

Transportation and Circulation

I. What has Hatfield said about this topic in earlier plans?

WALKING AND BIKING

- The Town needs to continue to improve and add more sidewalks and provide accessible facilities. There is significant interest in increasing safe bicycling and walking options such as bike paths and multi-use trails, and in adding more nature and hiking trails. (2023 OSP page 5)
- For those with a mobility impairment, residents would like to see more and better sidewalks, wheelchair accessible trails, benches along sidewalks, and accessible swimming areas. It is a goal to add more sidewalks on streets close to the town center that lack sidewalks but have a significant amount of pedestrian activity. (OSP 2023 page 55)
- There are sidewalks in several areas of Hatfield, particularly those most densely populated. There are no bike lanes in Hatfield, although the Town sees significant numbers of bikers that ride from Northampton and up Elm, Maple, Main and River Road into Whately. Town is in the process of installing flashing crosswalk signals on School Street, the corner of School Street/Main Street, North Street and Main Street, and Elm Street. (2023 OSP page 15).

TRANSIT

- Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTa) does not provide service in Hatfield. The Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) runs a Greenfield to Northampton bus route that has stops along Route 5&10 in Hatfield. (2023 OSP page 12).
- The FRTA's ADA Paratransit services are for individuals who are unable to independently ride the FRTA's accessible fixed-route system and reside within 3/4 of a mile of an existing FRTA bus route. (Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update page 20).

TRANSPORTATION FOR SENIORS

- Hatfield currently provides van service to seniors over sixty (60) years of age. The service is coordinated through the Hatfield Council on Aging. The door-to-door on-call service is available for trips within a 30-mile radius of Hatfield. The van is available five days a week between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. (Monday through Friday). The Council maintains two vans and employs three drivers on a part-time/as needed basis. The vans include a 1999 (white) Ford Econoline with

approximately 61,808 miles, and an older (blue) Ford Econoline with 114,520 miles. The second van provides backup service for the newer vehicle and is in use when the new van is being serviced or otherwise predisposed. The two-van operation assures that seniors will not be stranded or inconvenienced if one of the vans is detained during a longer hospital visit or a long-distance trip. Ridership is strong for the service with 8,953 trips in fiscal year 2003 (7/2/02-6/30/03). Of the 740 seniors living in Hatfield in 2003, 129 of them requested van service. (Hatfield Community Development Plan 2004 page 7)

- Hatfield currently does not currently have a contract with the Franklin Region Transit Authority (FRTA) for demand response rides. This service is provided in many surrounding communities. For these communities the FRTA fare within the same town is \$1.25 per ride; to an adjacent town is \$1.75; and to any town beyond that is \$2.25. (for some communities FRTA also provides a discounted fare to senior centers and community meal sites at \$0.75 within the same town, and \$1.00 to an adjacent town.) (2020 HST Plan)
- FRTA provides complementary ADA paratransit service, non-ADA demand response service in 35 municipalities, two pilot FRTA Access micro transit programs, and a Med-Ride program (in 25 communities) with volunteer drivers. (Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update page 20).

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

- Rail transport exists along this same north-south track, with freight transport, as well as passenger train travel. Amtrak passenger rail from Springfield north to the Vermont line on the Vermonter stops in Holyoke, Northampton, and Greenfield. (2023 OSP page 12)
- The rail line may be underutilized for freight traffic. The town hosts the north-south Connecticut River Line of the Guilford Transportation Corporation, a primary provider of freight rail service in the region. Landowners adjacent to or in proximity to this line could take advantage of the rail service to develop commercial and industrial operations along this corridor. (2009 Master Plan)

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

- It is recommended that the Town of Hatfield identify potential locations on private property and outside of the Route 5/10 right of way for new guide signs to the Plain Road entrance to the C&S Wholesale Grocers facility. This could decrease the number of vehicles that are reported to use side streets and private driveways to turn around after driving past the Plain Road entrance. Guide signs that are located outside of the Route 5/10 right of way will also be less likely to be struck by larger vehicles. (2005 Pantry Road Study).

- Seek to reduce traffic impacts from industrial uses on residents of North Hatfield. The community should continue to pursue solutions to the increased level of truck traffic and automobile nuisance noise in this area of town. Non-infrastructural solutions such as increased enforcement of existing nuisance bylaws should be considered before any road realignment plans are implemented. (2009 Master Plan)
- The Police Department is working with C & S Wholesale Grocers to alleviate some of the traffic noise during the hours of the third shift. A traffic report estimated 3,000 vehicles per day travel on North Hatfield Street. The Police Department estimates tractor-trailer truck traffic at 1,000 per day. The interests of residential and industrial property owners are in conflict along North Hatfield Street. Industrial users that depend on truck traffic and access to I-91 create traffic noise and congestion. This has been on-going for five or more years without resolution. Access to the industrial park is part of the problem. Employees use North Hatfield Street, while trucks use Plains Road. C & S originally established these separate entry points to keep automobiles away from the 18-wheeler trucks. (Master Plan 2009)

MAJOR EMPLOYMENT TRANSPORTATION

- The Route 5&10 corridor is zoned for industrial use and is home to Hatfield’s largest employers; C&S Wholesale Grocers, (c. 1000 employees,) and Brockway-Smith (c. 110 employees,) and Northeast Solar. (2023 OSP page 12).
- A Regional Planning Initiative of the Massachusetts Workforce Skills Cabinet and the Pioneer Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS 2019-2024) identified gaps in existing employment transportation services. One goal of the plan is to increase public transportation options to employer sites such as these major employers in Hatfield.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

- Gaps in Chapter 90 Funding: Commonwealth’s MGL Chapter 90 Program (“Chapter 90”) is the main source of funding used by municipalities to complete improvements and maintenance and is insufficient to keep up with needs. Rural towns like Hatfield have aging roads, bridges, and culverts that need maintenance and repair. Rural communities struggle to pay for design and engineering plans to get projects included on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or to apply for other grants. The low regional TIP targets in rural regions make the wait for federal transportation funding long, and project cost estimates can become inaccurate, or design standards can change during that time leading to additional project design costs. In addition, lower project evaluation scores from the MassDOT selection process makes it difficult for projects in rural communities to benefit from federal transportation funding. (Massachusetts Rural Policy Plan 2019)

- As rural communities struggle to maintain the roads and bridges that provide necessary human services transportation, the cost often falls on seniors, those with disabilities, and those with low-income in the form of added car maintenance, transportation cost, travel time, and speed of ambulance services. (Massachusetts Rural Policy Plan 2019)
- The town is dependent on Massachusetts' Chapter 90 funds to maintain and repair roads. Chapter 90 funding provides the resources needed by most communities to maintain their non-federal roadways. Hatfield is quite dependent on this funding for its regular road maintenance and repair program. When this funding is decreased, road maintenance is deferred. (2009 Master Plan)
- There are no Hatfield projects in the Regional Transportation Improvements Plan (TIP). The TIP is a regional prioritization plan for local transportation projects occurring on so-called "federal-aid" roads. No projects are listed on the TIP, as other projects in the region have been ranked as requiring more immediate attention. (2009 Master Plan)
- Some local roads demand immediate repair but are awaiting adequate funding. Hatfield awaits \$975,000 in funding to make the necessary repairs to Bridge Road (at Gore Avenue), School Street, and Plantation Road (where the new sewer main is located). (2009 Master Plan)

OTHER TRANSPORTATION RELATED

- There are no state designated scenic roads in Hatfield. There are, however, roads that are cherished for their bucolic charm and rural views that make them well qualified for such a designation: River Road and Main Street provide beautiful views of the Holyoke Range, Mount Warner in Hadley, and UMass, as well as the historic houses and public buildings of the town center, all surrounded by working farmland dotted with barns. Maintaining the landscapes associated with any of these roads would be a worthwhile and related goal, possibly through a Scenic Byway designation. (OSP 2023 page 54)
- Some town roads are not paved and there is no consensus on whether or not they should be. While rural in appearance, dirt roads cost more to maintain than hard-surfaced roads. Scotland Road, Mountain Road, Old Stage Road, and a portion of Straits Road are currently unpaved. Some residents want some roads paved for ease of access, while other residents want them to remain dirt to reduce cut-through traffic. (2009 Master Plan)

II. What have been the key findings and recommended actions?

WALKING AND BIKING

- The Town will continue to work to improve both passive and active recreation facilities and opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities. The Town will also work to educate residents about recreational opportunities. While much progress has been made in developing new trails, there is still a need and desire for more sidewalks, walking and biking paths. (2023 OPS page 59)
- A sidewalk bylaw incorporated into the existing zoning regulations could provide encouragement for new commercial developments. Commercial sections of Route 5/10 with existing pedestrian traffic should be considered for new sidewalk construction. (Hatfield Community Development Plan 2004 page 10)
- The Town has adequate recreation areas at present, but there is a demand for additional, varied opportunities for passive and active recreation at a wider variety of recreational venues, as well as better maintenance of facilities. Among the potential additions are a bike trail between Elm Court and Damon Road (pending continued evaluation) with Northampton, improved access to the Mill River; striping of roads for bike lanes and wider shoulders; and creation of new sidewalks with a view to expanding the Town’s “pedestrian circuit.” (2023 OSP page 59)
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TRANSIT

