

Chapter 8: TRANSPORTATION

Almost all of the transportation in Ossipee involves automobiles, therefore the network of roads is very important. State highway Route 16 goes north and south the entire length of Ossipee. There are three important intersections: West Ossipee, at the intersection of Route 16 and 25 West, in Center Ossipee, the intersection with Route 25E, and in Ossipee, the intersection of Route 16 and 28.

Route 16 is also used extensively by people traveling to other parts of the state. These are often tourists or vacationers who stop for travel necessities like food and gasoline.

The easy access has fostered commercial development of businesses and small industries. Other parts of the route are scenic and undeveloped. Although much of Route 16 is zoned Commercial and Roadside Commercial or Commercial Node, most residents of Ossipee want this entrance to Ossipee to be rural and attractive.

The increasing amount of traffic and the need to keep the traffic flowing are factors to be considered. Recent attempts to keep the number of accidents down include the installation of traffic lights at the intersections of Route 16 and 25W and Route 16 and Route 28. The establishment of the Corridor Zone is intended to keep low volume traffic businesses along the highway, and high traffic businesses like fast food restaurants at the intersections. Another attempt to keep traffic moving, emphasized in the NH Route 16 Corridor Study, was the need to limit the number of accesses onto the highway. The intention is to encourage the creation of shared access roads to and from the highway, instead of multiple separate driveways, so that several places use the same access. Interconnecting driveways and shared parking will help cut down on sprawl and also help retain rural character in scenic sections of the highway.

There are a number of state highways in Ossipee in addition to Routes 16, 25 and 28. Browns Ridge Road, Courthouse Square, Folsom Road, Main Street, Old Granite Road, Routes 16B and 171 are maintained by the state.

State highway work is prioritized through a lengthy process that starts with communities bringing their projects to the regional level to be studied by the Transportation Advisory Committee. The projects go through the legislature and the Governor and Governor's Council, and finally evolve into a ten-year plan.

Unfortunately, costs of construction are going up so radically that the last ten-year plan is going to take about fifteen years to complete. This means that many of the projects slated to be done in Ossipee have been put off for several years. Two innovative projects which came out of the Route 16 Corridor Study were not well received by the Selectmen and fizzled out. There are three projects on Route 16 in Ossipee in the current plan. The first, scheduled for 2011 is to reconstruct from Route 28 north 3.4 miles. The second is to reconstruct the roadway and four bridges from the Lovell River to the Chocorua River on Routes 16 and 25 scheduled for 2011. The third is to improve the intersection of Routes 16, 25, and 41 in 2013.

According to RSA 229:5 town roads are classified as Class V – town maintained roads and Class VI – town roads not maintained. A table of road names and classifications is found in the Appendix. Landowners are not permitted to build new homes on Class VI roads without obtaining permission from the Selectmen. Because more and more people are building homes in remote sections of Ossipee, the Selectmen are faced with adding more miles to the large number of miles of road already being maintained by the highway department. Currently five of these roads belong to a group of roads called cottage roads, which are only maintained in the summer. This includes Circuit Road, Blake Hill Road, Spring Tavern Hill Road, Walker Hill Road, Lyons Road and Cleveland Beach Road.

Other roads, a majority of which are located in developments, are classified as private. They are not taken care of by the town, so the owners must pay for grading, plowing, etc. An association is set up when a new subdivision is approved to ensure that there is a mechanism in place to share the cost among the landowners. Roads in new subdivisions which must be approved by the Planning Board are subject to the specifications in the Subdivision Regulations.

TRAFFIC VOLUME

The 2000 Census data for Ossipee showed a population over 4000. All indications are that this is increasing all the time. Therefore, when Traffic Count Numbers are studied, they reveal much the same picture of increases identified in the last Master Plan for the 70's. The summer tourist season has a significant impact on traffic in Ossipee, with weekends having the most traffic throughout the year.

Statistics taken by Lakes Region Planning Commission in 1994, 1998, 2001, and 2003 at five different locations in Ossipee all show increases. The largest percent of increase on Route 16 occurred two miles north of Route 28. Other important locations were the Moultonville Road, Browns Ridge Road, and 171. Counts on some of the other roads were not taken as often or in exactly the same years, but the only significant decrease was on Bean Hill Road over the Dan Hole River where the traffic count decreased from 20 to 10. The earlier number was probably due to logging traffic in that area.

ROAD MILEAGE

About 83 miles of road are maintained by the town of Ossipee. There have been some changes in classification, between Class 5 and Class 6. A few miles of town maintained roads have been changed to private roads, but the majority of new private roads are in subdivisions.

SCENIC ROADS

The 1983 Master Plan devoted a section of the Transportation Chapter to a discussion of scenic roads. There are currently no roads designated as scenic roads in Ossipee. There have been several warrant articles submitted by petition to designate particular roads as scenic roads, but they have not been passed by the voters. Although most people do wish to preserve the scenic qualities of many of our roads, the formal designation places many restrictions on road maintenance.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

For the last ten years the emphasis has been on maintaining the tarred roads, so that the tarred roads stay in good condition. In the last few years the emphasis has been on top coating and shimming or leveling the roads. Aprons have been paved to cut down on the damage to the roads from traffic on and off the roads and driveways. Most of this work has been done to the following roads: Chickville, Granite, Dorrs Corner, Moultonville, Circuit, Pork Hill, County Farm, Newman Drew, West Ossipee Square, Leavitt, Jewel Hill, Hodgdon Shore, Walker Hill, Dore Street, Long Sands, Walker Hill, Deer Cove, Pequawket and Old Route 28. This is an ongoing job that will prevent the need for more extensive roadwork. Cutting brush and keeping drainage working are also important summer work. Unfortunately, weather conditions have caused a lot of extra expense and work for the highway crew, such as the heavy rains in the fall of 2005 and spring of 2006.

CURRENT EQUIPMENT AND MANPOWER

Equipment	Year of Manufacture
Cat front-end loader	1999
Cat backhoe	2000
John Deere grader w/ snow plow	2004
4 six-wheel dump trucks w/plow and wings	1994-2002
Six-wheel all wheel drive w/ plow and wing	2001
John Deere four-wheel drive tractor with front-end loader	2003
Ford F-350 one-ton w/ plow	1999
Ford F-550 one-ton w/plow	2005
Misc. Equipment	
Power broom, backhoe attachment	2000
Snow plow, backhoe/loader attachment	2000
Flail mower, JD tractor attachment	2003
Pref. Chipper	1994
Wright flat bed trailer	1992
Cross flat bed trailer	2003

Logging and gravel, two of the biggest industries in Ossipee, extract a high toll on the road conditions. In the spring during mud season some roads are posted to prevent damage to the roads when the ground is thawing.

Now the overall goal of the highway department is to bring the gravel roads up to the standards necessary for paving. Because this takes a lot of time and money, it is done a little at a time. The decision about which roads to pave first will be based on the volume of traffic obtained from traffic counts.

Another issue of immediate concern is what to do about the bridges that are identified in the state report as needing immediate attention. Over the past ten years, a number of bridges have been repaired by contractors hired and overseen by a management team made up of state and local officials. Although the state does reimburse the town for a percentage of the cost, it requires a large loan over several years. The town selectmen have also opted to replace two bridges using town engineers and highway workers. This process was closely monitored by the state. It saved money, but took the highway crew away from the work they would ordinarily do on the roads. Selectmen need to make plans and take immediate action on the bridges on the state's "red list".

The Whittier Covered Bridge in West Ossipee has been closed to all traffic, because of its poor condition. An attempt to get federal funds for highway enhancement projects was not successful, partly because of Ossipee's poor record in curbing vandalism on the bridge. A new attempt to save the bridge is underway in 2006. Four other bridges in Ossipee must be posted with weight limits and conditions. They are Chapel Road over the Lovell River, Valley Road over the Dan Hole River, Thurley Road over the Dan Hole River, and Archers Pond Road over the Beech River. Plans are currently underway to repair the bridge on Valley Road.

A new 50'x100' pole shed was built in 2002 for storage and a salt shed.

There are nine full-time employees and six other part-time employees in the winter months for snow plowing.

It is anticipated that within the next ten years there will need to be an addition to the town garage and two additional people will need to be hired to keep up with growth in the town.

EXPENDITURES

In 2004 the regular operating budget for the highway department was \$770,050. In 2005 it was \$806,384, and the budget request for 2006 is \$868,800. New equipment and major improvements are voted on by the voters at the annual town meeting. This amount is about \$250,000, of which \$150,000 comes to the town from the Highway Block Grant.

There is a Capital Reserve Account for the purchase of vehicles and equipment. The vehicles are on a seven-year rotation, because after that they begin to need extensive repairs and have a much lower trade-in value.

Sidewalks and crosswalks need to be added to areas with pedestrian traffic on state and town roads.

Implementation Recommendations:

Update the inventory of the roads. Measure the length and width of roads where that information is not available.

Get traffic counts to use in deciding which roads should be paved first.

Over the next ten years add on to the town garage and hire two additional workers.

Budget money for the construction of sidewalks and crosswalks on town roads.

Work with NHDOT to add sidewalks and crosswalks where there is pedestrian traffic on state roads in Ossipee.

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

Railroad

A chapter on transportation in Ossipee would not be complete without a section on trains. Many people think back wistfully to the time when the trains were running. Between the passenger cars carrying skiers and vacationers and the freight train, the villages were busy centers. Currently, the only railroad operating in Ossipee is North Coast Railroad that carries gravel from Ossipee Aggregates south.

A recent feasibility study identified the cost of restoring the rail corridor to be around \$13,000,000 in 2004. This could be done in phases. Problems were identified with rail and tie conditions, bridge conditions, drainage and crossing conditions. It seems likely as automobile travel becomes more crowded and more costly, Ossipee will see more consideration of revitalizing the trains. The train corridor is now used by snowmobiles and skiers in the winter. In many places trains and recreation exist side-by-side with trains and cross country skiers and snowmobilers all using the same corridor.

TRAILS

Part of a bike path around Ossipee Lake will be in Ossipee. As more and more bike paths are developed in the region, many people foresee a path throughout the Lakes Region. The section of the path to be constructed soon will start in West Ossipee and connect to the section already constructed around the lake. The regional Transportation Advisory Committee has been instrumental in the development of these bike paths throughout the Lakes Region by giving those projects a high rating.

The Ossipee Conservation Commission plans to develop trails for hiking on conservation land in town. One of the first properties they plan to work on is Sumner Brook. There are trails and a wooden walkway in Constitution Park.

There is an extensive network of state and local snowmobile trails in Ossipee. Much of the work on them is done by local snowmobile clubs. They are groomed in the winter, when snow conditions allow, to smooth them out, and cleared by cutting brush along the sides in the summer and fall. Proper signage and trail maintenance follow Trail Bureau guidelines. They obtain permission from landowners to travel over property and provide free landowner liability insurance. It is possible to travel from the southern part of the state to Canada using the state trail system. Snowmobiling is the number one winter family sport in NH. Snowmobilers have a positive economic impact on local merchants.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The Master Plan would not be complete if the transportation chapter didn't deal with the lack of public transportation in Ossipee and rural New Hampshire. Unfortunately, because of low population densities and wide geographic areas, it is not economically feasible. Basically the feasibility study for building a Transportation Center in Ossipee failed to recommend the building, because no private group or government agency was willing to put up the money to run it. It is easy to demonstrate the need for a rest area and a commuter park-and-ride in Ossipee; it is not easy to figure out how it will be funded.

There have been a number of committees made up of concerned citizens, local officials, and service providers to try to improve the transportation for the elderly, handicapped, or disadvantaged. Most of the special services, like Meals-on-Wheels and RSVP, rely on volunteers to drive. Ossipee Concerned Citizens did acquire a van, but doesn't have the resources or manpower to fill the need.

Perhaps increased fuel costs will tip the scale in favor of more group transportation, rather than individual vehicles. Another possibility would be to encourage biofuel production using low-grade wood from this area to reduce transportation costs and bring in a lot of income to this area. The technology currently exists, someone just needs to pull it all together.

OBJECTIVES

Various groups have different objectives for the transportation system in Ossipee. Residents want to keep the roads rural and scenic, and they want to prevent a tax increase. In the Master Plan Survey conducted in 1998, 62% of the respondents said that they were satisfied with the condition of the roads. When they were asked which roads need repair, everyone listed their own road. The NHDOT wants to keep traffic moving on the highway, as do people who earn their living driving on the roads, and people driving in or through Ossipee. Retailers have their own priorities, which include selling their wares where there is the most traffic. Conservationists, which is everybody, to some degree, want to keep our aquifer under the highway uncontaminated. Ossipee voters and town officials have a difficult job ahead of them.

Implementation Recommendations:

Encourage alternative transportation and the development of increased public transportation.

Because paving and straightening roads encourages people to speed, the police and highway department need to do a speed survey of local roads and employ techniques to calm traffic.

Develop and submit transportation projects to the Lakes Region Planning Commission for the Lakes Region Transportation Improvement Program. This should include roadway changes and sidewalks in the downtown Main Street Target Area.