

## V. TRANSPORTATION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the transportation modes available to the Town of Grantham, to appreciate the integration of the town within the overall transportation framework of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region, and to develop transportation planning objectives based on the changing demographics of the town and current and future transportation requirements.

### TRANSPORTATION MODE OVERVIEW

#### Road Transportation

The road transportation network is primarily defined by I-89 and NH Routes 10 and 114. Old Route 10, parallel to I-89 and extending from Exit 13 north to Exit 14, is also an important road serving both entrances to the Eastman Community and the entrance to the Olde Farms neighborhood. The Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission's Regional Transportation Plan (2003) indicates that several vehicle congestion points are evident within the Upper Valley. NH Route 10 through Grantham's town center fulfills the congestion point description, between the junction of NH Routes 10 and 114 and Exit 13, I-89.

New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) personnel have indicated that Exit 14 of I-89, at the northern boundary of Grantham, is not likely to become a full interchange. When I-89 was built, Exit 14 was provided only to give access to the northern end of Old Route 10, because the old route was eliminated north of that point by the Interstate construction. This fact affects the character of any potential development in that portion of town, since commercial development would be impractical at a partial interchange.

As the population grows within the Upper Valley, roads that offer access to I-89 will continue to show increased traffic growth. NH Route 10 traffic will increase in volume through Grantham as Grantham properties adjacent to NH Route 10, as well as locations south of Grantham (e.g., Croydon, Newport) are developed. Likewise, future residential development along NH Route 114 will feed traffic into the Grantham village center largely headed for Exit 13, I-89.

Based on results from the Community Survey, of those Grantham residents who work, over 72% commute to a work site outside of Grantham. Most commute to locations north of Grantham via NH Route 10 (or Old Route 10) and I-89, specifically Lebanon, West Lebanon, Hanover, and locations in Vermont.

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Traffic volume on NH Route 10 has grown significantly within the last two decades. The average daily traffic passing Croydon into Grantham nearly doubled from 1983 to 1992 (1,300 to 2,512). The average annual daily traffic measured in 2000 and adjusted for seasonal traffic was 2,900. Since 2000, the traffic increase on NH Route 10 through the Grantham village center has been dramatic. A one-week count done by NHDOT (Sept. 20-24, 2004) showed a weekday average of 7,200 vehicles.

Vehicle registration (2004) within Grantham is over 3,360. Vehicle registration includes the seasonal vehicles of residents who maintain a home outside of New Hampshire, and also includes public service vehicles.

### Rail Transportation

Railroad stations are located in White River Junction and Claremont. Amtrak passenger service is available at those points.

### Commercial Air Transportation

Limited public air transportation is available at Lebanon Airport. General aviation airports are available in Claremont and Newport, as well as Lebanon. Full service commercial air service is available in Manchester, NH, Burlington, VT and Boston's Logan Airport.

### Public Bus Transportation

As segments of the population age, the ability to drive privately owned vehicles may be reduced. Bus service thus becomes an important transportation mode for many citizens. Throughout much of the Upper Valley, but not including Grantham, Advance Transit serves many local commuting needs. The closest terminals for longer-distance bus transportation are White River Junction and Concord. Bus transportation is available to major hubs including airports in Manchester and Boston, a drop-off/pickup point in the vicinity of the Burlington Airport, plus South Station in Boston. There is also a separate bus service dedicated to Boston's Logan Airport and South Station, with a nearby pickup point in New London at Exit 12, I-89, as well as pickups in Lebanon and Hanover.

### Private Motor Vehicle Parking

Non-patron parking in business parking lots along NH Route 10 limits the availability of these parking facilities for customers, and is an unreasonable imposition on local business operations. Moreover, the use of local business parking lots for commuters or ride sharing adds to their congestion. All such parking is to be discouraged.

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A Park & Ride facility in Grantham is planned for completion during the 2005 construction season, adjacent to Old Route 10 just north of Exit 13, I-89. The facility should accommodate a turnaround area for public buses and should also accommodate vans. Once completed, the facility will promote ride sharing and reduce regional vehicle congestion (but not necessarily reduce congestion in the local vicinity of the lot). The Park & Ride facility will be important for reducing northbound and southbound commuting traffic flow. It will also serve as a pickup point and secure parking area for residents needing transport to facilities and services outside of Grantham.

### Taxi Service

Taxis are available on a demand basis. Local services are available in Hanover, Lebanon, White River Junction, and New London.

### Bicycle Lanes

NH Route 10 through Grantham is part of the UVLSRPC Regional Bike Route Plan. Continued development of bike paths with well defined lanes will promote recreational and transportation use of bicycles as an alternative to motor vehicles. Development of bike paths in Grantham, both along roads and apart from roads, received a significant positive response in the Community Survey.

### Pedestrian Walkways

Sidewalks and walkways are not available in the village center area (meaning the area including the Grantham Municipal Complex, the Dunbar Free Library, the Grantham Methodist Church, the US Post Office, the Grantham Fire Station, town recreation facilities, and a possible secondary access road to the Grantham Village School). Crosswalks on NH Route 10 would first require sidewalk construction before crosswalks may be delineated. The newly constructed (2004) bridge on NH Route 114 near the entrance to the Grantham Village School meets state standards for pedestrians by providing a walkway on the bridge. However, a transition walkway adjacent to NH Route 114 in either direction from the bridge is absent.

## DEMOGRAPHIC IMPACTS ON TRANSPORTATION

While already addressed in Chapter II, *Demographics*, the demographic and population growth factors most relevant to transportation are highlighted here.

Demographic predictions indicate the population of Grantham will continue to grow faster than Sullivan County and the state as a whole. Additionally, the percent of the population over 60 is expected to remain high, and the school age population will continue to grow.

