

Tunbridge buys gravel for its roads from Chelsea. As of the writing of this Plan, the cost is approximately \$15 a yard, including trucking, but escalating gas prices have a strong impact on this price. Tunbridge uses approximately 5000 yards of sand a year.

The highway budget has consistently been one of the largest parts of the Town's budget. In 2011, the actual money spent on highways was \$735,190. The highway budget is not entirely funded by Town revenues. State Aid contributed \$115,000 or 15% of the total for 2010. The Tunbridge Highway Fund does not receive Federal Revenue Sharing funds.

A strong majority of citizens who commented during the 2005 public workshops indicated they wanted Tunbridge to stay largely the same, including issues relating to roads and transportation. Tunbridge has a strong desire to maintain its rural roads, especially Route 110 as a low volume, secondary road.

### **C. Bridges**

Tunbridge has five covered bridges (all listed on the National Register):

- Cilley (or Lower) Bridge — Southwest of Tunbridge Village
- Flint Bridge — Northeast of Tunbridge Village (off VT 110)
- Larkin Bridge — North Tunbridge (off VT 110)
- Howe Bridge — South of Tunbridge Village (off VT 110)
- Mill (or Hayward & Noble or Spring Rd.) Bridge — West of VT 110 on Spring Road

These bridges are important to the history of Tunbridge as well as adding to the rural character of the Town. They are maintained through a joint collaboration between the Town of Tunbridge and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTRANS). Much of the funding to rehabilitate and maintain these historic bridges comes from the State in an effort to preserve historic structures and help support tourism. Vermont's covered bridges are a popular tourist attraction.

There are twelve bridges in Tunbridge that are maintained by VTRANS. The rest of the bridges in Tunbridge are on town roads and therefore are maintained by the town road crew.

### **D. Ancient Roads**

The legal status of so-called "ancient roads" has become increasingly contentious in many Vermont towns. Points of view diverge sharply on the access rights to these hard-to-locate roads. To some, these roads should remain a public asset even though they have not been maintained or used as a road over many decades, even centuries. To others, the town should no longer retain public rights to lands that are not in active use and have been presumed by landowners to be privately held.

In 2006, the Vermont General Assembly passed H.701, now Act 178, which establishes a process for towns to determine the legal status of their roads. The Act allows towns the opportunity and incentive to identify and add to their town highway map all town highways and trails that it decides to retain as a public right-of-way. It also establishes a public discontinuance process that a town's legislative body determines are no longer desired as public rights-of-way. The legislation includes a funding source and grant program to assist towns with research and mapping of town highways.

A town has until July 1, 2009 to add unmapped town highways that are not observable by physical evidence of their use onto their town highway map in order to retain those roads as town highways. After that deadline, those unobservable town highways become *unidentified corridors*. A municipality is not required to maintain an unidentified corridor, and it may be used by the public in a manner consistent with its use within the last ten years. On July 1, 2015 all *unidentified corridors* (that is, all properly laid-out, but unobservable and unmapped town highways) are automatically discontinued. Between 2009 and 2015, a town may reclassify an unidentified corridor as a class 1, 2, 3, or 4 town highway or a trail, and must follow the current process as contained in statute (19 V.S.A. Chapter 7). This process may include landowner compensation. If an unidentified corridor or any other highway or trail does not appear on a town highway map by July 1, 2015, it will be considered discontinued and will legally belong to the owners of the adjoining lands. (from Ancient Roads Research and Mapping Grant Program FY07)

The Tunbridge Ancient Roads Committee believes that these roads are an important part of our local history and that the community will share their interest in knowing where they are. The project is being approached with the understanding that there must be balance between respect for landowners who presume ownership of these rights-of-way, and the manner in which the public may want them to be used in the future.

## E. Road Standards

The Town currently uses highway rules and regulations based on state standards that were adopted by the Selectboard in April 6, 2011. This policy details road construction standards and policies for road classifications, right-of-way, access, road acceptance, and numerous other construction and maintenance related activities. The responsibility of ordinance implementation rests with the Selectboard and the Tunbridge Road crew. In the event that a proposed development is considered under Act 250, the following shall apply:

- Emergency management services will have guaranteed safe access to all development.
- Roads should be designed with multi-modal transportation safety (pedestrian, bicycle, etc.) in mind.
- Since local and state road construction follows State of Vermont design standards, private roads should be constructed to those standards, thereby minimizing changes if the road is accepted by the Town at a later date.
- Road design and construction shall adhere to the relevant Town Plan goals and objectives - land use, natural resources and transportation elements.
- All roads shall reflect a context-sensitive design that preserves and enhances the adjacent land uses and transportation system.

Major transportation projects often place a greater emphasis on contemporary engineering design standards. However, in some instances, the design and engineering of our roadways and bridges fail to consider the Town's unique historical and natural landscapes. The design of a transportation project should account for a road being historic, scenic, pleasant to drive, or respectful to the people and businesses living alongside it. While engineering sufficiency criteria are important factors for road and bridge improvements, compatibility with existing and future development patterns also are important considerations.

## **F. Access Management**

According to the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) definition, access management is a process that provides or manages access to land development while simultaneously preserving the flow of traffic on the surrounding road system in terms of safety, capacity needs, and speed. Access management is an important process to provide reasonable accessibility to adjacent land uses while maintaining a safe and efficient flow of traffic. Transportation professionals have established that a single, well-designed access to a public highway presents few concerns for the traveling public. However, if access has been poorly designed and/or its frequency increases, the road's health declines proportionally. The result is increased traffic congestion, crash rates, and road maintenance obligations to handle surface water improperly channeled to the road surface or shoulders. Ironically, these factors eventually compromise access to all land uses along the affected roadway. In many instances, towns are forced into costly highway expansion projects.

