



Newburyport Turnpike, 1911  
Courtesy photo

## The Re-Elming of Route One: ERI's idea now policy In New Hampshire

If you've been an ERI member for a while, you know about "The Re-Elming of Route One," a program we began in 1995. Now the idea of elm restoration in towns along the historic highway has led to an official policy in New Hampshire, thanks to the adoption of a resolution introduced by Rep. Robert "Renny" Cushing, Hampton.

ERI Executive Director John Hansel worked with Renny in writing the resolution. "This resolution has the effect of law," said Cushing, "so it is now the policy of the state of New Hampshire. It endorses the effort to re-elm U.S. Route 1. I'm pretty excited about it."

In part the resolution reads: "...for centuries the elm provided shade and beauty and enhanced the environment of our cities and towns, standing as a graceful sentinel on almost every street and square, lining and giving protection and definition to roadways and public spaces across our land...The re-elm of U.S. Route 1 would have a beneficial impact on the natural environment, culture, and aesthetics of U.S. Route 1 in New Hampshire and the nation..."

Cushing grew up in Hampton, a Route 1 community. "My childhood memories are of my grandmother's front yard, which was on Route 1, which had these tall elm trees gracing it. And I remember how neat it looked.

"I also remember how sad it was when Dutch elm

disease came and having to cut all those elms down," he said. "I'm looking forward to a time when that memory I have of me with my grandparents on Route 1 in Hampton, seeing a street lined with elms, will be something I'll be able to experience with my grandchildren."

The resolution acknowledges ERI's founding in 1967 and its goals of preserving remaining elms and developing a disease-resistant tree. It recognizes that "In recent years Elm Research Institute and others have succeeded in developing disease resistant elms" and urges the department of transportation, the office of state planning, and New Hampshire communities on Route 1 to support efforts to replace elms.

Cushing explained the resolution is going out to New Hampshire's Route 1 communities, to planning boards, boards of selectmen, city councils, and regional planning commissions to support efforts to replace elms. He hopes other states will follow New Hampshire's lead and support elm restoration along the highway. U.S. 1, America's first east coast highway, runs 2,209 miles between Fort Kent, Maine, and Key West, Fla., passing through 14 states and Washington, D.C. Our elm can be grown all along the route.

We thank Renny Cushing for his perseverance in seeing this bill through, also Kay Cushman, who testified while the bill was in committee. Kay is a "Conscientious

Injector" who takes care of older American elms by injecting them with ERI's fungicide. John Hansel also testified.

And thanks to the members of the New Hampshire House and Senate for making their state the first to officially promote elm restoration on U.S. 1. The following is a reprint of a Boston Globe article from August 24, 1998 by Alice Giordano, Globe Correspondent. *Route 1 Mission: remake in shade Elms could restore highway's charm*

Donald Harriss remembers when Route 1 in Lynnfield was so shady he had to use his headlights on bright, sunny days.

He has a long memory.

"There was a solid line of elms on both sides," said Harriss, who lives in Lynnfield. "They were just absolutely beautiful trees."

Much has changed since the 1930's. Brake shops, traffic lights, and shopping malls have turned Route 1, America's oldest highway, into a busy and often avoided thoroughfare. The 10-mile stretch north of Boston is like a giant aisle in a brightly lit supermarket.

Now, through a movement begun in New Hampshire, towns along the east coast are working to restore at least a shadow of Route 1's heritage as a scenic byway. And they're pinning their hopes on the elm.

The Elm Research Institute, a small nonprofit organization in Westmoreland, N.H., approached about 40 communities this year with the

idea of replanting elms along their stretches of Route 1. Among those who jumped at the chance are Fort Kent, Maine, a small logging community near the Canadian border, where Route 1 starts, and Key West, Fla., where the 2,209-mile highway ends.

In between, the elm effort has spread throughout all 14 states that Route 1 traverses, including the five in New England.

In Maine, which boasts the longest and most preserved piece of Route 1, seven towns - including Camden, Van Buren, and Yarmouth - have already planted elms on their stretches of highway. Massachusetts communities working on elm projects include Attleboro, Norwood, Ipswich, and Lynnfield. New Hampshire has gone so far as to set the elm effort into law. Last month, the Legislature approved a measure directing the state Department of Transportation to incorporate elm planting along the state's 18 miles of Route 1 into its 10 year highway improvement plan.

To John Hansel, executive director of Elm Research Institute, passage of the measure came as an unexpected blessing. "Route 1 is Main Street America," said Hansel, who lives in Harrisville, N.H. (Ed. note: John Hansel now lives in Walpole, NH) "It tied all of the colonies together and is a history lesson in itself. Paul Revere walked 200 miles down Route 1 all the way home to Boston after his defeat in Penobscot, Maine."