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Recent and planned growth at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Dartmouth College, and in the Lake Sunapee area's ski and recreational facilities will place increasing demands on Grantham for housing and for subsequent upgrades in transportation infrastructure and services.

Home construction has grown significantly. During the 2000-2003 period, the number of home building permits in Grantham increased by over 80% compared to the previous four year period (1996-1999).

The single most important indicator in the growth of the school age families is the high turnover rate of multi-bedroom homes from older to younger families. More affordable housing and the excellent schools available here (Grantham Village School and Lebanon Junior and High Schools) are drawing younger families to Grantham. At the same time, the recreational activities for seniors in Grantham and the region are plentiful, well advertised, and are expected to remain an incentive for active seniors to retire within Grantham.

### TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

Planning for future transportation growth must appreciate the need for maintaining the village and rural character values important to our citizens. Planning should also provide a safe, shared, and mixed set of transportation modes.

Based on projected population growth patterns, an adequate transportation infrastructure is already present or can be achieved for the safe and efficient movement of people and services. But the historically inadequate transportation services (e.g., buses, taxis, and bicycle and pedestrian routes) must be addressed and remedied.

Grantham has created a village center area with significant municipal, commercial, recreational, and educational facilities on both sides of NH Route 10. The attractiveness and utility of such facilities naturally concentrates significant foot and bicycle traffic, as long as safe avenues are available. The safe flow of pedestrians and bicycles requires well defined traffic flow corridors for all travel modes, and methods for effectively controlling the speed of vehicle traffic.

Over recent years there has been consideration given to relocating the US Post Office from the village center to a new location north of the NH Route 10/I-89 intersection. Since much of the locally generated traffic in the village center results from boxholders (mostly residing in Eastman) visiting the Post Office daily, a move closer to the Eastman main entrance would favorably affect village center traffic levels. However, relocation of the Post Office would deprive the central village of an important civic resource. The Post Office provides opportunities for social interaction wherever it is located, but the current location helps to focus this interaction as part of the larger social interaction associated with the town offices, library, church, school, and

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police and fire stations. Construction of the sidewalks recommended earlier in this chapter would facilitate and enhance all of these social interactions.

The current single access road to the Grantham Village School, a school geographically constrained by wetlands, wooded areas, and the Sugar River, is unacceptable and needs remedy. The development of a new road and bridge, allowing a safe route for vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians entering and exiting NH Route 10, would provide a second access for emergency vehicles and improve the efficiency and safety of traffic flow within the school area. One-way traffic circulation on the school grounds would also become a possibility. This issue is currently being closely examined by all parties, and a solution is likely to be implemented soon.

Any future NHDOT road upgrades and construction in Grantham should use accepted state road design standards when and where feasible. However, concerns for maintaining rural or small town character values, especially in or near the village center, will often require relaxation of state road standards. For example, relaxation may be called for to prevent expanded rights-of-way from encroaching on small yards or on dwellings themselves. Such adjustments of state standards can also serve as traffic control methods in the more dense areas, which may also be characterized by more concentrated pedestrian and bike traffic activity.

Finally, the rural character so highly valued by Grantham's residents may indicate that gravel roads are in many cases more appropriate than paved roads. Thus, where practical from a road maintenance viewpoint, paving plans should be balanced with residents' preferences.

## GOALS

- Develop a comprehensive transportation plan for the village center to a) control vehicle traffic in a measured manner through the area, and b) to adequately provide for pedestrians and bicycles. These are particularly important for providing multimodal access to the many village center facilities, and for maintaining a rural and safe environment through the village center.
- Correct the existing unsafe method of access to the Grantham Village School by providing a second access.
- Encourage more efficient private commuting and greater opportunities for public transportation, including support for the planned Park & Ride facility in Grantham.
- Apply accepted standards to all road construction and rehabilitation where feasible, with particular emphasis on emergency vehicle and school bus operations.

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

- To avoid destruction of the central village's character, retain NH Route 10 through the central village area as a two-lane, low-speed-limit main street, working with NHDOT to provide traffic calming measures as needed, and avoiding any conventional measures (widening, turning lanes, etc.) that would increase vehicle or traffic capacity.
- Consider the provision of sidewalks and crosswalks in the central village area, to link the Dunbar Free Library, the new Grantham Municipal Complex, the Grantham Village School, the Post Office, the Fire Station, and Sawyer Brook Plaza. In addition, consider the provision of bike paths located to provide alternatives to portions of the the road system.
- Carefully assess the town's position relative to any possible relocation of the US Post Office from the village center to north of the NH Route 10/I-89 intersection, weighing the benefits of reducing traffic in the village center resulting from boxholders' daily visits against the loss of an important civic resource in the central village.
- Provide a second access to the Grantham Village School, most likely from NH Route 10, and consider one-way traffic circulation through the GVS site.
- Actively encourage the NHDOT to construct the planned Park & Ride facility at Exit 13, I-89 to provide for commuter parking and to include accommodations for pickup and discharge of passengers by buses, taxis, and vans.
- Encourage bus companies to establish a pickup and discharge point in Grantham at the planned Park & Ride facility on NH Route 10.
- Work with NHDOT to identify town needs vis-à-vis the accepted state road design standards for state road repairs, reconstruction, and upgrades.
- Require that all proposed land developments for residential and commercial uses which access town or state roads provide adequate and safe vehicle lanes and line-of-sight transitions to public roads.
- Require that all new subdivision roads and future town roads meet town road design standards, including design standards for public school bus access, such as secure pickup and discharge points and suitable school bus turnaround areas.
- Proceed slowly with paving plans for town (public) roads, providing strong justification for each paving project.