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HPO-E2012-092

State of New Jersey

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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

NATURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER

Mail Code 501-3A

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Lt. Governor

BOB MARTIN
Commissioner

May 11, 2012

Paul Wyckoff
Chief, Government and External Affairs
NJ Transit
One Penn Plaza East
Newark, NJ 07105-2246

Re: Princeton Railroad Station Track Removal Project
Princeton Railroad Station
Mercer County, Borough of Princeton

Dear Mr. Wyckoff:

I am writing concerning your application for authorization of the proposed Princeton Railroad Station Track Removal Project. The Princeton Railroad Station is listed in the New Jersey Register of Historic Places. In accordance with the New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act, the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) presented the application to the New Jersey Historic Sites Council (HSC) at its February 16, 2012 and April 19, 2012 meetings. I have taken into account the recommendation made by the Council and I am adopting their resolution number 2012 - 341 (attached).

I hereby authorize the abandonment of 460' of the transportation easement at the north end of the Princeton Branch Railroad with the following mitigating conditions:

1. Prior to the abandonment of the easement, Historic American Building Survey (HABS) quality documentation shall be performed to record the current appearance of the Princeton Railroad Station complex and its physical setting. The quantity, nature, quality, specific content, and disposition of the photographs to be taken, shall be decided through consultation with and, thereafter, reviewed by the HPO.
2. NJ Transit shall promote public awareness of the history of the Princeton Railroad Station through the installation and permanent maintenance of interpretive displays at the Princeton Railroad Station and/or the new Dinky station. These displays shall use text and historic photographs to present the history of the station and the Princeton Branch, in particular, its relationship to both the township and the University.

3. The track shall not be removed until the service is terminated and the connection work for the new track has commenced. NJ Transit will not abandon the easement until new transit service is in operation.

Please note that, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:4 – 7.2 (c) 5, you must respond in writing to the conditions within 60 days of the date of this letter. If you agree to the conditions specified above, please sign the bottom of this letter in the space provided and return it to the HPO. Signature on the bottom of this letter will constitute formal acceptance of the conditions of project authorization. If you disagree or fail to respond to the requirements set forth within 60 days, I must, by regulation, deny your application.

The New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act does not apply to the private actions of Princeton University. Please note that in its Resolution, the Council made a non-binding recommendation to Princeton University that the Princeton Railroad Station complex be rehabilitated in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties-Rehabilitation*. I am forwarding the Historic Sites Council's recommendations by copy of this letter to Princeton University.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Dan Saunders of my staff at (609) 633-2397 or at dan.saunders@dep.state.nj.us. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Rich Boornazian
Assistant Commissioner for
Natural and Historic Resources

By signing this letter, NJ Transit accepts the conditions of authorization outlined above, in accordance with New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act, Chapter 4, Laws of 1970 and N.J.A.C. 7:4 – 7.2 (c) 5.

For NJ Transit

Date

Attachments

C: Robert W. Bruschi, Borough Administrator
Nora Kerr, Chair, PHPRC
Idamis Perez-Margicin, Chief, MCCHC
Erin Dougherty, Executive Director, HSP
Trustees of Princeton University
Dara Callender, NJT

NEW JERSEY HISTORIC SITES COUNCIL
RESOLUTION #2012-341

NAMES OF PROPERTY ON STATE
REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES: Princeton Railroad Station Track Removal
Project

COUNTY: Mercer
MUNICIPALITY: Borough of Princeton
DATE REGISTERED: 3/17/1984
APPLICANT: NJ Transit

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Historic Sites Council, created pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:1B-15.108 et seq. is authorized by, N.J.S.A. 13:1B-15.131 to offer advice and recommendations concerning encroachments upon properties listed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places to the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection; and

WHEREAS, NJ Transit has requested authorization to abandon 460' of the transportation easement at the northern end of the Princeton Branch rail corridor, and establish a new rail terminus for the Princeton Branch Railroad south of the present site; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Historic Sites Council conducted open public meetings on February 16, 2012 and April 19, 2012, pursuant to the requirements of the "Open Public Meetings Act", N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq.; and

