

## CHAPTER 5 – TRANSPORTATION

### Vision

We recognize that –

- Increased knowledge of the environmental consequences of how we use energy is pushing us to re-think and support other options for transportation;
- Our municipal services are mainly concentrated in the center of town while our population is largely de-centralized; and
- Significant tourist and second-home traffic will remain a seasonal challenge for residents.

Recognizing the changes in our environment, we hold the following as part of our vision for Rye's future.

- Whenever possible we will provide multiple safe and efficient transportation alternatives for its residents and visitors.
- Our children will increasingly walk or ride their bikes safely to school.
- Adult residents will increasingly take advantage of environmentally sound travel options such as cycling, ridesharing, and using public transportation.
- Senior and disabled residents will be enabled through expanded transportation options.

All transportation projects in Rye will be undertaken with an eye to increasing safety, protecting our natural resources, and preserving or enhancing our sense of rural character.

We will maximize the safe, efficient and effective movement of people and goods into, around and through the town, connecting with the wider transportation network.

### Overview

Rye has approximately 54 miles of streets, roads and highways with one being added as late as March 2012. Although the growth of the region and increased use of the Seacoast is attracting increasing traffic, for now the network of town roads appears adequate to serve the future growth of vehicular traffic in the community without significant improvement. In the recent past there have been ongoing efforts to improve our roads to accommodate more pedestrian and bicycle traffic. These efforts will continue. Rye's town roads are an important component of the town's rural character and Ocean Boulevard (NH-1A) and a portion of Wentworth Road (NH-1B), which is state owned, and over which we have no jurisdiction are important parts of Rye's scenic coastal character as well.

Most of Rye's main roads were laid out along the ridges surrounding the wetlands during colonial times. Most have been improved over time. They serve as both streets for the many

residences located along them and highways for those passing through. The majority of the roads in town, including the primary routes, are in good-to-fair condition with minor work required on some to fix surface cracking or other similar maintenance issues. There are a few sections that need more extensive work. Table T-1 shows maintenance responsibilities for Rye's roads and Map T-1 shows road classifications.

<b>Table T-1 Road Maintenance Responsibilities in Rye, New Hampshire</b>		
Roads by maintenance responsibility	Road Segment	Mileage
State-maintained primary highways	- Ocean Boulevard (NH 1A) along the coast - Lafayette Road (US 1) - a portion of Wentworth Road (NH 1B)	11
State-maintained secondary roads	- Bracket Road, from Pioneer to IA - Marsh Road - small portion of Breakfast Hill Road	3
Town-owned and maintained roads	- most other in-town roads - New residential subdivision streets that are turned over to the Town become Class V roads once they become public	41

The bridges in town are owned and maintained by the State, with the exception of the Harbor Road Bridge which is owned and maintained by the Town. The most recent to be rebuilt is the Seavey's Creek Bridge which was completed in 2010.

## 1.0 TRAFFIC FLOW AND TRAVEL PATTERN

Most trips in or out of Rye are either: coming from or going to Portsmouth; to the north; or US-1 to the west. Such trips include work, shopping and entertainment trips of most town residents as well as the bulk of seasonal traffic headed to the beaches or merely passing through on Ocean Boulevard. The orientation of Rye's principal traffic artery (i.e. Washington Road to Wallis Road to Sagamore Road) is south-to-north. Rye's natural features have limited points of access to the west to Wentworth Road, Foyes Corner, Lang Road, Washington Road at Breakfast Hill, and South Road.

The Town of Rye, the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC), the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT), and other agencies have monitored traffic volumes over the years at many locations throughout Rye. More information is available at [www.nhdot.gov](http://www.nhdot.gov).

The roadway network in Rye is, for the most part, well within its functional capacity. Occasional congestion does occur, primarily during the summer months on the routes to and from the beaches. Two exceptions of note are and have been addressed; Foyes Corner: This intersection was a safety and capacity concern. Previously it was a three-way-stop controlled intersection with odd approach angles. A project was completed by the NH Department of Transportation to construct a roundabout.

Pioneer Road (US 1A): Pioneer Road is designated as a Scenic Byway. The road is controlled by the State and its shoulders have been upgraded on the roadway to better and more safely serve the significant bicycle traffic that frequents the area.

Infrequent and inconsistent traffic count data makes it difficult to determine the root causes of traffic volume increases; they may be attributed to several different general possibilities:

- Diversion to alternative routes due to congestion either within Rye or on roads outside of Rye. For instance, congestion in Seabrook or Hampton may cause fewer people to travel the length of Ocean Boulevard, using alternate routes such as I-95 to Ocean Road to enter Rye via Lang Road or I-95 to US-1 to enter Rye via Elwyn Road.
- Changes in where people work. During the time period covered by these traffic counts, Pease Tradeport had significant changes in employment levels as did the City of Portsmouth. People's work destinations subsequently change as well.
- Shifting travel destinations for tourists. The escalation of gas prices, for example, will impact traffic volume.
- Count discrepancies. If a traffic volume count occurred during a week where travel was higher or lower due to a non-recurring event or some other external factor, or if a counter malfunction occurred, counts would be significantly affected.

Lang Road is already carrying increasing traffic volumes as it becomes more of a primary access point between Rye and Portsmouth. Mill Road/West Road may also show increased volumes if it is used as an alternative to traveling on US-1. Some conflict has already arisen as a result of truck traffic that must travel local roads in order to access businesses in Rye and surrounding communities. However, the Rye road system would not generally be considered an efficient alternative for drivers not already destined for Rye.

To limit through truck traffic, the Town can place limits on some roadways under certain conditions as long as reasonable alternative routes exist. In order to assure that trucks use the proper roads, the town should enforce RSA 47:17, Section VIII "Traffic Devices and Signals."

The interrelationships between population growth, employment patterns, and land use ultimately affect transportation patterns and frequency. Dispersed housing contributes to lengthy commutes in the Seacoast Region. Consistent with national trends, vehicle miles traveled and total vehicle trips have increased at rates that are two to three times faster than either population or housing growth. The projected growth in the region, and the likelihood of continued pattern of dispersed land use, foreshadows a continued rise in the demand for travel for the foreseeable future.

The vast majority of Rye residents drive to work alone, although a small percentage carpools. Public transportation is also minimally used for commuting probably due to the fact that there is no fixed-route service with destinations in Rye.

## 2.0 TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

There are few sidewalks in Rye. However, there is a growing desire to construct a sidewalk from the Rye Jr. High School to the Library.<sup>1</sup>

Bicycle travel in Rye is primarily recreational at this time. Rye has one paved, off-road bicycle path in the region. This path runs adjacent to NH-1A from the bridge at Berry Brook estuary south through Odiome State Park. It rejoins the roadway just north of Wallis Sands Beach.

There is significant bicycle transportation planning going on at the state and regional levels. One of the primary goals of New Hampshire's Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan is to recognize, support and encourage bicycling and walking as alternatives to motorized forms of transportation. The State's plan includes a "Statewide Bicycle Route System" which was adopted as the most suitable network of existing roads to serve the needs of inter-regional bicycle trips. NH-1A is part of that state bicycle network.

In addition there is a regional bike network, SABRE, which complements the state system with local roads that are considered bicycle-friendly within communities. It provides loop routes as well as connections with other towns. Rye's Washington, Mill/West, Grove, Central, Cable, Wallis and Sagamore Roads provide connections between State-identified routes NH-1A and NH-33, and established routes with lower vehicular volumes in other seacoast towns.

Driving alone is expensive. It also contributes to increased traffic congestion and air pollution. For the purpose of this document, public transportation is defined as any transportation service available to the general public, whether it is publicly or privately funded. It makes efficient use of our existing road network, carrying passengers that otherwise might be driving their own vehicles. It also offers social benefits by providing a reliable means of travel for those who are unable or otherwise choose not to drive themselves.

There is currently no year-round fixed-route transit service within the town of Rye. Portions of COAST (Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation) bus routes in Portsmouth pass within walking distance of some residential neighborhoods and could be reached by residents, if desired.

To help commuters cut costs and to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, the NHDOT has constructed 25 park and ride lots throughout the State. The Portsmouth Park and Ride on NH-33 at I-95, Exit 3 is the State's largest facility of this type. It has a 975-car capacity and bike racks. Part of the reason for this well-used lot's success is its relationship to the C&J Trailways and COAST bus systems. The convenience of these services allows users to link bus travel with Logan Airport, the metropolitan Boston public transportation system, and the Downeaster train, serving Exeter, Durham and Dover. On average the lot is filled to 64% capacity, a daily use of roughly 628 cars. This park and ride is well situated to serve Rye residents who commute via I-95.

