Danbury Branch Dockyard](#) project and the [CP243 Interlocking project](#) on the mainline between East Norwalk and Westport. Emergency fender repairs, the rehabilitation of the Osborne Avenue Bridge, replacement of the East Avenue Bridge in East Norwalk, and realignment of the Fort Point Street Bridge are also included in the program.

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