

Executive Summary

Purpose

The Town of Simsbury in conjunction with the Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) initiated this study to develop a twenty year corridor plan for Route 10 (Hopmeadow Street) in Simsbury that would assess current and future transportation issues in terms of safety and efficiency, while accommodating targeted new and redevelopment. This Study demonstrates what the Route 10 Corridor could be if designed and built using context sensitivity formed by broad based public participation, state-of-the-art engineering practices and tools, and in conformance with emerging local, regional and federal policies for sustainable development and livable, walkable places.

How to Use the Plan

The plan is a guide for actions and decisions by the Town of Simsbury elected Officials, Boards, and Commissions, and is endorsed by CRCOG as part of a Long Range Transportation Plan for the Capitol Region. This allows the Town to move forward with identifying and programming funding for Town projects and in cooperation with private development proposals, however, detailed engineering design will still need to be undertaken for many of the recommendations to be implemented.

The Suitability, Land Use, and Transportation analysis conducted by the Consultant Team was derived for a one time use in conjunction with this study to determine a planning base for the mix, density, and configuration of land uses in the 20 year corridor plan. This study did not delineate specific economic development or re-district/ zone change proposals, and it would be inappropriate to interpolate the corridor study land use analysis to another time frame and/or for application to an individual property.

The recommendations contained in the study establish a holistic system where transportation in all modal varieties can support existing business, appropriate economic growth and the community character of the Town of Simsbury. Individual transportation improvements will be built independently over time using various public and private funding sources in conjunction with other projects and partnerships which may have emphasis on community building, place making or development. The important accomplishment is that the individual elements are made better by this locally initiated and consensus driven planning process and the resounding emphasis is that the purpose of these improvements is not to move traffic, but rather to enhance the Town of Simsbury.

A Unique Study

A similar transportation study of Route 10 in Simsbury was completed in 1998. This study is slightly different in that the State and CRCOG process now places greater emphasis on land use considerations to inform decisions on transportation recommendations. For example, this study balances the regional need to move traffic through the corridor with the desire of the community to maintain the “Main Street” character of Hopmeadow Street, including a predominantly two-lane Route 10 with a walkable Town Center. The Town’s goal for development along Hopmeadow Street was clearly articulated in the 2007 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

In addition, this study was ground breaking for CRCOG in that it was the first study developed utilizing a community “charrette” process in collaboration with the community stakeholders as a continuation of the successful charrette held to develop the Town Center Master Plan for Simsbury. In this manner, the design solutions could be developed in collaboration with the community, achieving consensus along the way. The consultants worked closely with the Town of Simsbury, Steering Committee, CRCOG, ConnDOT, various environmental, historic preservation, and bicycle advocacy groups, and over 150 Simsbury citizens who attended the charrette or submitted comments on the study.

Finally, another unique aspect of this study is that it adheres to the recent State legislation and Federal guidelines to consider all forms of transportation including walking, biking, and mass transit as well as the customary use of motor vehicles.



Guiding Principles

The Steering Committee and community Stakeholders prepared the following Guiding Principles for use by the Consultant Team:

Guiding Principles for the Route 10 Corridor Study

1. Maintain the integrity of a two-lane Route 10
2. Maintain the integrity of the whole
 - Economic: Distribute the benefits and burdens of growth among current and future residents and reduce the costs for building and maintaining the infrastructure that supports them
 - Social: Preserve and enhance community character including creating equitable, attractive, affordable, and safe environments
 - Ecological: Protect air, water, and habit resources and reduce energy consumption
3. Insure more efficient local travel while preserving valued visual, natural, and cultural/historic resources
4. Maintain the integrity of Town Center as defined in the Charrette when considering the intensity of growth in other areas
5. Provide viable transit options along the corridor

Boundary of Study

The physical boundaries of this study extend from the Town of Avon on the southern end of the corridor in Simsbury, to the intersection of Wolcott Road in the northern end of town. The corridor segment is approximately 7 miles long.

Areas were characterized by specific traits that made the areas special to the corridor and Simsbury, as broken down in the character area graphic illustrated below. By identifying what makes each area special, a slate of enhancements could be developed that not only served growth in traffic, but also preserved and enhanced the character of each specific area.

