
Transportation



One of the reasons for Old Saybrook's historical position as a center for commercial activity is a transportation network dominated by the intersection of several major transportation systems – Interstate 95, Route 9, Route 1, the rail corridor, the Connecticut River, and Long Island Sound. These networks, particularly Interstate 95, play an important role in the desirability of Old Saybrook for all classes of development, including commercial, industrial, and residential.

ISSUES FOR THE NEXT DECADE

As the town continues to develop, traffic congestion increasingly occurs on its road system. In the past, Plan of Development policies called for the expansion of the roadways to accommodate the increase in traffic. As many residents will attest, the widening of roadways in Old Saybrook has not lessened the congestion. Increased development brings additional traffic to fill those widened roadways. Congestion has become particularly difficult on Main Street and Route 1 during summer months when the town's population almost triples. Heavy interstate traffic or accidents exacerbate this problem when hundreds of vehicles access Route 1 in an attempt to bypass interstate congestion.

One particular Program Recommendation from the 1990 Plan – to widen Route 1 to four lanes throughout the entire town -- illustrates a change in today's philosophy of transportation planning. Although widened to as many as five lanes in places,

Route 1 remains two lanes from the Oyster River to the Westbrook town line. Seemingly appropriate at that time, this recommendation runs counter to the overall policy of maintaining Old Saybrook's small town character. An alternative approach, supported by this updated Plan, would be to limit development to uses that will not create significant traffic increases that would necessitate such widening.

“Smart Growth” is a process that incorporates many principles and practices that can provide relief from gridlock on our transportation network. Some aspects of smart growth include: reinvestment and revitalization of inner suburbs, mixed-use development, preservation of open space, and investment in transportation systems that alleviate congestion and connect developed and developing places. Traffic congestion not only has a deleterious effect on moving people and goods, but makes it difficult for businesses to find workers within a reasonable

commuting distance. It also takes a toll on our air and water resources. Connecting new transportation investments to a smart growth pattern is essential to achieving long-term economic growth and sustainability and improved quality of life.

According to the information provided by the NEMO (Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials) Project, two-thirds of all impervious coverage is automobile-related. As a pilot town for the NEMO Project, Old Saybrook is committed to incorporating the principles of stormwater management into its Plan and to implement such as opportunities arise. The NEMO Project recommends the following policies:

Concerns about Non-Point Source Pollution

Old Saybrook should revise its subdivision and road standards so that “improvements” adequately accommodate the level of service necessary for the function – residential, commercial, industrial – and no more. Those standards are pavement type, sub-base specifications, road length and width, sidewalks, curbs, swales and street trees. Local roads can be narrow, designed to follow natural contours, and drain to swales rather than curbs. These features produce functional roads while promoting infiltration of stormwater runoff. Policies regarding sidewalks should limit their location to only where needed. Excessive setbacks of buildings to create front yards produce long impervious driveways and, therefore, increase stormwater runoff.

Old Saybrook should emphasize investment in mass transit, as well as alternative transportation, such as pedestrian and bike trails. Many parking standards are based on peak utilization periods, such as the week before

Christmas, and, consequently, many spaces are not utilized for most of the year. Parking utilization surveys would determine if present zoning requirements for parking are excessive. The benefits of landscaped and porous parking lots as natural filters and pleasant visual alternatives to seas of macadam and concrete should be promoted. In addition, reviews should be conducted on the water quality impact of local maintenance practices on roads and parking areas.

Utilizing NEMO principles, zoning regulations, traffic studies, and encouraging mass transit are not only important for quality of life, small town character, and environmental issues, but the economy of Old Saybrook and its increasing emphasis on tourism. Good traffic flow and enjoyable alternatives to the private automobile are necessary to encourage a growing source of interest in and revenue for Old Saybrook. Safe, attractive, and efficient walkways, bike paths, and waterways are important methods of transportation for those without access to private cars or who choose sightseeing and a slower paced mode of travel. To accomplish economic development goals and fully realize Old Saybrook's potential as a vital, prosperous attraction to visitors, a more comprehensive transportation plan for access to and transit between tourist areas must be developed.

The Connecticut Transportation Strategy Board (TSB) created five regional Transportation Investment Area (TIA) committees organized around the major transportation corridors within the State. The TIA committees were charged with preparing an Initial Corridor Plan for submission to the TSB by November 15, 2001. Old Saybrook land use agencies should refer to, understand, and support its principles and projects as issues and opportunities arise.

Road Systems

BOSTON POST ROAD (U.S. ROUTE 1)

In Old Saybrook, Route 1 exists as a four-lane road from the Middlesex Turnpike/Mill Rock Road East intersection through to Staples. It remains two lanes from the Mill Rock Road East intersection east, and from Staples, west. Within the last ten years, most Route 1 improvements have taken place in the area of the roadway between Main Street west to Lynde Street. Traffic volume on Route 1, even during winter months, can create a level of service at uncontrolled intersections that is poor to unacceptable.

MAIN STREET (CONNECTICUT ROUTE 154)

Main Street is the heart and epitome of Old Saybrook's character. It is unusual in that it exists as a four-lane roadway, including the brick median strip. Substantial space in the parking areas outside of the travel portion of the roadway provides sufficient area for vehicle maneuvering prior to merging into traffic, except for the area south of Maynard Road near St. John's Church. During summer months, the increased traffic volumes can cause significant congestion and potentially dangerous mixes of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Parking on Main Street

"Shared" parking exists on Main Street behind Walt's Market and Hallisey's Pharmacy in the area of Saybrook Cinema. With the construction of CVS in the old Malloy's structure, including a rear parking area, additional parking has been made

available in that area of Main Street. More is needed, however. On the West Side, the shallow nature of lots occupying Main Street, limit the amount of rear lot space available for parking as well. One shared lot that exists in an optimum location and is sufficiently large enough to accommodate general parking needs, is the North Cove Outfitters/Harbor Realty lot across from Huffman Koos Furniture. The large lot at Cinemas Plaza also can and does serve as a general lot for access to many Main Street businesses. In many areas, space limitations make it difficult to construct such parking areas, especially on the East Side of Main Street.

MIDDLESEX TURNPIKE (CONNECTICUT ROUTE 154)

From Mill Rock Road East north to Essex, Route 154 exists as a two-lane road. Properties located adjacent to Route 154 through this corridor are zoned as various classes of commercial including the Shopping Center designation in the Route 9 interchange area. Much of the traffic congestion on Route 154 seems to be confined to the stretch from the Route 9 interchange south to the center of Old Saybrook. Turns into and out of Obed Heights Road, the Town Transfer Station, Bokum Road, and Christy Heights can be difficult with lengthy delays.

INDUSTRIAL AREA CONNECTOR ROAD

With the development of the Mill Meadow Industrial Park, a connection has been made from Mill Rock Road through to Ingham Hill Road. The section of the connector that passes through the Industrial Park occupied by Pye & Hogan and others, however, remains private and is often in poor shape, although passable.

EAST/WEST CONNECTORS

Existing development patterns and rugged ridge-type topography with intervening wetland systems makes east west connections difficult. The reason Bokum, Schoolhouse, and Ingham Hill Roads tend to run south is that they follow those ridges. Low areas in between are occupied by wetland systems that are increasingly more difficult to cross with environmental concerns and efforts. In addition, the Valley Railroad ROW separates Bokum from areas to the west. As for connection of Ingham Hill to Schoolhouse, a significant north/south trending wetland system (including Cavanaugh Park off Schoolhouse) separates those areas north through to the property known as the "former Lyons Property." Wetland systems fragment much of the area between the two north-south roads thereby limiting connections from the east to the west. This connection although not the most convenient or efficient for a public route, could be considered for safety reasons and to advance neighborhood interaction.