The Town recognizes the value of access management and can implement access management strategies through its planning and public works related ordinances and policies. The following are some of these strategies for all public and private transportation and development projects impacting local and state public roads as well as private roads:

- Utilize State of Vermont design standards for all temporary and permanent access, to include emphasis on drainage, sight distance, and access for emergency services;
- Encourage use of shared driveways and/or permitting access that may result in a future shared driveway;
- Require the review of access for existing development whenever a change of use, ownership, or other application process is brought before the Town;
- Encourage commercial properties to use existing development nodes in order to preserve or create road segments with few accesses;
- When practical, approve subdivisions with private and public road designs that allow shared access with other adjacent subdivisions and/or have the private rights-of-way reserved so an access may be built to connect to existing and future development;
- Encourage permanent landscaping and roadside enhancements to visually define access points and contribute to the roadway's aesthetic character;
- Use sight-distance standards based on the actual travel speeds and not the posted speed limits. If no such data exists or is not current, then the Town will work with the Regional Planning Commission to obtain the appropriate data.

## **G. Other Modes of Travel**

### **Bicycles and Pedestrians**

Many residents bike or walk on town roads in Tunbridge. The rural nature of most of Tunbridge's roads makes bike/ped travel reasonably safe. However, bike/ped travel along the Route 110 is less safe due to higher traffic volume and speed and a lack of available shoulders.

Tunbridge has 2.15 miles of legal trails, all of which can be used by the public for hiking. Additional recreational opportunities can be found using trails maintained by VAST.

## **ATVs**

Some ATV use is allowed on town roads, but it is limited to Class 4 roads or other roads that are not maintained in the winter.

## **Public Transportation**

Tunbridge, like most Vermont Towns, lacks public transportation. Stagecoach, Inc. offers limited public transportation in the form of special requests for individuals who need transportation for medical reasons, etc. Although there is no Stagecoach bus route in Tunbridge, there are a number of routes that depart from nearby Randolph where Stagecoach is located. Tunbridge residents can take advantage of Stagecoach's "Ticket to Ride" Program helps pay a substantial percentage of the cost of rides for senior citizens (60+) and persons with disabilities when there is not available transportation in the household or the person requesting the trips is unable to drive on the day of the trip. Ticket to Ride is available for a broad array of destinations, such as medical services, shopping, errands, and social purposes.

Given that Tunbridge's elderly population is growing, the need for an affordable source of public transportation that can bring the elderly to major medical facilities like Dartmouth Hitchcock and larger commercial centers for day-to-day shopping needs is important. See Appendix B for additional transportation information.

## **H. Goals and Policies**

### **Goals**

1. To maintain a transportation system that is safe, efficient, meets the needs of residents, and complements the other goals and policies of this Plan.
2. To ensure that future development does not unnecessarily or unreasonably impact the public investment in Town and regional transportation systems or facilities, including highways, bikeways, trails and rail.
3. To support local, regional and statewide efforts to provide public and private transportation systems that meet the needs of all population segments and not just those who use automobiles.
4. To minimize transportation energy consumption by encouraging carpooling and creative alternatives for sharing transportation resources.
5. To provide pedestrians with safe areas to travel within the Villages of Tunbridge and North Tunbridge, such as sidewalks and bike paths.
6. To provide regular maintenance and upgrades to road equipment and facilities, provided that the costs do not put an undue burden on the people of Tunbridge.
7. To recognize the importance of balancing the need to have safe roadways with the desire to maintain appropriate widths and the health of existing vegetation in its role as a structural component of the roads.

### **Policies**

1. Prior to a final decision to proceed with a major capital transportation project, policy makers should first analyze the project against reasonable alternatives and include public input. In examining the alternatives, investigation should focus on the environmental, energy, social and investment costs and the extent to which such costs meet the goals and policies of this Plan.
2. Any new access, new construction, change of use, and any development of a land parcel that would create impacts on Tunbridge's road system shall be reviewed by the Town. Where such development requires improvements to Town highways, such costs shall be borne by the developer, in consultation with the Selectmen, and the Selectmen shall have sole power to change the classification of the road.
3. It is the policy of the town to minimize curb cuts to insure the proper function and performance of a town highway.
4. It is the policy of the town that the design of access roads and related facilities provide for proper alignment of new or relocated driveways along a roadway.
5. The Town shall seek public input in any decision to substantially change the maintenance level or surface treatment of any town road.
6. The Town, as written in V.S.A. Title 19 Section 310, does not maintain Class 4 Highways, excepting bridges and culverts. The policy of the Selectboard is that before the town would consider adopting a new road or upgrading an existing highway, the abutting property owners shall be responsible for the cost of improving and/or building the road to Town specifications. Final decision regarding the nature of the improvement rests with the Selectboard.
7. Given the interest in and benefits from biking, hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and similar outdoor recreational activities, the Town should, as an alternative to complete discontinuance of a highway, give full consideration to preserving Class 4 roads for recreational use by downgrading their status to a legal trail and thus retaining the public's interest in them.
8. An integral scenic element of the rural countryside is the network of back roads comprising the town's highway system. These byways are both visually and economically important to the Town. If improvements are needed to accommodate increased traffic, the Town shall consider the relationship of the road to the surrounding features of the landscape.
9. Strip development is discouraged as a land use pattern. Such development occurs in a linear path along a right-of-way which often restricts visual and physical access to interior lands.
10. The health of trees along town roads shall be periodically reviewed. Trees that are unhealthy or otherwise pose a substantial risk to travelers shall be removed.

*"In the end, our society will be defined not only by what we create, but by what we refuse to destroy." ~ John Sawhill,  
Nature Conservancy*