

VI. TRANSPORTATION

6.1 Introduction

As a small rural town, Sandgate's transportation infrastructure is quite limited. Sandgate is the only town in the Bennington Region that is not traversed by a single state highway. However, there are nearly 30 miles of town highways within the municipal limits (Table 6.1). These highways must be adequately maintained to provide safe, convenient, and economical transportation routes for Sandgate residents.

Table 6.1

Sandgate, Vermont -- Town Highway Mileage

Class 1 Town Highways	--	0.00 miles
Class 2 Town Highways	--	7.58 miles
<u>Class 3 Town Highways</u>	--	<u>21.99 miles</u>
Total Town Highways	--	29.57 miles

* Sandgate also contains 4.16 miles of Class 4 (not maintained) town highways.

Three roads in Sandgate provide through routes and collect traffic from smaller side roads (Figure 6.1). Sandgate Road follows the valley of the Green River from Route 313 in Arlington to Beartown. West Sandgate Road, running from the Green River through the Notch to West Sandgate and Salem, New York, is the only road connecting the east and west sides of the town. West Rupert and Route 153 can be reached by following the Rupert Road north from West Sandgate Road near the Notch. Twelve smaller roads provide access to homes and camps located in stream valleys, hollows, and other areas where some development has occurred.

6.2 Town Roads

The maintenance of the network of town roads, bridges, culverts, and drainage systems involves considerable work and expense. The underlying factor exacerbating many of Sandgate's road maintenance problems is the lack of a good road base. The town's road crew is able to keep the roads in good condition with day-to-day maintenance, but during mud season several roads frequently become impassable for many vehicles. Periodic high traffic volumes on certain roads (Rupert Road during hunting season, for example) also result in rapid deterioration of surface conditions. Significant effort has been directed recently toward upgrading culverts at key locations around town.

Because significant increases in traffic can be expected to adversely affect the condition of many roads, the probable impact on town roads of any new major subdivision should be determined. If substantial upgrades of town roads or bridges will be necessary as a result of such a development, the developer should share in the cost of the construction work.

New developments also frequently involve the construction of new roadways to serve individual lots. New private subdivision roads are subject to review by the Planning Commission under the municipal subdivision regulations. The Planning Commission should consult with the road foreman before approving new roads. New roads and

driveways accessing onto town roads must also receive an access permit from the town; these permits are important to ensure that access points are safe and that drainage does not damage town infrastructure. Of course, the town should not take over private roads unless they are improved to conform to municipal road specifications.

One issue that should be addressed by the town is the need for access to all residential areas by emergency vehicles. The Arlington Fire Company serves the town, and access by their larger vehicles over certain narrow roads and two 16,000 pound bridges (Hamilton Hollow Road and Tschorn Road) may present a problem. The town should work cooperatively with the fire department to assess the seriousness of any problem, and identify appropriate remedial actions. Such an assessment would also benefit the town in the event that any new development occurs in these areas.

The level of development in remote areas, not readily accessible from good town roads, has been a concern in Sandgate for some time. Development in remote backcountry areas generally requires the construction of new roads which, even if originally built as private roads, may be taken over by the town at some future time. The maintenance of town roads and the provision of other public services in these remote areas is costly. The town land use plan (see Chapter V) also reflects this concern over growing municipal expenses by directing new growth to areas along existing town roads.

At the current level of growth and development, the town highway department's equipment and staffing should be adequate for the next several years. Equipment will need to be replaced periodically; the town maintains a fund for the acquisition of new equipment. Coordinated capital planning could help the town ensure that adequate funds will be available when major new acquisitions become necessary.

Expenditures on the town's transportation infrastructure have remained fairly constant, but have increased slightly in the last couple of years (Table 6.2). Significant fluctuations can occur from year to year as the need for major repairs does not occur on a regular schedule. The town can control fluctuations in capital expenditures through long-range planning for equipment replacement, town garage, and similar items. This process does occur now in Sandgate, but might be improved by developing and annually updating a more formal capital budget. Costs to the town for roadway expenses are also moderated through receipt of state highway aid. The town should participate in the regional transportation planning process (developed in response to the state and federal initiatives) with the BCRC and other towns in the region to ensure that important qualifying local projects receive funding.

Sandgate Town Highway Expenditures	
1990	-- \$146,203
1991	-- 154,772
1992	-- 166,629
1993	-- 186,082
1994	-- 174,117
1995	-- 158,535
1996	-- 188,185
1997	-- 145,869
1998	-- 157,039
1999	-- 260,194
2000	-- 208,786

6.3 Public Transit

The need for some form of public transportation in Sandgate is most likely to be felt by elderly persons. Access to transportation for health care purposes, for shopping and personal business, and for social or recreational purposes is particularly important to elderly residents. While many of these needs are met through the community, there are some programs offered by area health and human service organizations that can also benefit these individuals. The Red Cross and other service organizations currently offer transportation services for health-related trips and handicap accessible transportation services for seniors and disabled persons.

6.4 Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel

In recent years, the town has seen a marked increase in the number of bicycles touring through the town. Many Sandgate residents and visitors to the town also enjoy walking along the town's quiet roads. These recreational uses have not presented any problems to date, but if vehicular traffic increases substantially on certain roads (particularly higher speed roads such as Sandgate Road), consideration should be given to including wider shoulders when undertaking regular road reconstruction and maintenance activities. Such improvements will also encourage the use of bicycles for transportation to certain destinations in place of automobiles.

6.5 Policies and Recommendations

1. New roads, driveways, and drainage systems should be designed, constructed, and maintained in accordance with the municipal subdivision regulations, street standards, and any recommendations of the Town's road foreman.
2. Additions and improvements to the transportation system should be designed to minimize impacts on important natural resources.
3. Major transportation improvements and investments should benefit existing roads and developed areas, with minimal or no investment for new roads serving remote and mountainous areas.
4. All new road construction should be consistent with limitations imposed by topographical conditions, natural areas, and areas having special resource value.
5. Scenic roads should be maintained for their scenic value while providing safe access for residents. Road construction and maintenance should be consistent with scenic values (width, alignment, roadside vegetation, etc.).
6. The town should carefully plan for large transportation related costs to avoid excessive budget growth in any one year. The town should also avoid taking responsibility for private roads that would present a financial burden to the town.
7. Sandgate should participate in regional transportation planning activities and make maximum use of available state funds.