Agreeing on a Vision

Summary:

The Town envisions comprehensive strategies that would prevent large volumes of induced traffic and accomplish the “right size” transportation infrastructure to fit in the context of the community character and appropriate economic development. In summary, the Vision emphasizes

- Make place-making and far-sighted land-use planning central to all transportation decisions
- Re-envision zoning regulations, promote connectivity, and walkability.
- Accomplish more with the roads and public right of way and rethink streets as public spaces

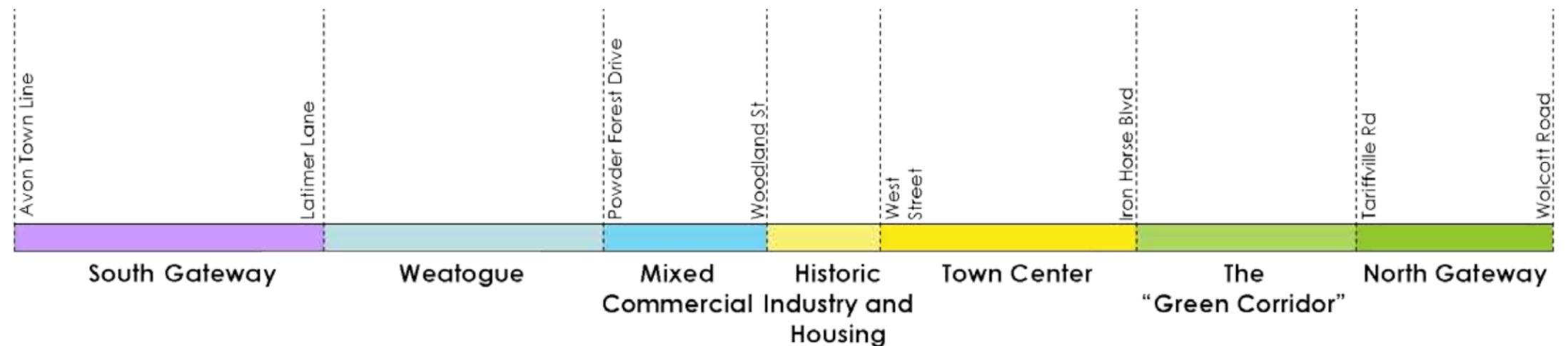
Existing Conditions

Coupled with the development of the physical plan, a detailed analysis of travel demand and safety parameters informed the design concept through the development and refinement stages of the project. Traffic analyses such as operational analyses, intersection analyses, travel demand modeling, simulation, and accident history analyses were completed concurrently with the planning effort to create a truly integrated corridor plan that was technically sound and met the goals of the region and Town of Simsbury.

The Consultant Team reviewed previous studies and town regulations/POCD/planning documents, gathered data and conducted analysis in order to understand the land use, community character (urban design) and multi-modal transportation conditions in both quantitative and qualitative format. These data were compiled in tabular format by character segment along the Route 10 corridor and are summarized in the study. The major findings which provided a framework for subsequent tasks included the following:

- Existing traffic delay, and vehicle queues are generally acceptable to most residents.
- Historic traffic volume trends have been stable in the Route 10, Route 185, and Route 167 corridors.

- Vehicle speeds are appropriate in Town Center, but can be managed better in other segments of Route 10.
- The natural environment is an essential element of Simsbury. Transportation planning must consider the Farmington River watershed, floodplains, and wetland habitat but can be integrated to create recreational opportunities.
- Aesthetics in the public right of way are too vehicle oriented.
- Commuter park and ride lots are well utilized. Service and amenities are lacking.
- Access management problems contribute to accident frequency.
- Bike facilities in Town and along the Route 10 corridor are superb, and a culture for biking can be an asset to the community.
- Sidewalk connections from neighborhoods, and schools to Route 10 businesses and community facilities are lacking.



Taking Action

The Consultant Team developed the Suitability, Land Use, and Transportation analysis in order to predict the transportation implications of a planning level economic growth scenario. Alternative recommendations, and concept improvement plans were developed in order to address safety, capacity, and connectivity problems that arise in the 20 year horizon. These alternatives were vetted through a public process in the charrette, and through a series of public meetings held with the Steering Committee.

Numerous alternatives for off-corridor improvements were the natural approach for striking a balance between future economic development and maintenance of a two lane Route 10. Public discussion, including support and opposition, vetted the alternatives and ensured that the process considered the natural environment, the historic character of the Town, and traffic impacts elsewhere in Town. Many ideas and concepts were placed in Appendix C of the study report. These alternatives were not endorsed by the project steering committee but were left in the appendix, anticipating that future planning efforts may find that conditions may change in the future such that one of these concepts may be considered.

Recommendations

The full set of study recommendations are provided in the "Recommended Transportation Project Matrix" in Section 3.5, pages 63-69.

Each of the recommended transportation improvements were evaluated in terms of meeting goals for safety, efficiency, augmenting town character as well as estimated costs, potential funding sources, phasing, and some potential impacts of construction.

Timeframes considered for the recommendations were "Short-Term" (within 5 years), "Medium-Term" (5-10 years), and "As Opportunity Arises" which concerns long-term capital projects, but also those which could be primarily development-driven.

Transportation improvements included intersection enhancements, access management recommendations, network additions and connections, non-motorized connectivity, and transit enhancements. Projects ranged from off-corridor improvements that would improve vehicular movement throughout the Farmington Valley region, and on-corridor spot projects that would improve pedestrian or vehicular operations at specific intersections, to general policies supportive of alternative modes, streetscaping, and development patterns in some or all of the corridor.

Some recommendations extend beyond the boundaries of public owned right of way. These recommendations would need to be accomplished in cooperation with the owners of these properties through potential Public-Private Partnerships.

Two parallel streets are recommended to balance the desire of Simsbury citizens to retain a two-lane corridor with the need for additional physical capacity for vehicles in certain areas where development is expected. Parallel streets such as the current Iron Horse Boulevard provide a way to consolidate driveways on main roads and access development and parking areas from the rear, which improves both Town character and multimodal travel safety. Further, parallel streets can create additional frontage for business development activities, or serve as alternate routes for emergency and other vehicles when primary roads are congested.

- South Gateway Access Management**
Major redevelopment properties exist in the South Gateway. As such, there is potential for multiple curb cuts on Route 10. Any potential future developments should seek to access Route 10 through existing driveways. If new development is proposed and existing drives or existing curb cuts do not exist, efforts to create intersections opposite local streets should be made so as to create the best possible intersection alignment and configuration. These potential new connections will likely involve cooperation between several different landowners.
- Weatogue Village Connectivity**
The proposed roadway connection and will allow cross-town traffic to flow east-to-west in a more efficient manner, which is important because Route 185 (Hartford Road) is the only means of crossing Talcott Mountain in Simsbury. This comprehensive approach to improving the transportation functionality includes expansion of the heavily used commuter parking lot, redesign of the Route 10 intersection at Stratton Brook Road, and a new one way roadway beginning in back of the Abigail restaurant connecting Hartford Road to Stratton Brook Road. Transit oriented development and Weatogue Village character enhancement opportunities are exciting by-products of this transportation improvement.



Weatogue Village Green and Circulation

- Parallel Roadway South of Town Center**
Right-of-way already exists to create a service-style roadway to the south of the terminus of Iron Horse Boulevard at Drake Hill Road that would run parallel to Route 10 and eventually reconnect to Route 10 somewhere in the vicinity of Pine Hill Drive. This potential roadway would alleviate traffic on Route 10 and provide significant opportunity in supporting potential future site development.
- Wolcott Road Extension**
A new roadway extension of Wolcott Road from the Route intersection with Wolcott Road to Hoskins Road will improve the operational efficiency of the Route 10 corridor. The roadway will minimize left turns onto Route 10 at Wolcott Road and Tariffville Road intersections, and would aid mobility and transportation system flexibility in the northern part of Simsbury. The North Gateway has a great potential for development growth, with more available commercial and residential zoned land than in any other part of the Route 10 corridor.
- North Gateway Access Management**
Destinations along Route 10 in the North Gateway are accessed through a multitude of driveways, sometimes with three or more curb cuts per property which present hazardous travel conditions. An additional parallel road to the west of Route 10 from Hoskins Road to the Ice Rink driveway and north through new development properties could provide easy access to parking areas and new walkable development opportunities in this area of Simsbury.

