

CHAPTER 3: TRANSPORTATION

Challenges and Opportunities

3.1 Roads: Lancaster's transportation network both ties the community together and links it to the outside world. Local streets and roads should provide safe, reliable access to work, schools, shopping, and residences. The location and quality of the local street system has a great impact on where development will occur, and transportation links with the outside world greatly influence the potential for economic growth. A safe and efficient road network is essential to the smooth functioning of the community.

3.2 Lancaster is fortunate to lie at the intersection of US Route 2 (east-west) and US Route 3 (north-south), two important transportation corridors in the North Country. Route 2 represents a major transportation route for not only Northern New Hampshire but Northern New England, while at the same time functioning as Main Street in Lancaster. It is a road that is used as much by local traffic as commercial. It incorporates residential, agricultural, tourism, forestry and commercial uses as it passes through Lancaster. Residents agree that traffic congestion and safety on North Main Street at the Bridge Street intersection is a problem at certain times of the day and year due to delays and difficulty entering Main Street from side streets. While these routes bring potential for economic growth, they also bring challenges of pedestrian safety, noise and traffic circulation problems on Main Street. Inappropriate development along scenic entrances to town, particularly Route 3 south and Route 2 east, are also concerns of many citizens. Results from a Road Safety Audit in October 2010, sponsored by North Country Council, identified a need for improvements to the North and South junctions of Routes 2 & 3.

3.3 Bridges: Eleven Town-owned bridges are inspected by the State Department of Transportation at least every two years with copies of reports forwarded to the Town. Two of the bridges (McGary Hill Road and Mt Orne Covered Bridge) are red-listed due to deficiencies. Both are part of the State Bridge-Aid program allowing for State funding along with Town matching funds to repair and replace. A third (Mechanic Street Covered Bridge) is red-listed due to height and weight limits.

3.4 Air Transportation: The Mount Washington Regional Airport is a fully authorized airport owned and operated year-round by the Mount Washington Regional Airport Commission. The airport could be a huge economic development asset in the region. The Town should work with the Airport Commission to help maintain and expand its current services in hopes of attracting new and expanded businesses and industries.

3.5 Bus Service: Currently there is local public bus service serving Lancaster. Most notably the Tri-Town Trolley bus service which provides transportation between the towns of Lancaster, Whitefield and Littleton and is managed by North Country Transportation, a program of Tri-County CAP. North Country Transportation also provides transportation to elderly and disabled citizens in the region. The current bus service is felt to be a needed asset to the Town and the region and every opportunity to expand it and make it a more profitable and sustainable business should be encouraged and supported.

3.6 Rail service: Ownership of the branch rail line which runs through Lancaster has now passed to the state of New Hampshire. The nearest freight rail service is in Groveton, connecting Montreal, Canada and Portland, Maine.

Goal 3.1: To provide a safe and efficient transportation system on both state and local roads within the community.

Objectives:

- 1) Future commercial and residential development should be planned so that Lancaster remains a walkable community, with attractive sidewalks in good repair.
- 2) State bridge inspection reports should be used to develop a regular maintenance schedule for each bridge with appropriate funds being made available to carry out any necessary repairs. The Town should also take advantage of any funding made available by the State of NH for bridge maintenance and/or replacement.
- 3) Local officials will work closely with NH DOT to come up with a plan for future improvements at the Route 2 and 3 intersections.
- 4) Encourage downtown employers to secure parking off Main Street for their employees during business hours.
- 5) Town officials should work with new and existing businesses to improve the efficiency and traffic flow both within and in the entryway to their parking lots and encourage shared driveway entrances on Main Street.
- 6) Make sure that Lancaster is kept informed of any proposed changes to sections of Routes 2 & 3 that pass through Town, especially the North and South junctions, and has an opportunity to present their own recommendations.