



State Route 1002 over the Delaware River Skinners Falls Bridge

Coordination Plan for Public and Agency Involvement



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Coordination Plan

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), has initiated a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study for the Skinners Falls Bridge. The PEL Study is being undertaken in accordance with 23 United States Code (USC) Section 168 as well as with 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 450.212. Under these authorities, analyses conducted during planning may be adopted and incorporated directly or by reference into subsequent environmental documents prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), provided that the studies are adequately documented; interested Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies are involved; a reasonable opportunity for public review and comment on the PEL Study is provided; and the FHWA is engaged.

The PEL process was established by the FHWA to provide a more efficient method of identifying, evaluating, and recommending transportation improvements for project delivery. This process allows early planning-level decisions to be carried forward into future transportation projects so that NEPA requirements¹ are connected and planning analyses and decisions are not revisited.

As a result, the PEL Study will be conducted in accordance with FHWA direction and guidance established under the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA implementing regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508)². These PEL activities include the purpose and need statement, preliminary range of alternatives, and alternatives to be carried forward into NEPA. Concurrences obtained from Cooperating Agencies, and decisions made as part of the PEL activities, would be adopted into future NEPA studies.³

Section 139(g) of Title 23, U.S. Code requires that the lead agencies establish a plan for coordinating public and agency participation and comment during the environmental review process. The *State Route 1002 over the Delaware River Skinners Falls Bridge Coordination Plan for Public and Agency Involvement* (Coordination Plan) is prepared in cooperation with FHWA, PennDOT, NYSDOT, and all regulatory and resource agencies listed in chapter two of this document. Lead agencies are encouraged to consult with the cooperating and participating agencies on the Coordination Plan because key elements of the plan could set expectations that require a commitment of resources by the agencies.

This Coordination Plan is intended to define the process by which PennDOT will communicate information about the Skinners Falls Bridge PEL Study and subsequent NEPA phase to the resource agencies and to the public. The plan also identifies how input from agencies and the public will be solicited and considered.

Per the *Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Publication 10B* (Design Manual Part 1B: Post-TIP NEPA Procedures, April 2022 edition), the Coordination Plan must be shared with the public and participating agencies so they know what to expect and so any disputes are addressed as early as possible.

¹ For more information on NEPA see <https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/legislation/implementation.aspx>

² For more information on CEQ regulations see <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-40/chapter-V/subchapter-A>

³ 23 U.S.C. 168; 23 U.S.C. 139 (f)(4)(E)

This Coordination Plan will:

- Identify the early coordination efforts.
- Identify cooperating and participating agencies to be involved in agency coordination.
- Establish the timing and form for agency involvement in defining the purpose and need, the range of alternatives to be investigated, and the alternatives to be carried into NEPA.
- Describe the communication methods that will be implemented to inform the community about the PEL Study.

The Coordination Plan will be updated as the study progresses to reflect changes to the schedule, agency representatives, and other revisions to the PEL Study.

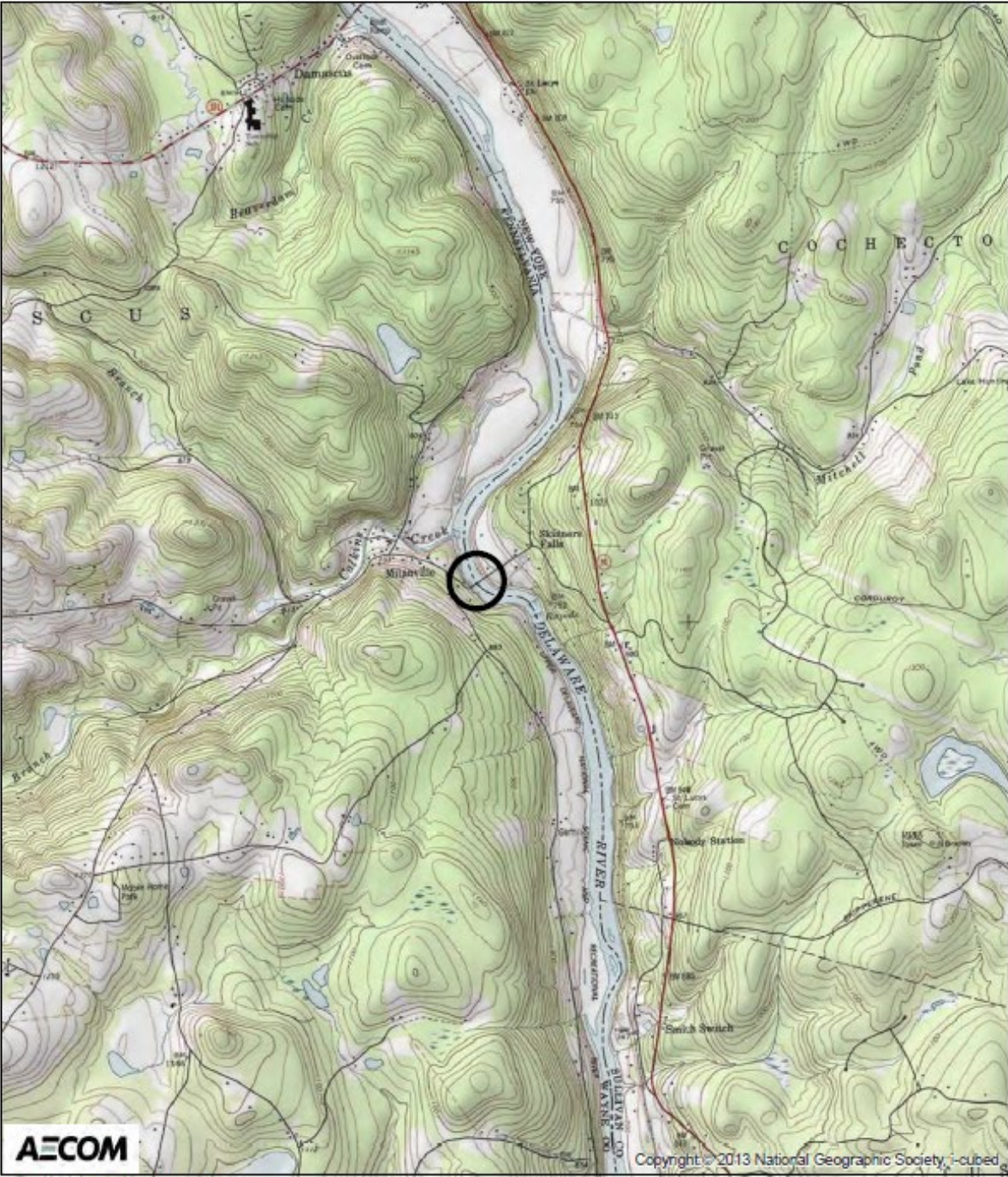
1.2 Skinners Falls Bridge Description and History

