

# TRANSPORTATION

As the metropolitan area of Chittenden County becomes increasingly interconnected, transportation planning and municipal coordination becomes increasingly crucial. Winooski recognizes and supports the value of the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transportation Plan. The transit-oriented design principles, intended to promote a transportation system which enhances the quality of life in neighborhoods and downtowns, are basic to Winooski's transportation planning, philosophy and character. Winooski's existing and proposed traditional development pattern of grid streets with sidewalks and bus routes epitomize the principles of transit-oriented design. The points which follow highlight the extent to which Winooski embodies transit oriented principles.

**MAP Refer to Appendix** A map entitled "Transportation Map" is featured in the appendix to this document.

## ARTERIAL STREETS

☞ **Through participation in Regional, State and Federal transportation programs, Winooski will insist that traffic calming measures and transportation enhancement improvements be installed on the State and Federal highways which pass through the community.**

Winooski must work hard to insure that its local interests are not lost in the effort to move as many vehicles through the City as quickly as possible. Routes 15, 2 and 7 and the bridge over the Winooski River shoulder much of northern Chittenden County's commuting burden. Well over 35,000 vehicles pass through Winooski every weekday. This traffic causes snarled intersections, parking problems, creates noise, pollution, vibrations, and dangerous situations. If the City of Winooski were not a heavily traveled entry point to Burlington for commuters from suburban Chittenden County, its transportation problems would be limited to localized parking problems, and maintenance of its streets and highways. With City and regional needs in competition, installation of traffic calming and transportation enhancement improvements are necessary to allow the commuter routes and Winooski's traditional development fabric to co-exist.

Widening of arterial and local streets and elimination of on-street parking is strongly discouraged. Increased pavement width and traveled lanes drastically alter the physical characteristics of neighborhoods and adjoining properties by reducing separation between vehicles and existing land uses. Such enlargements lower the quality of life for area residents and business people by increasing noise, dirt, and vibration, eliminating on-street parking, and reducing landscape buffers. On Main Street -Routes 2 and 7- additional or wider lanes will impair pedestrian crossing, contribute to increased speed and illegal traffic maneuvers -such as passing on the right- and exacerbate the dividing effect which the roadway causes between the east and west sides of the city.

Winooski requires strong benefit-cost justification before it will support development of a full interchange at I-89 Exit 15. City concerns include those associated with Routes 2, 7 and 15, as well as loss of tax base associated with right of way acquisition.

## Motor Freight and Truck Routes

☞ **The City shall discourage motor freight traffic from using neighborhood streets, and direct such traffic to run only on designated truck routes.** Heavy trucks produce negative impacts such as vibration, noise, dust, and pavement wear and tear which erode the City's quality of life, particularly on residential streets. Currently, all trucks over 24,000 pounds must acquire an annual permit to operate within Winooski. The City will routinely enforce its truck route and weight ordinances and will re-evaluate their provisions as necessary.

## PARKING

Parking continues to be one of the largest transportation-related problems in the region and notably, in Winooski.

The City was built during a different era, when there were fewer cars and commuting meant walking to the mill, not driving to Taft Corners or the suburbs. In many neighborhoods, parking problems are evident near multi-unit buildings where yards and lawns become overused as tenants have more cars than there are parking spaces. This problem is most acute in winter, when the on-street parking ban is enforced. In the downtown, streets are very narrow and there is little off-street parking. Routes 2, 7 and 15 run immediately in front of commercial buildings whose customers must park either on the mainartery or on small side streets. This problem constitutes more than an inconvenience; vacancies and a high turnover rate among downtown businesses is associated with the lack of parking.

If Winooski is to be a city with safe, uncongested streets, and if neighborhoods are to preserve their character, and businesses assured of long-term economic viability, parking must be provided to keep up with demand. Given that Winooski has a development pattern of an old-style Vermont city, creative solutions to parking problems must be sought.

☞ **Alternatives to the complete on-street winter parking ban shall be investigated and tested to determine which best meets Winooski's needs.** Winter parking problems may be addressed partially through variations of the total parking ban (i.e., one side parking, alternate night-alternate sides, etc.). Such variations should be investigated for application on appropriate streets.

☞ **To address its parking challenges, the City of Winooski will adopt traffic generation oriented parking regulations for uniform application. Variances of the parking requirements of the Zoning Ordinance ~~shall not be granted~~ shall be strongly discouraged. If granted, variances shall be offset via contribution to a municipal parking fund; the program in place in Burlington may serve as a model for the local program.** In the interest of minimizing pavement and reducing the loss of urban greenspace the 1981 Winooski Zoning Ordinance was revised to require only 1.5 parking spaces per unit. This requirement is substandard in the current day and contributes to the existing on- and off-site parking shortage. Variances of parking requirements have further exacerbated the problem.