WHEREAS, the jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Protection/Historic Sites Council under the New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act, N.J.S.A. 13:1B-15.131, and its attendant regulation, N.J.A.C. 7:4, concerns the consideration of actions with effects, both direct and indirect, on New Jersey Register of Historic Places listed properties; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Historic Sites Council, based on the evidence presented at the public meeting, made the following findings of fact:

1. The Princeton Railroad Station complex consists of a 1 ½ story stone station building (North Building), a 1 ½ story stone freight house (South Building), tracks, platform and canopy. The complex was listed in the New Jersey Register of Historic Places on March 17, 1984 as part of a thematic nomination of Operating Passenger Railroad Stations.
2. The Princeton Railroad Station, designed by Alexander C. Shand in the Collegiate Gothic style, was constructed in 1918. The station building is constructed of stone, with a tooled granite base and coursed ashlar walls. The

window surrounds, sills and gable end coping are limestone and the roof is slate. The waiting room has a terrazzo floor, paneled wainscot and plastered walls and ceilings. The ceiling consists of a barrel vault with groin vault in the center on axis with the doors. The freight house is constructed of stone with coursed ashlar walls. The window sills, lintels and coping are concrete and the roof is slate. The windows have stone voussoirs, wood brackets and rafter tails. The station and freight house are connected by a canopy on the east.

3. The Princeton Railroad Station is significant as a good example of the Collegiate Gothic style, adapted to the functions of an early 20th century rail terminal. The design and materials are consistent with many of the buildings of nearby Princeton University. The station is a terminal—located at the north end of a branch line that joins the main line (Northeast Corridor) at Princeton Junction. It is served by a shuttle train; known locally as “the Dinky.”
4. The appropriate standard to evaluate this project is the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Buildings – Rehabilitation*. “Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.”
5. The Historic Preservation Office (HPO) has determined that, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:4 – 7.4, the proposed undertaking is an encroachment that will diminish the character and integrity of the registered property, the Princeton Railroad Station, because the project as currently proposed will result in abandonment of the easement and subsequent removal of track and infrastructure. The project as proposed violates Preservation Standard 4; the abandonment of the easement will lead to the alteration of the character of the registered property.
6. Specifically, the abandonment of the easement, as proposed, includes the following adverse impacts:
 - Abandonment of the NJ Transit easement results in the permanent loss of the connection of the Princeton Railroad Station to track and railroad infrastructure;
 - The Princeton Railroad Station will no longer function in its historic use as a terminal train station.
 - NJ Transit will remove all rail related infrastructure, including track and catenary, adjacent to the Princeton Railroad Station, for a length of 460.’
7. The Princeton Railroad Station and adjacent right-of-way (ROW) were owned and operated by the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) until 1968, when the PRR merged with the New York Central Railroad to form the Penn Central. The

Penn Central declared bankruptcy just two years later. In 1971, the portion of the PRR main line known as the Northeast Corridor became part of the Amtrak system. The Princeton Branch came under the control of the New Jersey Department of Transportation and in 1983, following the formation of NJ Transit Rail Operations, became the NJ Transit Princeton Branch.