Pennsylvania State Route (SR) 1002 over the Delaware River (Skinners Falls Bridge) is a single-lane, two-span, Baltimore through truss bridge connecting Wayne County, Pennsylvania (PA) on the west side and Sullivan County, New York (NY) on the east side. The bridge was constructed in 1902 and is owned by the NY-PA Joint Interstate Bridge Commission (JIBC). The JIBC was established by the State of NY Senate and Assembly through the Act approved May 11, 1916, Chapter 506, Laws of 1916 and the Commonwealth of PA General Assembly by the Act approved July 25, 1917, P.L. 1180 (as amended by Act No. 169 approved December 19, 1975). The JIBC is responsible for the maintenance, repair, or rebuilding of the Skinners Falls Bridge and nine other bridges in the Upper Delaware region.

The Skinners Falls Bridge crosses the Delaware River, connecting the communities of Milanville, PA and Skinners Falls, NY (**Figure 1**). In recent years, the bridge has undergone a series of traffic closures due to observed structural issues, followed by emergency repairs and re-openings. Major rehabilitations of the Skinners Falls Bridge were undertaken in 1971 and again in 1986. Emergency repairs were completed on the bridge in 2010, 2013, and 2016. The bridge has been closed to traffic since October 2019. The bridge, originally constructed with a nine-ton load capacity, has been posted for a four-ton capacity since 2013. A customer complaint and subsequent District Bridge Unit inspection on October 16, 2019, identified timber deck and lateral truss bracing deterioration that required the bridge to be closed. A timeline of the operational history is shown in **Figure 2**.

PennDOT is conducting a PEL Study to identify the transportation purpose and need statement. In addition, PennDOT is in the process of preparing the Historic Bridge Rehabilitation Analysis (HBRA). The HBRA will assess whether the Skinners Falls Bridge can be rehabilitated to meet the needs of the project while maintaining the historic integrity of the bridge. The HBRA will be completed prior to the conclusion of the PEL Study. Once the PEL Study is completed, the project will enter preliminary design.

The Skinners Falls Bridge has cultural significance to the local community and larger historic preservation community. Because of this, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and is a contri-



Skinner's Falls Bridge
SR 1002-651 over the Delaware River
FIGURE 1: PROJECT LOCATION MAP