☞ **In Winooski's Downtown Growth Center and commercial development areas, it is envisioned that additional parking will be provided in structured facilities. Such garages must be part of a mixed-use development and be in scale with neighboring historic buildings. Increasing pressure to provide parking space Downtown and in redevelopment projects must not result in buildings being razed.**

☞ **Where appropriate, street design techniques such as the European "woonerf" concept should be applied as a means of providing on-street parking and serving to calm traffic.** In addition to functioning to minimize the impact of vehicles on pedestrians, "woonerfs" (woonerven) with widened sidewalks at the ends of the block, landscaping, site amenities and one-way traffic flow patterns with angled parking may provide on-street parking on certain streets. In the downtown area, Weaver and Newells Lane have been identified as candidates for "woonerf" treatment. Residential neighborhoods, as well, should be investigated for the potential of "woonerf" installations.

## **TRAFFIC CALMING**

☞ **Winooski will seek to implement traffic calming measures which have been locally proven to be effective in similar conditions.** Winooski's neighborhood streets have, by their nature, the capacity to accommodate local traffic. They are neither designed nor suitable for heavy or rapid through traffic. Several of Winooski's neighborhoods experience inappropriate traffic burdens because they are convenient bypasses of the arterial streets. Suggested traffic calming schemes for Winooski are presented in a study prepared for the City in 2001.

## **STREET MAINTENANCE**

☞ **Through its legislative delegation, membership in VLCT and participation in the MPO Winooski will pursue improved funding for the State and Federal highways which pass through the community.**

Routes 2 & 7 (Main Street) and 15 (East Allen Street) are State Highways and are maintained by the State of Vermont outside of Winooski. Within city limits, however, maintenance and traffic safety responsibilities are borne by Winooski taxpayers.

☞ **To offset management and maintenance burdens related to higher traffic volumes and inordinate wear and tear caused by heavy vehicles, the City will continue to seek impact fees from those generating new traffic through Act 250 and other regulatory processes.** Heavy users and contractors will be charged for damage and undue wear and tear caused to City streets.

☞ **The City will strictly enforce its street excavation policy and expand it where necessary.** Excavations within Winooski's street rights-of-way, when they are not promptly and properly repaired, severely undermine the integrity of the roadway surface, disrupt sidewalks, turn green belts into mud holes, and generally reduce the quality of the streetscape. The City's street excavation ordinance imposes a fee, which reflects the costs of damage to the public infrastructure.

☞ **It is recommended that a local street reconstruction program be renewed to assure that Winooski's streets are kept in the best possible condition.**

Most of the City's roads are residential streets which adequately meet the needs of the areas they serve. However, the physical condition of the streets varies, and a regular system of repair and replacement must continue to assure that they remain serviceable. The City's 10-Year Street Reconstruction Program expired in 1998.

## **CURB CUT MANAGEMENT**

☞ **The City shall enforce maximum curb cut widths, and discourage multiple curb cuts in development and redevelopment projects.**

☞ **In the interest of pedestrian and motorist safety, corner curbs on streets intersecting with arteries including Main Street, East and West Allen Streets and Malletts Bay Avenue shall be restored as a component of street reconstruction projects or redevelopment efforts.**

Wide or numerous curb cuts create a situation where it is hazardous for pedestrians to cross, allow for unsafe entry or backing into traveled lanes, and encourage drivers to enter or exit sites at high speeds. Appropriate site circulation management, with curb cuts minimized in number and widths no wider than needed, reduce traffic interference and the possible number of collision points with traffic flow. Additionally, site circulation schemes, which wisely manage curb cuts, provide additional on-site parking and reduced paving for driveway aprons allows for additional greenspace in the public rights of way.

## **ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION**

☞ **Winooski will continue to strengthen its existing alternative transportation systems and will work to develop a more extensive and broader range of alternative options.**

Winooski recognizes the benefits of transportation modes which help reduce automotive use. Those benefits include more than the reduction of traffic burden and its accompanying ill effects. Other benefits are the diversity and vitality that non-automobile traffic bestows on the activity of a city, and the fact that other options for transportation are available to a wide range of citizens, especially to elders, residents of downtown, and children.

### **Pedestrian Travel**

☞ **Winooski plans to maintain its sidewalks year-round, mark them at street crossings, and, to the extent practical, improve them to be barrier-free to the elderly and people with disabilities. In non-residential areas, abutting property owners should be required to keep sidewalks passable and clear of ice and snow during winter months.**

Pedestrian passage is considered an essential component of the city's transportation network. In a compact, urban setting such as Winooski, it is possible to commute on foot to shopping, work, and school. Sidewalks link most of the city's neighborhoods, and provide a safe haven from vehicles for commuting pedestrians as well as those who walk or jog for exercise. There are certain sections of the city, however, which do not have sidewalks, or where sidewalks have deteriorated and must be reconstructed. In such areas, particularly those near schools, parks or public services, sidewalks should be installed or reconstructed. Extension of the sidewalk system where needed has been strongly requested by the City Council.