- There is a need for better coordination of transit service between PVTA and FRTA:
 - FRTA Route 31 should be extended to meet PVTA Route 31 in Sunderland. Another opportunity would be to realign PVTA Route 31 so a portion of the trips would be scheduled to meet FRTA Route 31 at the Whately/South Deerfield Park and Ride lot.
 - Schedule FRTA Route 31 so it arrives in Northampton on the hour. Arriving on the hour will facilitate connections to Holyoke, Hadley and Amherst and destinations within Northampton. (2020 HST Plan).
- Hatfield should consider options for expanding the paratransit service offered. The Franklin Regional Transit Authority provides paratransit service (FRTA may not be expanding service at this time) to other communities of similar size in the region have established successful programs that operate efficiently. The “local share” costs are based on ridership. The Town of Athol has ridership numbers like those in Hatfield and is assessed a local share of \$32,282. The FRTA provides vans, insurance and covers fuel costs. (Hatfield Community Development Plan 2004 page 7)

RAIL

- Plan for use of the rail corridor. The town should take full advantage of the freight rail infrastructure that parallels the I-91/Routes 5/10 corridor. Any appropriate industries along this corridor that can utilize the services of the railroad should be identified as part of a town economic development policy. If this corridor fails to maintain a viable amount of freight (or passenger) rail traffic, the town should be prepared to pursue other uses of the corridor such as biking and hiking trails (in the event of an abandonment). (2009 Master Plan)

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

- Traffic volumes and speeds along key town roadways should be monitored periodically to determine changes in travel patterns. The PVPC recommends that a traffic classification count be conducted on North Hatfield Road approaching Route 5 to monitor truck traffic to determine if conditions are changing on the roadway. (Hatfield Community Development Plan 2004 page 9)

MAJOR EMPLOYMENT TRANSPORTATION AND RIDESHARE

- While there is currently no ridesharing and park-and-ride in Hatfield, a joint effort with the surrounding communities along the Route 10/202 to identify a preferred location for a park-and-ride lot should be considered. The MassHighway District 2 Office at exit 21 in Northampton may be a potential location. (Hatfield Community Development Plan 2004 page 9)

OTHER TRANSPORTATION RELATED

- The Town should consider conducting an inventory of all existing traffic signs. Ideally this inventory would be input into a geographic information system (GIS) and identify the type of sign, location, and condition. This inventory would be useful in identifying the need for future warning and regulatory signage as well as when replacement signs are necessary. (Hatfield Community Development Plan 2004 page 9)

III. What are the best practices for consideration in this chapter topic?

What should Hatfield be thinking about that might best help plan for the future, ensure greater resilience?

- Work with major employers, school choice families, to explore rideshare options and the and the use of park and ride facilities.
- Explore options for increased Paratransit and demand-response service with FRTA.
- Petition for participation in the FRTA Access Program that offers self-scheduling rides up to one week in advance.
- Review opportunities for enforcement of traffic speeds
- Expand the sidewalk network and explore revenue options for maintenance through “Sidewalk Special Assessments.” (MA towns may assess each parcel up to one percent of the preceding year's assessed valuation not to exceed fifty percent of the cost of sidewalk / G.L. Ch. 83 §26)
- Identify existing electric vehicle (EV) charging locations and capacity and opportunities at schools, local businesses/employers, and town hall. Include revenue projections and monthly software maintenance fees in this assessment.
- Continue working with MA Safe Routes to School partners to review school drop-off and pick-up protocols, encourage use of the school bus, and provide education on health impacts (and MA laws) associated with idling vehicles in drop-off ques.
- Encourage the use the Town’s freight rail capacity through the Industrial Railroad Access Program (IRAP), a public/private partnership program that provides state incentive funding to increase freight rail usage in Massachusetts by making it easier for shippers and receivers to connect to the freight rail system and for railroads to attract and serve viable markets.
- Investigate the need for noise abatement strategies to assist residents and businesses impacted by rail traffic. Review the possibility of creating a “No horn zone” (also called a “Quiet Zone”) at the railroad crossings in town and provide impacted residents access to Amtrak’s Residential Acoustical Treatment Program (sound insulation).
- Adopt pavement management and maintenance strategies that maximize the Town’s roadway investments.
- Participate in Age-Friendly and Dementia Friendly Community programs that assist with transportation needs.
- Identify issues related to truck traffic including road maintenance, residential street traffic, cold start emissions, noise from refrigeration units, driver restroom access, the use of “air brakes”, trailer storage in residential zones, enforcement of existing regulations, and seek potential solutions.
- Monitor bridge conditions and plan for potential closures.
- Prepare detour routes for emergency response.

- Identify outside funding opportunities for transportation infrastructure and program needs including participation in grant programs:
 1. Community Transit Grant Program
 2. MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program
 3. Helping Hand Mini-Grants
 4. Mobility Assistance Program (MAP) provides grants to purchase vans to provide transportation for seniors, disabled and other eligible clients.
 5. Massachusetts Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program
 6. MassDOT Workforce Transportation Program
 7. MassTrails Grant Program

Chapter background paper prepared by
Jeff McCollough, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission