

## Section V Transportation

### *Introduction*

Highways are the foremost means of travel in the Town of Sunapee. In the past, railroads and steamboats were used as methods for traveling to and within Sunapee. The railroads have completely disappeared from the area and the boats are now only used for scenic lake excursions.

Boston- Manchester International Airport is the nearest major airport. Lebanon Airport provides limited commercial service. The nearest private airport is in Newport. Long distance rail service is available via Amtrak, which stops in Claremont. Regional bus service to Boston is available from the recently expanded commuter park and ride lot at Exit 12 in New London. There is local bus service in Newport and Claremont.

The focus of this section will be the highway system within the Town (including State and local highways and related traffic data).

### *Highway System*

The Town of Sunapee controls the vast majority of the road mileage (88%) within its municipal boundaries. The remainder of the roads are either part of the State highway system or under private control. State highways include Routes 11, 103, 103B and the small part of Interstate 89 which crosses the northerly portion of town.

The only roads constructed in the last 20 years in Sunapee have been to provide access to new developments. All new roads must be built to a minimum set of specifications as outlined in the Subdivision Regulations. Roads which will eventually become Town maintained roads must be constructed to a higher standard than those roads which will be permanently held in private ownership. The following is a breakdown of roads by classification:

Table V-1  
Road Mileage by Classification – 2009

<u>Class</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Miles</u>
I	State and Federal Highways	12.15
II	Secondary State Highways	4.62
III	Recreational State Highways	0.00
IV	Urban Compact Highways	0.00
V	Municipally Maintained Highways	54.50
VI	Discontinued Highways	3.50
	Total Town Highways	73.77

There are 10.2 miles of private roads in Sunapee giving a total of about 84 miles of roads.

Source: Sunapee Highway Department, 1998 Master Plan

### ***Highway Maintenance***

The local expenditure for highway maintenance, including plowing and sanding, drainage, right-of-way clearing, and road repair accounted for approximately 28% of general government spending in 2008 and is the largest single budget item. In addition to maintenance, special warrant articles at Town Meeting cover bridge and/or road reconstruction, paving and major road improvements.

State highways are generally upgraded as part of a ten-year plan proposed by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation in conjunction with the Regional Planning Commission and Town Highway Department. Most projects fall into the paving and bridge reconstruction category, but occasionally there are major highway realignments or widening, such as the recent work on Route 11 between Newport and Claremont.

The most recent community survey did not seek opinions about highway maintenance but, in the past, there was a generally favorable attitude about the Highway Department's efforts to maintain the town's roads.

### ***Traffic Counts***

The State of New Hampshire Department of Transportation completes traffic counts at various points throughout the State. The following table shows the progression of average daily traffic counts for the period of 1992-2005:

Table V-2  
Average Daily Traffic Counts

<u>Location</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>2000/1</u>	<u>2005</u>
Route 11 (Wendell – Sugar River)	-----	6,300	6,900
Route 11 (New London Line)	4,927	6,800	7,100
Route 11 (North of Sargent Road)	-----	7,600	9,600
Route 11 (North of Trow Hill Rd)	6,218	6,900	8,400
Route 103 (Newbury Town Line)	4,072	4,300	5,000
Route 103 (Wendell – Sugar River)	-----	2,800	3,000
Route 103B (East of Chase Street)	-----	2,300	2,700
Brook Road (Goshen Town Line)	-----	950	860
High Street (Sugar River)	-----	810	640
Lower Main St. (Sugar River)	-----	680	750
Main Street (Sugar River)	-----	2,300	2,000
Springfield Road (Otter Pond Brook)	-----	3,000	2,800

Source: 1998 Master Plan, 2009 NHDOT Website

Traffic on the State highways has been increasing steadily during the period shown. This is especially true on the Route 11 corridor between Sunapee Village and the New London Town Line where 20%-40% traffic increases have been noted over the thirteen year period. The traffic counts in the Sunapee Harbor area decreased slightly during the period from 2000-2005.

Growth in traffic flow is an important consideration for Master Planning since traffic and congestion could impact future growth potential, especially in the village areas. As flows increase the Levels of Service decline resulting in delays at intersections and reduced highway speeds. However, regular congestion should not be expected to occur anywhere within Sunapee during the next ten years if the recent growth rate continues.

### ***Parking & Circulation***

Sunapee Harbor remains the only area of town with significant parking challenges. In the last ten years, there have been two studies of parking along Main, River, Garnet, and High Streets.

The first study, by a Planning Board subcommittee in 1999, concluded that there was adequate parking available in the Harbor and most of it was underutilized. Boat launching created not only circulation problems but also parking problems, since many of the trailers were parked haphazardly in spaces which should have been available for automobiles. The result of this study was a new boat launching plan which required boats to queue on Burkehaven Hill Road rather than Main Street, and restrictions were placed on where trailers could be parked.

The Selectmen commissioned an Ad Hoc Committee (known as the Parking Data Collection Group) in 2004. This group again found that parking was available during most times of the year with shortages developing only during special events in the summer.

As the town continues to grow, Georges Mills will likely be the next location that experiences parking and circulation difficulties. Currently the only public parking available is in the area of Georges Mills Beach. Fortunately, many of the existing commercial uses in Georges Mill have gone through the Site Plan Review process and were required to provide on-site parking.

### ***Commuting Data***

Sunapee's rural nature and isolation from urban areas means that most workers commute to their places of employment. The 2000 US Census revealed that the average commuter traveled for just over 24 minutes one way to work.

The vast majority (over 90%) used a single-occupant, private automobile for commuting purposes with only 6% choosing to carpool. A small percentage (8%) reported either walking to work or working from home.

### ***Recommendations***

**1. Develop a plan for redesigning Route 11 through Sunapee Village.**

This plan will serve several purposes including traffic calming (slowing), providing better pedestrian access, and creating a “village” atmosphere in this portion of town. Possible improvements include sidewalks from Sargent Road to Route 103B, narrowing of Route 11 to allow “peninsulas” for tree placement, and intersection upgrades at Route 11 and Route 103B.

Coordinate planning and design with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission so that this project is included in future highway funding.

**2. Continue to strengthen and fund the Capital Improvements Program for Municipal Highways.**

Proper scheduling and funding of the CIP for the Highway Department will ensure that maintenance and upgrades can continue uninterrupted without serious impacts to the tax rate. The Planning Board and Town Manager should review the CIP on a regular basis (at least every 2 years) to be sure that proper funding levels are being maintained.

**3. Develop a plan for creating bike paths where feasible.**

Work with Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission to identify existing bike routes and to target places where new bike paths can be built.

**4. Review highway design and parking standards in the Subdivision and Site Plan Regulations to determine if they are up-to-date with modern planning and road design.**

In attempting to maintain the rural character of a community, care must be taken not to over-design new development roads and parking lots. Roads should be designed to fit with other town roads in the area. Retain safety and maintenance standards, such as curvature and base preparation, but provide flexibility in widths and the surface type, depending on the construction of other roads in the area.

Parking lots should be designed to reflect the sizes and maneuverability of the vehicles which will use them in order to minimize ground coverage and stormwater run-off.