The area north of the railroad and south of 1-95, linking Ingham Hill Road to Schoolhouse Road seems the most plausible choice to connect major north/south roadways in Old Saybrook in an attempt to bypass Route 1. The large undeveloped tract of land existing to the west nearer Schoolhouse Road is similar to Lookout Hill -with respect to development potential and size (approx. 28 acres). The eastern half, nearer Ingham Hill Road, however, is split into numerous smaller parcels, some developed with residences. There is a twenty-five foot (25') right-of-way off Ingham Hill immediately north of I95 that reaches

several thousand feet into the heart of the Beacon Hill area that would be the logical choice for a road, if available. This land is all zoned as AA-2 Residential.

NORTH/SOUTH CONNECTORS

In Old Saybrook, north-south connections exist via Route 154 to Essex, or Ingham Hill, Schoolhouse, Spencer Plains, or Bokum Roads. The latter four roads are rural country roads and provide connections to Route 1 from hundreds of existing residences and potential subdivision lots. The 1990 Plan and the updated Plan include goals and policies that limit improvements on those roads to safety: including sight lines, curves, and hills. The new Town Ordinance for the Designation of Scenic Roads was developed to accomplish this, thus preserving the character of the road. Effective February 2003, Ingham Hill Road was designated as a scenic road. An application to recognize Schoolhouse Road as a scenic road under the new ordinance is pending.

Country Road Improvements

In 1997, the town attempted to undertake an improvement program on Schoolhouse Road as recommended in the 1990 Plan of Development. When taken to a referendum vote, however, residents resoundingly voted down the item citing that improving the road by widening and straightening would ruin the character of the country road which was part of Old Saybrook's history. They feared improvements would lead to higher speeds and more danger to vehicular and pedestrian traffic, despite plans to include a sidewalk near the Town Park. If a connection is made to Ingham Hill Road, improvement issues will arise with respect to that country road as

well. Residents have demonstrated that they feel the same way about improving Ingham Hill and Bokum Road as they feel about improving Schoolhouse Road. Thus, it is appropriate to balance necessary improvements for safety reasons with the application of the Scenic Road Ordinance.

Elm Street Underpass

Although no direct work has been accomplished on the Elm Street underpass since the adoption of the 1990 Plan, a recent culvert replacement on Ingham Hill Road north of the railroad overpass has improved the flooding characteristics in the area of the underpass. The build-out of the Mill Meadow Industrial Park since the adoption of the 1990 Plan has allowed cut through traffic from Mill Rock Road East, thereby increasing the amount of traffic passing underneath the flood-prone overpass. The potential for significant residential development in the northern part of Town also presents the potential for significant future traffic increases through the area.

MAJOR INTERSECTIONS

The Route 1/Main Street intersection leads the list as the intersection that is most impacted by the ever-increasing volume of traffic. Discussions held between a recent developer, the Town, and the Connecticut Department of Transportation suggested that not much could be done to significantly improve the level of service at this intersection. Limitations on improvement include nonconforming and approved

structures located in close proximity to the rights-of-way and previous road expansion, which leave little room for further travel path expansion without taking it by eminent domain.

Most other intersections within the Route 1 corridor have been redesigned and reconstructed within the last ten years including Route 1/Elm Street, Route 1/Lynde Street, Route 1/Ingham Hill Road, Route 1/Schoolhouse Road, and Route 1/Spencer Plains Road. Traffic lights and/or turning lanes have also been added in front of developments such as Staples. Discussions between the Town, the Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency, and the Connecticut Department of Transportation were held concerning potential improvements to the Route 1/Stage Road intersection as well.

Public Transit

Efforts to improve public transit opportunities were enhanced within the last ten years with the replacement of the "S" Route bus from Old Saybrook to New Haven with the "Shoreline Shuttle". The replacement occurred because of increased regulation requiring better and more convenient service for the disabled. In its present form, a smaller van travels along Route 1 from Old Saybrook to Madison, making both scheduled and "flagged" stops in various locations along the route. At its terminus, in Madison, the Shuttle connects with a full size bus that completes the journey to New Haven. The Shoreline Shuttle runs both east and west and makes numerous trips every day with the exception of Sundays.