NH Rideshare is a free commuter matching service provided by the NHDOT. It facilitates commuters finding alternative ways to travel to and from work. By using Geographical Computer Matching, it provides commuters with information and assistance about carpools, vanpools, buses, and trains. Residents register with the NH Rideshare Program at <http://www.nhrideshare.com>.

Rye currently has two demand-response transportation options for its elderly residents. Users may call Lamprey Health Care for transportation assistance. In addition, the local volunteer organization Rye SERVE (Serving Elder Residents through Volunteer Efforts) also provides transportation services to Rye's elderly population.

For many, the roads of Rye are part of the rural character worthy of preservation as evidenced by the town's enactment of the scenic roads provision of RSA 231:58. Those roads which were existent at the time the warrant article was passed in 1973 are scenic roads.

In Rye, Routes 1A and 1B together comprise one of New Hampshire's 14 Scenic and Cultural Byways.

Additional transformation can be found on the following State of New Hampshire web sites.

<http://www.NHDOT.gov>

<http://www.NH.GOV.../Rye.pdf>

<http://www.NH.GOV/DOT/ORG/OPERATIONS>

### **Next Steps**

We will maximize the safe, efficient and effective movement of people and goods into, around and through town, connecting to the wider transportation network.

We will decide upon the need for a comprehensive and systematic transportation needs assessment. This should address:

- safety issues on NH 1A and other roads;
- transportation needs for our senior and disabled residents;
- the itemization of pedestrian and bicyclist needs;
- sustaining the semi-rural character of Rye's roads with traffic calming measures;
- the identification, inventory and protection of existing scenic vistas;
- the effects of cut-through and truck traffic; and
- the demand for fixed-route public transportation stops in Rye.

We will minimize transportation changes that promote automobile usage or increased speeds. Any and all changes will be made with full consideration given to and mitigation of environmental impacts;

We will continue to encourage and support volunteer and public transportation alternatives for senior citizens and disabled residents;

We will ensure that new housing developments will be sensitive to residents' access to services;

We will pursue funding options for sidewalks that will connect the new safety building, the library, the elementary and junior high schools. One possibility to pursue is the availability of Federal Transportation Enhancement Funds;

We will pursue funding options for shoulders along route NH-1A and Pioneer Road to improve bicycle safety.

We will pursue possible changes to Rye's zoning ordinance and land use regulations as they relate to transportation. For example:

- Our consideration of adding mixed use zoning and in-town retail possibilities will help shift our mindsets by offering new opportunities for local shopping. Such changes would reduce through and out-of-town consumer traffic. This would also offer an aspect of sustainability so that Rye residents are not limited by the zoning decisions of other communities.

We will promote the implementation of context-sensitive solutions to any roadway improvements. This could include the use of access management, traffic calming, and other techniques.

We will consider Rye's options for limiting through truck traffic. This may include time-of-day, seasonal or tonnage limits.

We will prioritize the sections of older roads requiring rebuilding due to drainage needs or inadequate initial construction standards and we will continue participating in US-1 Corridor planning efforts. We will continue to look at all access roads into and out of Rye.

We will support and promote both fixed-route and demand-responsive public transportation services, as well as, support and promote the usage of both the Portsmouth Park-and-Ride facility and the NH Rideshare Program.

We will seek improved route connections to our wider regional transit networks.

We will decide upon the most timely and relevant of the transportation recommendations from the regional Route 1A/1B Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan, and act accordingly. This will require considering the following:

- Identifying areas with severe safety problems and/or demonstrated parking shortages and develop a plan for expanding or relocating parking while minimizing impact on surrounding area characteristics.
- Designated roads should have 3 foot wide paved shoulder, appropriate signage and roadway stripes designating shoulder as bike/pedestrian facility. Areas identified as heavy in pedestrian traffic should have crosswalk improvements.
- Work with the State to conduct a feasibility study to identify strategies for developing bike/pedestrian ways along stretches of Route 1A/1B where 4-foot shoulders are not feasible.
- Installing bike racks and benches at key points in corridor, i.e., state parks, beaches, scenic overlooks, etc.
- Exploring the possibility of developing and printing a Seacoast bicycle map, to tie into any future statewide bicycle map and also show walking trails.
- Install signs, sheltered waiting areas and benches at key stops along existing transit routes (Pursue private and/or federal transportation funds).
- Utilize existing publicly-owned parking areas (i.e. schools, municipal lots) and pursue the cooperation of private sector in allowing a portion of their parking lot to be used for seasonal Park & Ride or stop for trolley service. Identify potential funding sources.