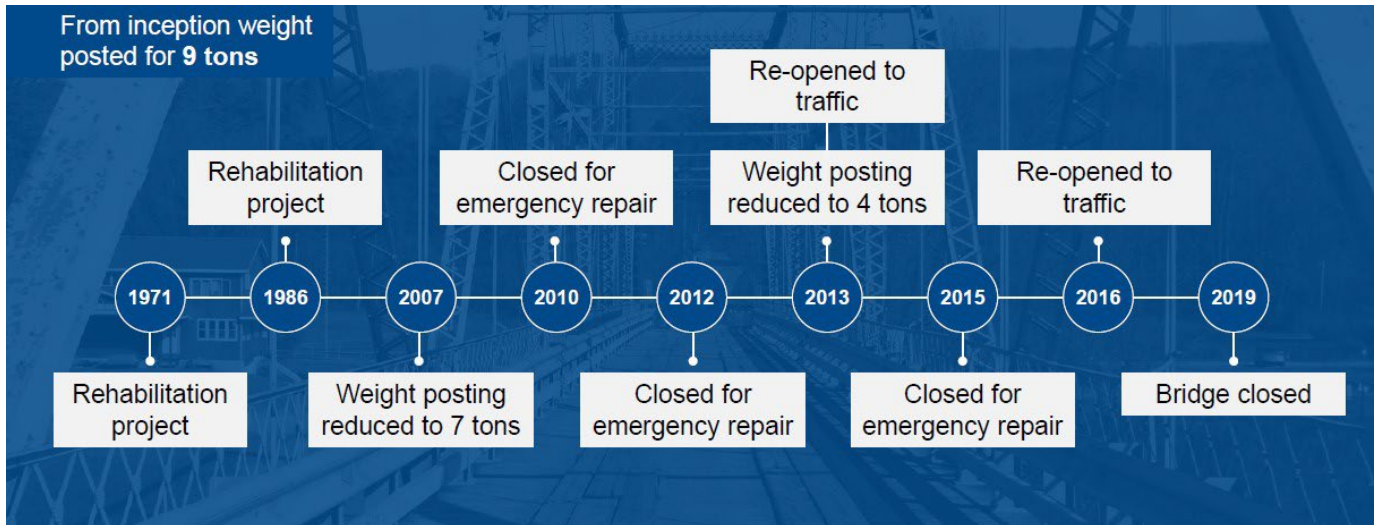
○ Project Location



Source: 2013 National Geographic Society, i-cubed

-buting resource⁴ to the NRHP-listed Milanville Historic District. It is also within the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, which was designated as a National Park Service (NPS) unit in 1978. The NPS considers this bridge a contributing element to the Cultural Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. Coordination with consulting parties, the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), and NPS will occur throughout the PEL Study and throughout the project development process in the NEPA phase.

Figure 2: Timeline of Operational History



1.3 Purpose and Need

PennDOT held an Agency Coordination Meeting (ACM) on October 27, 2021, to review the draft purpose and need statement ahead of the public review. The Project Advisory Committee discussed the local area needs at a meeting in February 2021 and during a meeting in September 2021. The draft purpose and need statement was then provided to the public for review and comment between December 8, 2021 and February 7, 2022 through the PennDOT District 4 website. Printed copies were also distributed throughout the PEL Study area. Comments were compiled in a *Purpose and Need Public Comment Response Report*, which was released in May 2022. Agency and public comments were considered when developing the final purpose and need statement in May 2022.

The *Purpose and Need Public Comment Response Report* and the draft and final purpose and need statements can be found on the PennDOT District 4 website:

<https://www.penndot.pa.gov/RegionalOffices/district-4/PublicMeetings/Wayne%20County/Pages/Skinners-Falls-Bridge-Project.aspx>).

⁴ A contributing resource is a building, structure, site, feature, or object within a historic district that contributes to the historic character of the district. (U.S. Department of the Interior 1990 How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (Bulletin 15), Prepared by National Park Service, Washington, D.C.)

The final purpose and need statement is included below:

Purpose:

The purpose of the project is to provide a safe and efficient crossing of the Delaware River at Skinners Falls for cars, trucks, trailers, emergency response vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

Needs:

1. The Skinners Falls Bridge is currently closed to traffic due to its condition, which limits efficient access for residents, businesses, and recreational users.
2. River rescue is negatively affected by the absence of a functional bridge in the vicinity of Skinners Falls.
3. Fire and medical emergency response are delayed due to the lack of a crossing at Skinners Falls.
4. The Skinners Falls Bridge does not provide adequate accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, and recreational users in the area.

1.4 PEL Study Outreach History

PennDOT initiated the PEL Study in February of 2021 and conducted several meetings or other outreach activities with agency representatives and other interested stakeholders as shown below:

- Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting February 22, 2021
- Agency Coordination Meeting February 24, 2021
- Public Meeting March 30, 2021
- Public Survey and Comment Period March 30 – June 1, 2021
- Stakeholder Interviews/Meetings June – July 2021
- PAC Meeting September 23, 2021
- Agency Coordination Meeting October 27, 2021
- Agency Coordination Meeting December 14, 2022

2. LEAD, COOPERATING, AND PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

In accordance with the CEQ NEPA implementing regulations referenced in Section 1.1, FHWA has included Cooperating and Participating Agencies for the Skinners Falls Bridge PEL and future NEPA studies.

2.1 Agency Roles and Responsibilities

2.1.1 Lead Agency

The lead federal agency has the primary responsibility for facilitating the review process and preparing the PEL Report and future NEPA documents. The agency carrying out the federal action is responsible for complying with the requirements of NEPA. For the Skinners Falls Bridge PEL Study, FHWA is the lead federal agency providing oversight of the preparation of the environmental analysis, as well as reviews under other federal laws such as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

PennDOT is the lead state agency responsible for completing the environmental analysis in partnership with NYSDOT.

2.1.2 Cooperating Agencies

The CEQ NEPA implementing regulations are intended to assure that agencies are fully engaged in the scoping of projects and the decisions regarding alternatives to be evaluated in detail in the NEPA phase. The roles and responsibilities of the Cooperating Agencies are found in **Table 1**. The contact information for the Cooperating Agencies may be found in **Appendix A**.

The Cooperating Agencies’ roles include identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the PEL Study or potential environmental, social, or economic impacts in the future NEPA project that could substantially delay or prevent an agency from granting future permits or other necessary approvals.

Cooperating Agencies are responsible for:

- Participating in the NEPA process at the earliest practicable time.
- Participating in the scoping process (described in § 1501.9).
- On request of the lead agency, assuming responsibility for developing information and preparing environmental analyses, including portions of the NEPA document for which the cooperating agency has special expertise.
- On request of the lead agency, making available staff support to enhance the lead agency's interdisciplinary capability.
- Using its own funds. To the extent available funds permit, the lead agency shall fund those major activities or analyses it requests from cooperating agencies. Potential lead agencies shall include such funding requirements in their budget requests.
- Consulting with the lead agency in developing the schedule (§ 1501.7(i)), meet the schedule, and elevate, as soon as practicable, to the senior agency official of the lead agency any issues relating to purpose and need, alternatives, or other issues that may affect any agencies' ability to meet the schedule.
- Meeting the lead agency's schedule for providing comments and limiting its comments to those matters for which it has jurisdiction by law or special expertise concerning any environmental issue.
- Jointly issuing environmental documents with the lead agency, to the maximum extent practicable.