Operational improvements consist primarily of strategic intersection modifications which increase spot capacity and efficiency while maintaining the typical two-lane character of Route 10. Traffic signal installation, coordination, and optimized turn lanes provide the bulk of operational recommendations.

- Relocate Nod Road** at the Route 185 intersection to create opportunity for widening Route 185 from Nod Road to the two eastbound climbing lanes. Install new traffic signal, close existing drive to Pinchot Sycamore and create new parking area and boat launch on south side of Route 185. This improvement mitigates traffic congestion on Route 10 and is sensitive to both natural environment and the nearby historic district of East Weatogue
- Two new traffic signals** are recommended at locations along the corridor, including Latimer Lane in the South Gateway and Hoskins Road in the North Gateway. These traffic signals will mitigate side-street delay at existing unsignalized approaches, where high through volume on Route 10 makes it difficult and unsafe for vehicles turning out of higher volume side streets.
- The coordinated signal system** should be expanded to include existing signalized intersections which are not presently synchronized. Traffic signals that have coordinated timing of green lights with each other can reduce unnecessary travel delay and congestion related impacts such as accidents, vehicle emissions and fuel consumption.
- Two left turn lanes** are recommended on Route 10 at signalized intersections within Town Center including Seminary Road/ Plank Hill Road / Phelps Lane, and Library Lane / Wilcox Street. These improvements can be accomplished without the need for significant roadway widening, as the roadway section through downtown provides sufficient width for a three lane cross-section. Provision of left turn lanes where recommended will prevent left turning vehicles from blocking the through volumes on Route 10, maximizing the capacity of the existing roadway section.

- Intersection pavement reductions** are recommended in spot locations where the traffic operations may be maintained with a narrower roadway cross section, improving access for pedestrians and reducing crosswalk lengths. The locations include several signalized intersections within Town Center as well as the intersection of Route 10 at Tariffville Road, and at Route 185. Pavement reduction recommendations correspond to the areas of existing and future high pedestrian usage and are accomplished by restriping to reduce the lane and shoulder widths and sometimes include raised planted islands for pedestrian shelter and aesthetics/character enhancement.
- Reduce speed limits** along Route 10 to provide consistency and driver expectation in harmony with the behavior the Town wishes to promote. Lower speed limits (30 mph and below) support pedestrian accessibility, while low to moderate speeds (30 – 40 mph) are appropriate for greater mobility without an excessive speed differential between motorists and adjacent bicyclists, who frequently travel on-road. Lowered travel speeds also reduce road noise from the rolling friction of tires and generally enhance the “place” aspects of the corridor rather than just “through movement” emphasis. New speed limit signs will be installed
- Restripe the travel lanes** along Route 10 to reduce speeds and provide a sense of enclosure and place (i.e. both physical and visual lane narrowing). This is accomplished through restriping to move the shoulder lane mark, and by implementing landscaping and streetscape. The through lanes on Route 10 vary from 12 to 16 feet at present. The recommended cross-section will feature travel lanes of constant 11 foot width throughout the town to assist in reducing vehicle speed and enhancing the pedestrian environment.



Bicycle transportation will be enhanced on Route 10 by installing continuous painted shoulders for use by bicyclists along the entirety of the Route 10 Corridor in Simsbury, except for Town Center between Iron Horse Boulevard and Drake Hill Road, where the bike route will follow Iron Horse Boulevard. Pavement markings for bicyclists provide increased visibility to automobile drivers, consistency in design and operations, predictability of behavior, and likelihood of complete roadway maintenance (including dirt and debris clearance). The study also recommends other measures for creating a robust bicycle network including installing improved access points to the the Farmington Canal Heritage trail and installing bicycle parking facilities.