8. NJ Transit sold the station and freight buildings, the canopy-covered platform, and the parking lot to Princeton University in 1984, retaining an easement for public transportation purposes covering the ROW, the platform, and facilities within the station and freight house for commuter and crew use. Princeton University covenanted to provide commuter parking spaces adjacent to the complex. The sales agreement also stated that Princeton University would maintain the parking and the buildings, and had the right to relocate the passenger station and related facilities to the freight house, and move the existing rail terminus southward, on the condition that it provides a platform to accommodate train service at the relocated terminus. The covenant attached to the sales agreement confirmed that the easement would "terminate five (5) years after the abandonment and termination of passenger service to the property, unless passenger service is reinstated during the five year period."
9. In 1996, an Amendment to the Agreement of Sale stated that NJ Transit would vacate the station building (North building) and relocate its facilities to the freight house (South building) following improvements by the University, and that passenger and crew facilities would be available within the freight house. The passenger facilities in the freight house were closed when ticket sales were automated.
10. In 1997, Princeton Borough adopted an amendment to the Princeton Community Master Plan (1996) titled Historic Preservation Element. The Historic Preservation Element makes a number of suggestions, including "Extension of the existing Central Historic Preservation District on the east side of University Place to include railroad station." This suggestion was not implemented and the Princeton Railroad Station remains outside of the locally designated historic district.
11. Princeton University is not subject to review under the *New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act*.
12. Princeton University will construct a new NJ Transit train station for the Dinky line, south of the Princeton Railroad Station. NJ Transit will then relocate the rail terminus 460' south of the present location and establish a new transportation easement. The construction of a new station is part of a larger vision on the part of Princeton University to promote the arts through the creation of an Arts and Transit Center on the western edge of the campus that will be home to the new Lewis Center for the Arts. Incorporated into this plan are improvements to reduce traffic congestion.

13. In 2011 the proposed Arts and Transit Center was the subject of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Princeton University and the Municipalities of Princeton Borough and Princeton Township. The MOU describes agreement between these three entities in continuing and improving transportation service along the NJ Transit Princeton Branch, known as the Dinky line. Princeton Borough and Princeton Township have adopted zoning that will allow the University to establish the new Arts and Transit district.
14. Through the above mentioned MOU, Princeton University, Princeton Borough and Princeton Township, agreed to request approval from NJ Transit to re-open the Princeton Railroad Station (north building) waiting room to the public. Subsequent to this approval, the waiting room is to remain open on a limited basis until the discontinuation of train service to the current location.
15. Princeton University refurbished the interior of the Station (north building) in October 2011, including cleaning, general repair, plaster repair and painting. Princeton University opened the station building on November 1, 2011 for passenger waiting on a limited basis, Monday through Friday.
16. Princeton University has chosen Rick Joy as the architect for the project. Mr. Joy will be working with local architects Mills & Schnoering, who meet the National Park Service's Professional Qualifications Standards for "historic architecture." The architect has been charged with the design of the new station as well as the renovation of the original station buildings to house a restaurant and café.
17. No detailed site plan that specifies the disposition of the canopy, track, and other railroad infrastructure was submitted.
18. The relocation of the rail terminus and the removal of the tracks is the subject of litigation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the New Jersey Historic Sites Council, that based upon the above findings, the Council recommends that the Commissioner authorize the NJ Transit track removal project with the following conditions that will avoid, minimize or mitigate the adverse impacts of the project as currently proposed:

1. Prior to the abandonment of the easement, Historic American Building Survey (HABS) quality documentation shall be performed to record the current appearance of the Princeton Railroad Station complex and its physical setting. The quantity, nature, quality, specific content, and disposition of the photographs to be taken shall be decided through consultation with and, thereafter, reviewed by the HPO.

2. NJ Transit shall promote public awareness of the history of the Princeton Railroad Station through the installation and permanent maintenance of interpretive displays at the Princeton Railroad Station and/or the new Dinky station. These displays shall use text and historic photographs to present the history of the station and the Princeton Branch, in particular, its relationship to both the township and the University.
3. The track shall not be removed until the service is terminated and the connection work for the new track has commenced. NJ Transit will not abandon the easement until new transit service is in operation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the New Jersey Historic Sites Council, that based upon the above findings, the Council recommends to Princeton University that the Princeton Railroad Station complex be rehabilitated in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties-Rehabilitation*, and that the character defining features, including the buildings, canopies, platform, and track, be considered in any future rehabilitation.

MOVED BY: William Saunders
SECONDED BY: Marilou Ehrler
IN FAVOR: 5
AGAINST: 1
ABSTAIN: 0

The Council's recommendations and advice are forwarded to the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection. The Commissioner makes a final determination.