Table 1: Agencies Invited to be Cooperating Agencies

Agency Name	Responsibilities	Response to Invitation
National Park Service	Oversee Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Participate in the consensus process for purpose and need, range of alternatives, and alternatives to be carried into NEPA.	Accepted

Agency Name	Responsibilities	Response to Invitation
NY State Department of Environmental Conservation	Permitting jurisdiction New York State environmental permits. Participate in the consensus process for purpose and need, range of alternatives, and alternatives to be carried into NEPA.	Accepted
PA Department of Environmental Protection	Permitting jurisdiction PA Environmental Permits. Participate in the consensus process for purpose and need, range of alternatives, and alternatives to be carried into NEPA.	Accepted
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Section 404 permit jurisdiction. Participate in the consensus process for purpose and need, range of alternatives, and alternatives to be carried into NEPA.	Accepted
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Permitting jurisdiction under Section 404/401 of the Clean Water Act. Participate in the consensus process for purpose and need, range of alternatives, and alternatives to be carried into NEPA.	Accepted
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Endangered Species Act Consultation. Participate in the consensus process for purpose and need, range of alternatives, and alternatives to be carried into NEPA.	Accepted

2.1.3 Participating Agencies

Participating Agencies include any federal, state, or local agencies or tribal nations that could have an interest in the PEL Study. Each Cooperating Agency is a Participating Agency, but many participating agencies are not cooperating agencies. The roles and responsibilities for the Participating Agencies is found in **Table 2**. The contact information for the Participating Agencies may be found in **Appendix A**.

Participating Agencies are expected to provide meaningful and timely input on unresolved issues within requested time frames. Participating agencies are expected to:

- Identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding potential impacts on the natural, cultural, or human environment.
- Provide meaningful and early input on relevant issues such as the study purpose and needs, the range of alternatives to be considered, and the methodologies and level of detail required in the alternatives analysis.
- Participate in coordination meetings and field reviews with other environmental resource agencies, as appropriate.
- Adhere to timeframes for reviewing and commenting on administrative copies of environmental documentation, including the draft and final NEPA documents.

Table 2: Agencies Invited to be Participating Agencies

Agency Name	Responsibilities	Response to Invitation
Absentee-Shawnee Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma	Provide meaningful and timely input and information on culturally sensitive tribal matters, resources, and places. Provide input on the PEL Study.	
Damascus Township	Provide meaningful and timely input on local agency issues regarding infrastructure, land use/development and community features.	Accepted
Delaware Nation, Oklahoma	Provide meaningful and timely input and information on culturally sensitive tribal matters, resources, and places. Provide input on the PEL Study.	
Delaware River Basin Commission	Provide meaningful and timely input regarding the identification of issues related to the Delaware River.	
Delaware Tribe of Indians, Oklahoma	Provide meaningful and timely input and information on culturally sensitive tribal matters, resources, and places. Provide input on the PEL Study.	Accepted
Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma	Provide meaningful and timely input and information on culturally sensitive tribal matters, resources, and places. Provide input on the PEL Study.	
New York State Historic Preservation Office, Technical Preservation Bureau	Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act consultation, cultural resources review and concurrence.	Accepted
NYSDEC Bureau of Fisheries	Provide meaningful and timely input regarding the identification of issues on aquatic and terrestrial species of concern under their jurisdiction.	
Onondaga Nation	Provide meaningful and timely input and information on culturally sensitive tribal matters, resources, and places. Provide input on the PEL Study.	
PA Department of Agriculture	Provide meaningful and timely input regarding the identification of issues within their jurisdiction.	
PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources	Provide meaningful and timely input regarding the identification of issues within their jurisdiction.	Accepted
PA Fish & Boat Commission	Provide meaningful and timely input regarding the identification of issues on aquatic and terrestrial species of concern under their jurisdiction in the study area. Responsible for review and approval of the Aids to Navigation Plan.	Accepted
PA Game Commission	Provide meaningful and timely input regarding the identification of issues regarding wildlife species and game lands.	

Agency Name	Responsibilities	Response to Invitation
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC)	Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act consultation, cultural resources review and concurrence.	Accepted
Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, New York	Provide meaningful and timely input and information on culturally sensitive tribal matters, resources, and places. Provide input on the PEL Study.	
Shawnee Tribe	Provide meaningful and timely input and information on culturally sensitive tribal matters, resources, and places. Provide input on the PEL Study.	
Stockbridge-Munsee Community, Wisconsin	Provide meaningful and timely input and information on culturally sensitive tribal matters, resources, and places. Provide input on the PEL Study.	Accepted
Sullivan County Soil & Water Conservation District	Oversight of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits for construction activities.	
Town of Cohecton	Provide meaningful and timely input on local agency issues regarding infrastructure, land use/development and community features.	
United States Coast Guard	Provide meaningful and timely input regarding the identification of issues within their jurisdiction.	
Wayne County Conservation District	Oversight of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits for construction activities.	Accepted

3. AGENCY COORDINATION

3.1 Agency Coordination Protocol

PennDOT uses Agency Coordination Meetings (ACM) to regularly inform agencies of the PEL Study status and seek input on decisions related to the alternatives. PennDOT will seek input and the consensus from the federal, Pennsylvania, and New York agencies throughout the PEL Study. Formal concurrence will not be requested for this project.

During the PEL Study, key consensus points for the Cooperating Agencies will include Purpose and Need, Range of Alternatives, and Alternatives to be carried forward into a future NEPA phase.

When certain milestones are reached and relevant documents are available for consideration, such as the project purpose and need, the materials will be sent to the agency representatives a minimum of ten business days in advance of the scheduled ACM meeting. The milestone will be discussed at the meeting and the team will facilitate open dialogue about any concerns or issues at the time.

The Lead Agency will present information to the Cooperating and Participating Agencies at an ACM prior to agencies developing official comments. Agencies will have ten business days after the ACM to provide comments. If an agency provides comments that are deemed significant, the project team will work directly with that agency to address those comments. Additional information may also be provided to the agency, when available. Conflicts will be resolved as they occur, on a case-by-case basis. Decision-making will be kept at the lowest possible level.

The proposed Agency Coordination Meetings are shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Proposed Agency Coordination Meetings

Coordination Point	Date	Information to be Presented/Discussed	Input Requested
ACM #1	February 24, 2021	PEL Study Initiation and Introduction to PEL	None
ACM #2	October 27, 2021	PEL Study Update	None
ACM #3	December 14, 2022	Draft Public and Agency Coordination Plan Final Purpose and Need	Agency Comment on Coordination Plan Cooperating Agencies Consensus on Purpose and Need
ACM #4	Summer 2023	Result of Phase I Alternatives Assessment	Cooperating Agencies Consensus on Phase I Alternatives
ACM #5	Fall 2023	Result of Phase II Alternatives Assessment Alternatives to be Carried in NEPA	Cooperating Agencies Consensus on Alternatives to be carried in NEPA

3.2 Additional Agency Coordination

3.2.1 Tribal Consultation

PennDOT, NYSDOT, and FHWA identified eight federally recognized Tribes and Nations that are likely to have an interest in the PEL Study because of ancestral ties to both New York and Pennsylvania. Each federally recognized Tribe and Nation is sovereign; therefore, FHWA, as part of the federal government, engages in government-to-government relations with the Tribes and Nations.

FHWA has delegated Section 106 consultation with the Tribes and Nations mentioned above to PennDOT, with the consent of the previously mentioned Tribes and Nations (listed below). PennDOT is responsible for initiating consultation with Tribes and Nations on a study or project-specific basis, transmitting documentation and information to the Tribes and Nations, and determining a Tribe's and Nation's level of interest in a study or project. In coordination with NYSDOT, PennDOT has initiated consultation with the following Tribes who have ancestral ties to this area:

- Absentee-Shawnee Tribes of Indians of Oklahoma
- Delaware Nation, Oklahoma
- Delaware Tribe of Indians, Oklahoma

- Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma
- Shawnee Tribe
- Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, New York
- Onondaga Nation
- Stockbridge-Munsee Community, Wisconsin

This initial consultation has been completed by PennDOT District 4-0's cultural resource professionals through Project Path. The PEL Study team will work closely with PennDOT 4-0's cultural resource professionals to ensure compliance with PennDOT's Publication 689, *The Transportation Project Development Process: Cultural Resources Handbook*.

3.2.2 Section 106 Consultation

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires that agencies using federal funds consider their projects' effects on historic properties that are listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Skinners Falls Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and is a contributing resource⁵ to the NRHP-listed Milanville Historic District (PA). It is also within the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, designated as a NPS unit in 1978. The NPS considers this bridge to be a contributing element to the Cultural Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River.

As a part of this process, PennDOT will prepare a Historic Bridge Rehabilitation Analysis (HRBA) for the Skinners Falls Bridge. A HRBA discusses the history and significant features of a historic bridge, as well as its current uses and condition. The report then analyzes rehabilitation options for the structure that also meet the project's purpose and need. Since the rehabilitation alternative is designed and evaluated as part of the PEL Study, the HBRA will proceed concurrently with the PEL Study. The HBRA will be completed prior to the conclusion of the PEL Study and the results of the HBRA will inform the alternatives analysis part of the PEL Study.

Since the project has not advanced in several years, PennDOT District 4-0 has restarted the Section 106 process from the beginning. In September 2022, PennDOT sent new invitation letters to interested consulting parties including the SHPO, local governments, Native American Tribes and Nations, interested parties, and the public. Coordination with consulting parties, the NY and PA SHPOs, and NPS will occur throughout the PEL Study, the HBRA process, and through the project development process in the NEPA phase.

PennDOT utilizes the Pennsylvania Transportation and Heritage (PATH) website to post all documents produced pursuant to Section 106 and State History Code. All relevant documents will be posted and made available to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) and the New York State Historic Preservation Office (NY SHPO), as well as any additional organization that signed up due to receiving the project early-notification email.

⁵ A contributing resource is a building, site, structure, or object that contributes to the significance of a historic district. (U.S. Department of the Interior 1990 How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (Bulletin 15), Prepared by National Park Service, Washington, D.C.)

3.2.3 Section 4(f) Resources

Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (codified in 23 CFR 774) states that the U.S. Secretary of Transportation may approve a transportation project requiring the use of publicly owned land of a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or land from a historic site of national, state, or local significance (as determined by the federal, state, or local officials having jurisdiction over the park, recreation area, refuge, or site) only if:

- There is no prudent and feasible alternative to using that land; and,
- The project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the public park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site resulting from the use; or,
- The use, including any measures to minimize harm (such as avoidance, minimization, mitigation, or enhancement measures), will have a de minimis impact on the property.

For parks, recreational areas, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges, the official(s) with jurisdiction is the official(s) of the agency owning or administering the land. For historic properties, the official with jurisdiction is the SHPO. If the historic property is located on tribal land, the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) is considered the official with jurisdiction.

The Cooperating agencies who participated in the PEL Study phase are anticipated to continue participating through the project development process in the NEPA phase. After a NEPA project is initiated, coordination with the officials with jurisdiction will continue during the Section 4(f) documentation and approval process. Section 4(f) documentation requirements are dictated by the type(s) of Section 4(f) use. The process will follow the procedures set for the in PennDOT's Publication 349, *Section 4(f) Handbook*⁶, and will use the appropriate PennDOT Section 4(f) Forms to assist in the documentation of the applicable Section 4(f) uses: non-applicability/no use, temporary occupancy, de minimis use, and Section 4(f) use that meet the criteria for nationwide programmatic Section 4(f) evaluations.

There are four identified Section 4(f) resources within the PEL Study area.

1. The NRHP-listed Skinners Falls Bridge is an individual Section 4(f) resource.
2. The bridge is also a contributing property in the NRHP-listed Milanville Historic District.
3. The Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River was designated as a NPS unit in 1978. The NPS considers this bridge a contributing element to the Cultural Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River.
4. The Delaware River Water Trail, designated by the PA Fish and Boat Commission.

3.2.4 Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-542; 16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq) creates protections for certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values so that they are preserved in a free-flowing condition for citizens' enjoyment. The NPS classifies the Delaware River as a Scenic and Recreational River in the project area. The Lead Agencies and the PEL Study team will coordinate with the NPS throughout the PEL Study and subsequent NEPA phase regarding the Delaware River.

⁶ <https://www.dot.state.pa.us/public/pubsforms/publications/pub%20349.pdf>

3.2.5 Threatened and Endangered Species

For purposes of this document, any "species of special concern" are those granted protection under federal, PA, and NY laws. These species include any plant, mammal, fish, reptile, amphibian, or bird that has received a Federal, PA, or NY threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate status or a NY "in need of conservation" status. The Lead Agencies and the PEL Study team will coordinate with the appropriate federal and state agencies to identify the possible species of concern in the project area and conduct the appropriate studies in the PEL Study and NEPA phase.

4. PUBLIC COORDINATION

The Coordination Plan is intended to define the process by which PennDOT will communicate information about the Skinners Falls Bridge PEL Study and subsequent NEPA phase to the resource agencies and to the public. It also identifies how input from agencies and the public will be solicited and considered. The plan follows PennDOT's Publication 295, *Project Level Public Involvement Handbook*⁷, and takes into consideration input from NYSDOT Region 9—the Skinners Falls Bridge PEL Study state agency partner.

The information in this chapter will be shared with the public and addresses the methods of public involvement. The plan provides for public input during the Skinners Falls Bridge PEL Study, including developing the purpose and need statement and the alternatives analysis. The plan will be posted on the PennDOT District 4-0 website.

The Skinners Falls Bridge PEL Study public involvement objectives strive to follow those of PennDOT's Publication 295. Informative, timely, and concise communication is essential for building trust and relationships among the community's numerous and varied stakeholders.

Key Objectives:

- Hold an open dialogue with interested citizens.
- Provide a meaningful way to gain input to understand what is important to the community.
- Allow the public to help develop solutions for their community.
- Assess the public's reaction to a proposed action.
- Integrate public views and preferences into decision-making and document their consideration.
- Disclose and consider the environmental consequences of a proposed action.

4.1 Public Meetings

Since the PEL Study was initiated, one public meeting was held on March 30, 2021. The meeting was held in a virtual meeting format with participants logging in. There were approximately 145 people recorded as attending the meeting. The PEL Study team put on a PowerPoint presentation to present a project overview and to explain the PEL Study process. They also discussed local needs. The meeting was followed by a period of comments and questions. Public comments were also received through email, mail, and phone. The public comments were considered when developing the final purpose and need statement.

⁷ <https://www.dot.state.pa.us/public/PubsForms/Publications/PUB%20295.pdf>

A second public meeting will be held towards the end of the PEL Study phase (winter 2024) to present the results of the alternatives analysis and to recommend the alternatives to be carried into the NEPA phase. Similar to the first public meeting, a public survey and comment form will be prepared and available at the meeting and online via the PennDOT District 4 website. It is anticipated that the second public meeting will be held in person.

4.2 Elected Officials Coordination

PennDOT and NYSDOT began coordination with elected officials in March of 2021 to provide information about the Skinners Falls Bridge PEL Study and to notify them of the upcoming public meeting held on March 30, 2021. PennDOT also notified public officials in December of 2021 to make them aware that the purpose and need statement was available for review and comment. To date, elected officials have included:

- Town of Cochection—Town Board Supervisor
- NY Assembly/NY State Representative—Aileen Gunther
- NY Senate—Mike Martucci, Sullivan County
- PA House of Representatives—Michael Peifer, Wayne County
- PA Senate—Lisa Baker, Wayne County

PennDOT and NYSDOT will continue to coordinate with elected officials throughout the PEL Study phase to provide information so they can understand how the PEL Study and future recommendations could affect their constituents. A Public Officials briefing will be held immediately prior to the next public meeting. PennDOT intends to seamlessly transition the coordination with elected officials established during the PEL Study into the NEPA phase.

