



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

Old State House 150 Benefit Street Providence, RI 02903

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23 June 2026

Via email: jacob.begin@dot.ri.gov

Jacob Begin
Interdepartmental Project Manager
Cultural Resources Unit
Rhode Island Department of Transportation
Two Capitol Hill – Room 370A
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Re: RIHPHC Project No. 19346
Cliff Walk Repair Project 2026-01-003
Between Narragansett Avenue and Webster Street
Newport, Rhode Island
Section 4(f) De Minimis Impact Finding for Historic Sites

Dear Mr. Begin:

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) staff has reviewed the information that you submitted related to a *Section 4(f) De Minimis Impact Finding for Historic Sites* for the Cliff Walk Repair Project. The RIDOT is proposing to repair an approximately 550-foot-long section of the Cliff Walk between Narragansett Avenue and Webster Street, in Newport. A temporary access easement is required through the property at 185-199 Narragansett Avenue (Assessor's Plat 36 Lot 001) to make the required repairs to the Cliff Walk. The property, known as "Southside," is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing property in the Ochre Point-Cliffs Historic District, which is, itself, a part of the Bellevue Avenue National Historic Landmark District.

The easement will be contained within the privately-owned parcel, parallel to the work area along the cliff face. Work within the easement will consist of material delivery and laydown, equipment staging, crane access and support, and general site access. The easement will be utilized for the length of construction and returned to its current condition after construction is complete. The proposed permanent drainage easement will not affect features associated with the historic property and will aid in increasing protection of the property from erosive forces.

Based on our review of the available information, the RIHPHC has no objection to the *de minimis* determination.

These comments are provided in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. If you have any questions, please contact me directly at 222-4134 or jeffrey.emidy@preservation.ri.gov.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey D. Emidy
Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer



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20 February 2026

Via email: lturner@crmc.ri.gov
jabbruzzese@crmc.ri.gov

Raymond Coia, Chair
Coastal Resources Management Council
Oliver H. Stedman Government Center
4808 Tower Hill Road
Wakefield, Rhode Island 02879

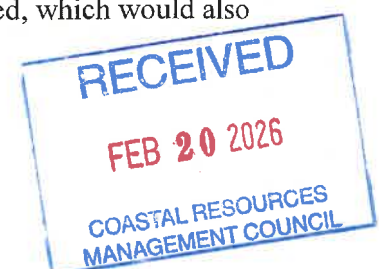
Re: CRMC File Number: 2026-01-003
Applicant: William R. Riccio, Jr. for the City of Newport
Cliff Walk Repair Project
Between Narragansett Avenue and Webster Street
Newport, Rhode Island

Dear Mr. Coia:

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) staff has reviewed the information that your office provided for the above-referenced application. The City of Newport is proposing to repair an approximately 550-foot-long section of the Cliff Walk between Narragansett Avenue and Webster Street, in Newport. The project generally consists of the repair of washed-out sections of the walkway and adjacent areas, and cliff and slope stabilization measures.

In Section 1.1.1(A) of its letter of December 11, 2025, that is attached to the CRMC application, GZA environmental, on behalf of the City, stated that "the area is located within The City of Newport Historic District." It is unclear to me if this refers to a City-designated historic district, however, the Cliff Walk is a contributing resource in the Ochre Point-Cliffs Historic District, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The entire Ochre Point-Cliffs Historic District is included within the larger Bellevue Avenue Historic District, a National Historic Landmark district.

The RIHPHC is reviewing this project under the regulations of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act because it is being at least partially funded with Congressionally Designated Spending administered through the Federal Highway Administration and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT). Page 3 of the December 11, 2025, GZA letter states that a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may be needed, which would also trigger a Section 106 review.



As you will see in the attached letter to the RIDOT dated February 20, 2026, the RIHPHC has multiple comments and questions regarding this proposal. Accordingly, at this time, we have not determined whether or not the project will have an adverse effect on historic properties.

These comments are provided in accordance with *650-RICR-20-00-1.2.3 Areas of Historic and Archaeological Significance* of the Coastal Resources Management Council. If you have any questions, please contact me directly at jeffrey.emidy@preservation.ri.gov or 222-4134.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey D. Emidy
Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure: February 20, 2026 letter from RIHPHC to RIDOT

C: William Riccio, Jr., City of Newport, by email
Jacob Begin, RIDOT, by email





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20 February 2026

Via email: jacob.begin@dot.ri.gov

Jacob Begin
Interdepartmental Project Manager
Cultural Resources Unit
Rhode Island Department of Transportation
Two Capitol Hill – Room 370A
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Re: RIHPHC Project No. 19346
Cliff Walk Repair Project
Between Narragansett Avenue and Webster Street
Newport, Rhode Island

Dear Mr. Begin:

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) staff has reviewed the information that you provided for the above-referenced project, including a set of drawings by GZA Environmental, Inc., entitled *Newport Cliff Walk Repair* and dated December 2025. The Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) is proposing to repair an approximately 550-foot-long section of the Cliff Walk between Narragansett Avenue and Webster Street, in Newport. The project generally consists of the repair of washed-out sections of the walkway and adjacent areas, and cliff and slope stabilization measures. We understand that this project is being at least partially funded with Congressionally Designated Spending administered through the Federal Highway Administration and the RIDOT, and is also subject to permits from the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council and likely from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

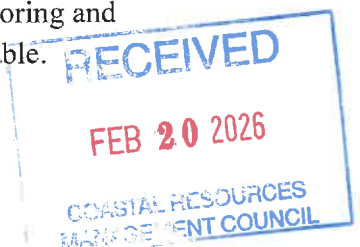
At various points along the 550-foot project area, the proposed work includes, but is not limited to: filling voids in the cliff face with grout or concrete; the installation of geotextile fabric, crushed stone, and riprap; construction of a new retaining wall; reconstruction of the walkway; and placement of large (5 to 6 foot diameter) armoring stones over multiple base layers at the cliff base. Nearly all of this work will be above the mean low water (MLW) level. According to the *Section 106 Documentation Sheet/Project Notification and Recommendation of Effect* that you provided, the proposed activities will be the minimum necessary to stabilize the existing shoreline.

As you are aware, the Cliff Walk is a contributing resource in the Ochre Point-Cliffs Historic District, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The entire Ochre Point-Cliffs Historic District is included within the larger Bellevue Avenue Historic District, a National Historic Landmark district.



We have multiple comments and questions regarding the proposed project.

- Overall: based on the section drawings, the proposed, sloped armor stone will extend between approximately 32 and 55 feet from the most seaward extent of the cliff at the MLW level and extends approximately 27 feet above MLW across the entire project area. This will create a significant change in appearance to the Cliff Walk. It will be visible from the water within Easton Bay and appears that parts of it could be visible from the Cliff Walk path. Only a segment of the 550-foot project area has collapsed. What factor(s) led to the determination to extend the project area to this extent?
- Overall, waves tend to hit a mostly vertical wall in the existing condition. Will adding a stone-armored slope effectively push the waves' force further up to areas that are composed of softer material (specifically at the areas designated as Sections 1 and 5 as shown on drawing 3), furthering erosion at those levels and allowing eventual undermining of the armored slope from behind?
- Section 1: the armoring assembly will be installed in front of conglomerate bedrock. Conglomerates can vary in hardness; what is the hardness of the conglomerate here? Are there signs that it is eroding?
- Section 2: When was the extant granite block wall installed? If there is not an additional armor layer present, one might presume that the wall was designed to not need one. Are plans from the wall construction project available to indicate whether or not there was an armor layer seaward of the wall which was either not installed or has been displaced? If there was not such a layer, what has led to the decision to install one now?
- Section 3: Multiple repair and reinforcement projects over the years have caused the cliff face to become a patchwork of various natural and man-made stone types. Is the proposed Stone Strong block in use anywhere else on the Cliff Walk? If so, please provide elevation photographs taken from the water or a drone keyed to a map that show where it has been installed. Please provide a catalog cut or other photographs of what the proposed Strong Stone blocks look like.
- Section 3: If the Strong Stone blocks are concrete, are they rated for a marine environment? The armor slope appears that it will push waves right up to the Strong Stone block wall. Are the blocks mortared together, to keep water under wave pressure from getting between them and soaking into the concrete, then spalling?
- Section 3: Has granite block like that which has been used elsewhere on the Cliff Walk, including within the project area, been considered for use in place of Strong Stone block? If so, why was it not proposed?
- Section 3: Please provide details for the proposed paved gutters shown on Drawing 19, such as the paving material, edge treatments, and side-to-side section.
- Section 3: Do the proposed galvanized steel tube railings shown on Drawing 20 match others in place on the Cliff Walk in both design and finish? Please provide details of the proposed design and photographs of the similar Cliff Walk railings, if applicable.
- Section 3: Drawing 20 Note 5 states that, "[Walkway] Concrete shall be integrally colored and stamped where shown on plans." Does this match existing treatments elsewhere on the Cliff Walk? Please provide details of the proposed coloring and stamping, and photographs of the similar Cliff Walk surfaces, if applicable.
- Section 4: no comments



- Section 5: When was the existing granite block wall installed? Other than the void behind, does this wall show signs of movement or deterioration that indicate that it needs to be armored?
- Section 5: We would like more information on the proposed RIDOT R-8 Riprap area. What color and kind of stone? Angular or rounded? Will it be stacked or dumped?

The RIDOT has concluded that the project will have no adverse effect on historic properties. Because of the questions and needs listed above, we are unable to make a determination of effect at this point.

These comments are provided in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. If you have any questions, please contact me directly at 222-4134 or jeffrey.emidy@preservation.ri.gov.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey D. Emidy
Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer

