
2.0 Introduction

2.1 Bedford and Route 101

Route 101 is a major east-west highway in southern New Hampshire, second only to Route 9 as an east-west arterial west of Interstate Route 93. It has long passed through Bedford on the current alignment, except for the improvement in the 1950s which moved the road from the historic town center to the present alignment just to its south.

As Bedford and southern New Hampshire grew dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s, traffic also increased, both from local and regional users of the highway. In addition, subdivisions and commercial development over the past half-century have added many points of access to the highway, necessitating left turns into and out of the traffic stream. As traffic increased, congestion became common during peak periods, and traffic began to divert to neighborhood streets until, at present, volumes passing through the narrow streets of the historic town center are almost half the volume on the highway itself. In addition, the high traffic volumes at all hours have created a barrier effect dividing the town in half and isolating town center uses from one another.

In the 2000 update to Bedford's Master Plan, Route 101 was a major topic, both in terms of transportation and the roadway's effect on the quality of life in Bedford. The need for action to reduce congestion, improve safety, and strengthen the town center was clearly identified. In 2000, the town applied for and received a study grant from the Federal Highway Administration's Transportation and Community and System Preservation (TCSP) program, whose aim is to consider both transportation and land use in a solution to roadway problems which also improves the quality of life in the town. The Corridor Study is the result.

2.2 Study Process

2.2.1 *Coordination with NRPC Corridor Study*

The Bedford Route 101 Corridor Study is being closely coordinated with a parallel study of the Route 101 Corridor in Amherst, Milford, and Wilton under a separate contract managed by the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC). Because of the importance of maintaining conti-



nunity and consistency over this entire stretch of roadway, a Corridor Steering Committee has been meeting regularly to coordinate the studies. The committee consists of representatives from the four towns (including Bedford's Town Manager, Planning Director and two Town Council members) as well as NRPC. The Bedford study is several months ahead of the schedule for the NRPC study, but issues such as roadway cross-section in Bedford and Amherst are being successfully discussed as the Bedford study nears completion.

2.2.2 Public Meetings

The Bedford Route 101 Corridor Study has emphasized public involvement and two-way information flow since its inception in May 2001. There have been four public meetings and workshops, all of them well-attended.

- Kick-off meeting, May 22, 2001 at the Bedford Library
- Visioning Workshop, September 19, 2001 at the historic Town Hall
- Consensus-building Workshop, November 29, 2001 at McKelvie School
- Public presentation of draft recommendations, May 23, 2002 at McKelvie School

2.2.3 Public Information

In addition to the public meeting presentations, a project web site has been updated throughout the study. The site, which is linked to the Town of Bedford's web page, contains notes of all meetings as well as graphics and studies. It also provided announcements of all upcoming meetings.

Prior to the final public meeting, a 4-page color summary was produced and distributed to all households in town as an insert to the Bedford Journal. The intent of this summary was to bring all citizens of Bedford up to date on the work done during the study.

2.2.4 Advisory Committee Meetings

The Bedford Route 101 Corridor Study Advisory Committee has 34 members appointed by the Town Council and charged with participating and advising the Council during the course of the

study. Fourteen of the members represent specific neighborhoods and the other members represent various town boards and departments. (A membership list is included in the Appendix to this report.)

The Committee met with the consultants nine times from June 2001 through May 2002. Meetings were conducted informally with the aim of moving toward consensus on the topics being presented by the consultants and discussed by the members. Meetings were open to the public and a number of Bedford residents not on the committee attended each meeting.

In addition to the meetings, several Committee members participated in a community photo survey in which they were given disposable cameras and logged photographs of situations in Bedford and examples in other places that they deemed either assets or liabilities. The mounted photos were displayed in the Town Offices during September 2001 and were used by the consultants as part of the analysis of issues and opportunities in the corridor.

The Committee members will receive copies of this draft report for their review and comment to the Town Council.

2.2.5 Schedule

The Route 101 Corridor Study began in May 2001 and will conclude in July 2002. The first phase of work included inventory and analysis of traffic and roadway issues, corridor aesthetics, and town center urban design. This phase culminated in the September 2001 Visioning Workshop. The second study phase involved development of options for roadway improvements, accommodation of pedestrians/bicycles, and guidelines for landscaping and architectural design. A list of roadway options was developed and evaluated early in this phase; the options on the list were discussed with the Advisory Committee at meetings in Fall 2001 and Winter/Spring 2002. The Consensus-Building workshop in November 2001 provided broad-based feedback on the options and preliminary recommendations for roadway improvements and landscaping. After the workshop, the consultants worked with the Committee to develop specific recommendations, which were presented and received feedback at the final public meeting. Recommendations were revised in some cases after the



*Traffic at Wallace Road signal
(photo by Jayne Spaulding)*

public meeting and are presented in this report. Following Committee review, the recommendations will be considered by the Town Council in July 2002.

2.3 Report Overview

This report begins with an analysis of the pieces of the puzzle: traffic and safety, land use and economics, aesthetics and town center urban design. This information provides the basis for identifying issues and opportunities that should be addressed.

The second section of the report begins with a Vision Statement summarizing public input on what participants in the process would like to see happen in the Route 101 Corridor. This section goes on to identify and evaluate concepts for improving Route 101. The final part of the report presents an organized program of recommendations for both roadway improvements, as well as pedestrian and bicycle routes and guidelines to address landscaping and architectural design of commercial development in the corridor.