4.3 Stakeholder Identification and Outreach Tools and Strategies

4.3.1 Meetings with Stakeholders

Stakeholder involvement is a key component of the PEL Study and is another source of input beyond what is received from the public at large. The Skinners Falls Bridge PEL Study stakeholders include:

- The National Park Service (NPS)

In addition to being a Cooperating Agency and a member of the PAC, the NPS also serves as stakeholder. The NPS is the primary responder for all river emergencies but is assisted by the surrounding fire departments of both states. In May 2014, the NPS provided information about the types and sizes of their rescue vehicle fleet to PennDOT. The NPS reported that since May through September 2017, there were 151 major incidents which have been responded to from their Milanville, PA Ranger Station requiring the use of the Skinners Falls Bridge, as well as the adjacent Delaware River access location in New York. NPS river response vehicle access is a concern for them as a stakeholder. In September 2019, PennDOT met with the NPS to provide details about the bridge inspection and anticipated rehabilitation approaches.

- Emergency Responders

A Joint Position Statement was issued on March 4, 2020, by representatives from local agencies and organizations, including Damascus Township, Upper Delaware Council, Chamber of the Northern Poconos, Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, Town of Cochection, Lake Huntingdon Fire Department,

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Committee, and Wayne County Planning Commission. The Position Statement asserted that the Skinners Falls Bridge is needed to provide emergency response, support the local economy, and connect the adjacent PA and NY communities.

Between March and June 2021, the PEL Study team conducted interviews with the Lake Huntingdon NY Fire Department; the Narrowsburg NY Fire Department; the Equinunk PA Fire Department; the Welcome Lake PA Volunteer Fire and Rescue; and the Wayne County PA 911 Dispatch (the Lava NY Volunteer Fire Department defers to Narrowsburg Fire Department). Key themes from the emergency responders included fire truck capacity needed, increased emergency response time with Skinners Falls Bridge closed, additional river crossing facilities, river rescues more feasible from PA side, Equinunk PA Fire Rescue uses river water to fill tank tankers and only has river access on NY side.

- Local Businesses

Telephone interviews were held with four local businesses near the bridge between May and June 2021. In sum, these businesses cited a desire that the bridge be used mainly as a pedestrian/bicycle connection, to accommodate personal vehicles and ambulances, and the need for truck and trailer access across the bridge.

The PEL Study team anticipates holding stakeholder meetings as needed throughout the PEL Study phase to address specific project issues or concerns. The means for contacting the PEL Study team with concerns includes a Project Hotline (telephone number) and an email address. The Project Hotline information was provided at the March 30, 2021 virtual Public Meeting, and is posted on the PennDOT District 4-0 project webpage. Stakeholder meetings will be documented and included in the public outreach technical file.

4.3.2 Project Advisory Committee (PAC)

The Project Advisory Committee is made up of major stakeholders who represent the needs and priorities of the community. The PAC members are responsible for the following:

- Provide information on local/regional needs, issues and activities related to Skinners Falls.
- Advise the PEL Study team on transportation needs and goals.
- Communicate with constituents about the PEL Study.
- Encourage public participation.

The following stakeholders make up the PAC:

- Town of Cohecton
- Damascus Township Board of Supervisors
- National Park Service (NPS)
- Sullivan County Planning Commissioner
- Upper Delaware Council (UDC)
- Wayne County Board of Commissioners Chair
- Wayne County Director of Planning

The PAC met on two previous occasions in February and September 2021. Three additional meetings with the PAC are planned to present information and seek input on upcoming major milestones as shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4: PAC Coordination Points

Coordination Point	Date of Coordination	Information to be Presented/Discussed
PAC #1	February 22, 2021	PEL Study Initiation and Discussion of Needs
PAC #2	September 23, 2021	PEL Study Update
PAC #3	January 19, 2023	Public and Agency Coordination Plan PEL Study Update Final Purpose and Need Statement
PAC #4	Fall 2023	Result of Phase I Alternatives Assessment
PAC #5	Early 2024	Result of Phase II Alternatives Assessment Alternatives to be Carried in NEPA

PennDOT intends to seamlessly transition the PAC established during the PEL Study into the NEPA phase. If it is determined through the PEL Study that it is appropriate for a member of the PAC to change roles, PennDOT would coordinate with FHWA to modify or extend a formal invitation letter to the member requiring a change in their role. Additionally, if other potential major stakeholders would be needed for their expertise or technical knowledge during the NEPA phase that was not necessary in the PEL Study, PennDOT, and FHWA would formally invite the new member to the PAC in a manner consistent with the PEL Study invitations.

4.3.3 Public Coordination Tools

The following tools will be implemented as necessary to enhance communication with the public:

- Skinners Falls Bridge Website

The PEL Study-specific sub-site hosted on PennDOT District 4-0's website was created in early 2021 as an information hub to announce public meetings. It has been updated as PEL Study milestones occur. A link to the website can be found at:

<https://www.penndot.pa.gov/RegionalOffices/district-4/PublicMeetings/Wayne%20County/Pages/Skinners-Falls-Bridge-Project.aspx>.

A brief description of the Skinners Falls Bridge Project can also be found on the NYSDOT Region 9 webpage. The link can be found at:

https://www.dot.ny.gov/portal/pls/portal/MEXIS_APP.DYN_PROJECT_DETAILS.show?p_arg_names=p_pin&p_arg_values=975504.

The PennDOT PEL Study website content has included, or may include the following:

- PEL Study fact sheets, updates, and public information materials, including public meeting dates
- PEL Study photos or videos
- Contact information for the Project Hotline (email and phone number)

- Meeting announcements
- Media releases
- PEL Study reports, as appropriate
- PEL Study milestones and schedule
- Online form(s) to gather contact information and feedback
- Visualization (e.g., renderings, drawings, maps, photos, videos) to provide visual examples of design concepts)
- Links to other related webpages

As appropriate, all comments and responses will be recorded and included in the public and stakeholder tracking log, technical reports, and PEL Study record. Future website content is not limited to the items listed above and could contain additional information as the PEL Study progresses. The PennDOT District 4 website will be updated after the NEPA phase is initiated to become the Skinners Falls Bridge Project website. It is anticipated that the website will contain an overview of the PEL Study history and process with a link to the PEL Study Report, as well as the project-related information.

- PEL Study Survey and Comment Forms

Immediately following the virtual public meeting held March 30, 2021, a project survey was conducted to capture public feedback on transportation needs and data on how the public used the bridge prior to its closure. The public survey and comment form was made available via the project website or by request and had a 60-day comment period between March 31 and June 1, 2021. Public comments were also received through email, mail, and phone. Those who provided comments with contact information were added to the PEL Study contacts list for future outreach. The survey results and public comments were incorporated into the draft purpose and need statement. The draft purpose and need document and public comment form was available on the project website and had a 60-day comment period between December 8, 2021 and February 7, 2022. Public comments were also received through email, mail, and phone. The Public Comment Response Report and the final purpose and need statement are both available on the PennDOT District 4 website.

Similar to the first public meeting, a public survey and comment form will be available after the second public meeting via the PennDOT District 4 website or by request. It is anticipated that the second public meeting will be held in person, and that the public survey will also be available in person at the meeting. There will be a 30-day comment period on the materials presented at the public meeting, and the results will be incorporated into Public Comment Response Report and considered as part of the PEL Study.

- Public Meeting Notifications

Prior to the virtual Public Meeting held on March 30, 2021, PennDOT advertised the meeting on their website and in the most circulated newspapers in the region. The website and the newspapers provided an overview the PEL Study, and included links to the project materials, and an online survey/public comment form, as well as a link to allow access to the upcoming virtual public meeting. The articles also included the phone number and email for the Skinners Falls Bridge hotline.

PennDOT also mailed postcards to property owners, residents, and business owners in the project area that announced the meeting and the Public Comment Period.

Following the public meeting, PennDOT disseminated information about, and solicited public input on, the Skinners Falls Bridge through advertisements in local newspapers between March and April 2021. The articles provided an overview of the PEL Study and directions on how to locate the public comment form on the PennDOT District 4 website.

PennDOT will follow this same notification process for future public meetings.

- Stakeholder Database

PennDOT is maintaining a Stakeholder Database throughout the PEL Study and subsequent NEPA process. All people who provided their contact information during the 60-day public survey comment period or via the project hotline were added to a contact list for future outreach and meeting notification. All project stakeholders are also included in this list. The PEL Study team maintains a database of contacts and will continue to expand it through the PEL Study phase.

- Media

PennDOT has been responsive to Press inquiries to date. Prior to the Public Meeting on March 30, 2021, and throughout the PEL Study to date, PennDOT disseminated information about, and solicited public input on, the Skinners Falls Bridge through advertisements in local newspapers.

4.4 Section 404 Permit Public Comment

The Cooperating agencies who participated in the PEL Study phase are anticipated to continue participating through the project development process in the NEPA phase. After a NEPA project is initiated, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has permitting jurisdiction under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The project would utilize a merged NEPA/Section 404 process in which the environmental document will serve as the NEPA decision-making document and the Section 404 permit application. It is anticipated that an Environmental Assessment (EA) would be the appropriate class of NEPA documentation for a future Skinners Falls Bridge project, as explained in the following section of this Coordination Plan. Therefore, the environmental document approval requirements for both NEPA and Section 404 would be covered jointly, and the public would have the opportunity to comment on the Section 404 permit application. The public involvement process for the EA would be summarized during the project introduction to the public.

5. IDENTIFY ANTICIPATED CLASS OF NEPA DOCUMENT

Following the approval of the Skinners Falls Bridge PEL Study Report, the Preliminary Engineering/NEPA Decision Phase for the Skinners Falls Bridge project will begin. Projects where the significance of the impacts is not certain are begun as EAs. It is anticipated that an EA would be the appropriate class of NEPA documentation for the project. The decision to use an EA for the project, and to follow the environmental review process in Section 139 of Title 23, U.S. Code, will be made by FHWA.

The project will be introduced to the public through a public meeting or other method at the beginning of the NEPA phase. Because the PEL Study phase would be concluded, the public and stakeholders should have some familiarity with the project. It is anticipated that the Cooperating and Participating Agencies who participated in the PEL Study phase would participate through the NEPA phase. The lead federal and state agencies responsible for the preparation of the EA will be identified and a brief description of the proposed

action and possible alternatives and environmental resources will be outlined. The public involvement process for the EA would also be summarized during the project introduction to the public. The EA for the Skinners Falls Bridge proposed action/project is anticipated to begin in the winter of 2024.