In some sections of the city, streets do not inter-connect and pedestrian traffic is possible only by crossing public or private property. Two such short cuts across public property which should be recognized as important exist between North and Main Streets through Highland Industrial Park, and between Main and George Streets through the Winooski School property. These, and other pedestrian ways, are acknowledged as links in Winooski's transportation chain and should be improved and preserved to the extent possible.

➤ **The City of Winooski shall study, seek funding for and put in place improved pedestrian crossings along major highways which traverse the community.** Major commuter arterials in Winooski must be crossed by pedestrians traveling to school, work and services. It is the policy of the City of Winooski to improve pedestrian crossings and shorten distance of pedestrian crossings through reduction of the number of traveled lanes and reduced lane widths. Main and East Allen Streets, particularly in the Central Business District, present a challenge to pedestrian crossing because of design and traffic volumes.

## Cycleways

➤ **A citywide system of bicycle ways is planned for commuting and recreational use. Winooski will seek funding through Regional, State and Federal authorities to design and construct the network. Winooski's proposed cycleway network is coordinated with bike routes in Colchester and Burlington as part of Chittenden County's Alternate Transportation Path Plan.**

**MAP Refer to Appendix** A map entitled "Cycleways" is featured in the appendix of this document.

There are three types of bikeways which can be implemented:

- Class I (Bike Path): a paved path separate from the street which is for the exclusive use of non-motorized vehicles.
- Class II (Bike Lane): a separately marked lane on a street which is designated for use by bicycles by signs, pavement markings and physical barriers.
- Class III (Bike Route): a facility designated by signs only, such as a city street, where bicycles and vehicles share the pavement.

Winooski's 18.25 miles of paved streets are proposed to continue to carry the bulk of bicycle traffic. It is expected that the City's street reconstruction program will improve road surfaces and enhance bicycling conditions. Class III designation is proposed for Weaver, North and Lafountain Streets, Hickok Street plus Malletts Bay Avenue, and their connecting streets. These facilities will be promoted over Route 2 & 7 (Main Street) and Route 15 (East Allen Street); corridors which have relatively high automobile volumes.

☞ **Evaluation of the suitability of conversion of proposed Class III routes to Class II status should be undertaken, and additional Class II routes should be established where road width, topography and parking conditions allow.**

A regional Class I bike and pedestrian route is proposed for Route 2 & 7, Main Street, over the Winooski River. This route, separate from the bridge, is proposed to connect Winooski's cycleways with Burlington's Riverside Ave bicycle route. It is also envisioned that a regional Class I route, in a right-of-way paralleling Route 15 (East Allen Street), will be developed to serve commuter trips as well as provide access to Winooski Valley Park District facilities and the St. Michael's-Fort Ethan Allen area.

Additional local short-run Class I routes are proposed for the Gilbrook area, where there is the potential to link the St. Michael's College area with Colchester's Exit 16 section, and between North and Tigan Streets.

## **Bus Service**

☞ **Winooski shall continue to support and encourage the use of the CCTA as a means of providing an alternative to private vehicles.**

Winooski is served by buses operated by the Chittenden County Transit Authority (CCTA), of which Burlington, South Burlington, Shelburne, Essex are also member communities. Two routes traverse the City, Riverside-Winooski and Essex Bus Route. Regular-rider/potential-rider surveys should be conducted to determine which sectors of the city require or can support additional service. Based on these surveys, the City plans to advocate for changes in service to reflect these needs.

**MAP Refer to Appendix** A map entitled "Bus Routes" is featured in the appendix of this document.

## **Rail Service**

☞ **Winooski will lend support to the expansion of CCTA's regional service, to the extension of a commuter rail system, and to increased efforts to popularize the use of mass transit between the suburbs and the urban core.**

The opportunity to utilize existing rail lines and to develop a public rail transportation system, akin to those of countries with more advanced infrastructure, is one that Winooski sees as forward-looking and welcomes.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

**☞ The City shall apply accessibility provisions of the BOCA Code and ANSI A117.1. Winooski will continue its support of the Winooski Accessibility Council, and encourage continued improvements in the accessibility of services and facilities to people with disabilities. Winooski's Accessibility Plan should be reviewed and updated.**

The Winooski Accessibility Council was created to improve physical and program accessibility for Winooski citizens. The Council devised Winooski's first Accessibility Plan which reviewed the accessibility to facilities in the city, listed modifications to improve accessibility, and set priorities for improvement work. A principal objective was to "increase awareness on the part of the City of Winooski, its government, businesses and residents of the right of accessibility to City resources that are enjoyed by all persons abled and disabled". The second priority of the plan was to identify physical barriers that inhibit access to resources and opportunities and take necessary action to remove those barriers.

The State of Vermont and the City of Winooski have adopted the BOCA building code and the ANSI A117.1 standards which are to be adhered to in all projects to improve accessibility. Improvements have been made in recent years to accommodate people with disabilities, but additional work is required to accurately address the needs of the handicapped and elderly community. For example, access to shops and services, improved sidewalks and curb cuts, and additional accessible transit stop locations require attention. Achieving these improvements will enable all of Winooski's citizens to actively participate in community life.