A first class pedestrian network is desired by Simsbury. The study recommends numerous pedestrian connectivity and enhancement recommendations:

- Replace current pedestrian signal systems at intersections with modern (Manual of Uniform Traffic Code compliant) pedestrian signal indicators, preferably with countdown timers at higher volume intersections. Ensure that all intersections have appropriate ADA-accessible ramps. Crosswalks should be striped so as to ensure high visibility day and night;

- All sidewalks should be a minimum of 5' in width; widen where necessary. During new or reconstruction, locate sidewalks and utilities so that they do not conflict with each other and a clear path is maintained;
- Develop a maintenance or enforcement program to ensure that sidewalk facilities are in good condition and are repaired regularly;
- Consolidate driveways within and across parcels where possible to minimize the number of vehicles that pedestrians encounter midblock through requirements/incentives for new development or redevelopment of existing uses;
- Install pedestrian scale lighting along sidewalks and pathways as recommended by the Simsbury Design Review Board. Lighting may be part of a "family" of fixtures rather than one specific type. Solar-sensitive controls and timers can be used for energy efficiency and dark skies initiatives; and
- Install sidewalks on intersecting streets that connect Route 10 to neighborhoods, schools, and other destinations. Ideally, sidewalks would be located on both sides of the street, but if only one side is feasible due to cost or perceived demand, sidewalks should be installed to serve the most destinations and to minimize unnecessary street crossings. A number of nearby streets were identified by the community and study team as desirable to retrofit with sidewalks. These streets include but are not limited to: Wolcott Road, Tariffville Road, Seminary Road, Plank Hill Road, Massaco Street, Stratton Brook Road, Sand Hill Road, Canal Street, Hartford Road, Latimer Lane, Old Meadow Plain Road, and Lincoln Lane.

Transit facilities and service will be improved by the following recommendations:

- Create a transit hub in Weatogue at the confluence of the greenway and Park & Ride lot;
- Work with CT Transit to add some express bus routes in South Gateway with continuation to Route 44. Add one or more new suburban routes serving the Farmington Valley Region and adjacent Towns including West Hartford and Bristol
- Create a local circulator system along Route 10 which primarily serves Simsbury destinations, and potentially several in Avon. Private "shared taxis" (also known as jitneys, Publicos, Collective Taxis, and shuttles) can also provide town-to-town, circulator, or bus stop shuttle service.
- Designate potential bus stop locations in each geography on the corridor. Each bus stop should have, at a minimum, signage depicting stop location, routes served, route maps, and schedules. Bus stops must be located adjacent to handicap-accessible sidewalks that connect the stop to the entrances of nearby destinations, and should be placed at the far side of intersections. Ideally, stops are sheltered and well-lit.
- Prioritize new sidewalk facilities that provide direct connection to current and future bus stop locations, as walking time to stops directly impacts ridership. Ensure bicycle racks on the front of buses continue to be incorporated to boost ridership from cyclist.

Acknowledgements

The Route 10 Corridor Study, conducted in the town of Simsbury, was funded by the Federal Highway Administration and the Connecticut Department of Transportation. The study was administered by the Capitol Region Council of Governments with the technical assistance of Fuss & O'Neill, Inc. and their subconsultants. The Final Plan is the result of a collaborative effort among local residents, local officials, and regional and State planners. This effort was guided by a Local Steering Committee. CRCOG would like to express its appreciation to the members of the Steering Committee who contributed their time and invaluable knowledge of local issues to the development of this Plan.

For more information or to see the full report contact CRCOG at 860.522.2217 or go to CRCOG's website at www.crcog.org

Suggested Citation: Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), 2011. Simsbury Route 10 Corridor Study Executive Summary. CRCOG 241 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06106. www.crcog.org

Prepared in cooperation with the Town of Simsbury, the Capitol Region Council of Governments, and the Connecticut Department of Transportation. The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the Municipal Steering Committee that served on the project and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Connecticut Department of Transportation and/or the U.S. Department of Transportation. For more information, contact CRCOG at 860.522.2217 x212 or go to www.crcog.org.