PLANNING FOR THE NEXT DECADE

Goals

- Development which will not significantly increase traffic congestion nor necessitate the widening of local roads, particularly Route 1 and Route 154.
- Increased level of service of intersections affected by nearby development.
- Improvements that reduce accident frequency and severity.
- Road and intersection design independent of development to accommodate traffic in a more efficient manner while increasing the level of service.
- Improved traffic circulation and safety for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists throughout town, with special focus on Main Street and the entire Village Center, and the use of enforcement to optimize crosswalk safety.
- Transportation alternatives to the personal automobile including the Shoreline Shuttle, the Shoreline East, the Old Saybrook Trolley, bus transportation routes, and other less traditional methods of transportation.
- Municipal roads and parking areas that reflect the NEMO principles, such as reduced or limited impervious surfaces on municipal properties and roads to reduce the risk of degradation to water resources.

Policies

- To be familiar with and support the policies and projects of the Connecticut Transportation Strategy Board and Southeast Corridor Transportation Investment Area Committee
- To encourage developers to use NEMO techniques in their parking, driveway, and street plans.
- To improve traffic circulation in residential, commercial and industrial areas, and in areas accessing the Interstate 95 / Route 9 interchanges.
- To promote circulation management by limiting dead-end streets and connecting subdivisions where appropriate.

- To seek opportunities for east-west connector roads to alleviate traffic congestion on Route 1.
- To cooperate with private developers to share financial responsibility for upgrading state and local roads and nearby impacted intersections to accommodate development.
- To encourage developers to consider employing traffic calming strategies on neighborhood streets when pedestrian and driver safety is best served by slowing vehicular traffic.
- To promote stormwater management techniques that use the natural landscape when designing transportation projects.
- To encourage reliable public transportation from marine transient areas such as Saybrook Point and Ferry Point throughout peak tourist months to decrease traffic and promote economic development for our commercial areas.
- To pursue the orderly development of docks to maintain a clear flow of boating traffic and maintain the visual aesthetics along our waterways.
- To support regional transportation goals, including use of: commuter parking lots and commuter buses, vanpools, and other ridesharing programs.
- To promote pervious overflow parking alternatives for large developments that require increased parking yet utilize this parking mainly during holiday and tourist seasons (similar to Westfarms Mall over flow pervious parking.)
- To review State Highway projects to evaluate impact upon the Town and to identify opportunities for improvement in the local circulation system.

Municipal Improvements, Programs, and Standards

The Plan recommends implementation of the following actions with priorities, resources and responsibilities coordinated among the appropriate Town agencies, including the Architectural Review Board (ARB), Board of Selectmen (BOS), Conservation Commission (CC), Economic Development Commission (EDC), Harbor Management Commission (HMC), Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission (IWWC), North Cove Historic District Commission (NCHDC), Planning Commission (PC), Parks & Recreation Commission (PRC), Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA), Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), and Zoning Commission (ZC).

- TRANSPORTATION PLAN.** Initiate and implement a transportation plan for Old Saybrook.
- ROAD CONDITION INVENTORY.** Maintain an inventory of road conditions, identify road improvements needs, and categorize needs across town and over time.
- SCENIC ROAD DESIGNATIONS.** Use the Scenic Road Ordinance to maintain community character, control traffic, and create opportunities to limit impervious surfaces.
- RURAL ROAD UPGRADES.** Undertake only those improvements to the Town’s rural roads necessary to assure safety and relieve congestion to retain the roads’ scenic character.
- TRAFFIC CALMING.** Consider traffic calming strategies where appropriate and feasible on Town roads, in rural community centers, and historic and other special districts.
- INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS.** Improve traffic characteristics at key intersections and roadways, including but not limited to the Main Street/North Main Street and Route 1 intersection, the North Main Street/Stage Road area, the Route 1 area from Stage Road to Main Street, and the Route 166 and Route 1 intersection as the level of service deteriorates due to increased volume. Improvements include realignment, construction of left turn lanes, and installation of phased and timed lights.

	ARB	BOS	CC	EDC	HMC	IWWC	NCHDC	PC	PRC	WPCA	ZBA	ZC
<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION PLAN.		●						●				
<input type="checkbox"/> ROAD CONDITION INVENTORY.		●										
<input type="checkbox"/> SCENIC ROAD DESIGNATIONS.	●	●	●					●				
<input type="checkbox"/> RURAL ROAD UPGRADES.		●						●				
<input type="checkbox"/> TRAFFIC CALMING.		●							●			
<input type="checkbox"/> INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS.		●										●

Municipal Improvements, Programs, and Standards, continued

- FRONTAGE ROAD.** Develop a connector road within the area north of the railroad and south of 1-95, linking Ingham Hill Road to Schoolhouse Road, enabling access to economic development areas from the 1-95 ramp at Elm Street.

- CONNECTOR ROADS.** Create east-west connectors north of 1-95 between Spencer Plains Road and Schoolhouse Road to Ingham Hill Road to allow for better cross-town movement. Additional rights-of-way required should be obtained or established through either subdivision approval, or, where that is not possible, through Town acquisition.

- MILL MEADOW INDUSTRIAL PARKWAY.** Develop a public connector road through the industrial area between Elm Street and Mill Rock Road.

- ELM STREET UNDERPASS APPROACH.** Improve approaches to the Elm Street underpass as adjacent or nearby land is developed.

- ELM-INGHAM HILL INTERCHANGE.** Undertake a full interchange on Elm Street that would reduce widening demands and bring people to the central business district.

- TOWN CENTER PARKING PROGRAM.** Seek opportunities for shared off-street parking for Main Street; expand on-street parking areas on Main Street; introduce parking signs.

- PARA-TRANSIT PROGRAM.** Support Estuary Transit District services including para-transit services and the medical outpatient transportation program.

- TRAFFIC FORECASTING METHOD.** Expand the travel forecasting process to better reflect the dynamic relationship between land use and transportation projects.

ARB	BOS	CC	EDC	HMC	IWVC	NCHDC	PC	PRC	WPCA	ZBA	ZC
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Municipal Improvements, Programs, and Standards, continued

- TRANSPORTATION & LAND USE STUDY.** Change zoning requirements in high traffic areas to discourage traffic-producing development while encouraging industry consistent with the Economic Development goals and policies.
- RESIDENTIAL IMPERVIOUS SURFACE STANDARDS.** Review regulations for driveway length and materials and front yard setbacks to mitigate impacts of stormwater runoff.
- PARKING STANDARDS.** Determine whether zoning parking requirements are excessive.
- RAILWAY RIDERSHIP PROGRAM.** Increase the frequency of railroad service stops to Old Saybrook and extend Metro-North railroad service into Old Saybrook.
- PEDESTRIAN TRAIN-TO-SHOPPING LINK.** Connect train station to shopping center.
- STREETSCAPE ENHANCEMENT.** Recognize the value of streetscape, which provides an important visual perception for motorists traveling through town, and develop right-of-way improvement plans and incorporate them whenever an opportunity arises.
- LANDSCAPING PLAN STANDARDS.** Strengthen regulations for street trees and landscaping after a development, and require specifics in the original plans and application.
- SIDEWALK PLAN.** Review sidewalk regulations; plan to improve pedestrian safety.
- BICYCLE ROUTE PLAN.** Develop a town-wide bicycle route plan, implement it as the opportunity arises; require developers to install bicycle paths and racks where appropriate.
- PEDESTRIAN CROSSWALK PROGRAM.** Increase crosswalks on Route 1 and improve safety and convenience for pedestrians and bicycles.

	ARB	BOS	CC	EDC	HMC	IW/C	NCHDC	PC	PRC	WPCA	ZBA	ZC
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