

**Notes on Draft of 2006 Jaffrey Master Plan Update**  
**Traffic and Transportation Chapter**  
**May 10, 2006**

**I. Overview**

In general the draft is an appropriate update of the 1997 plan. It contains recently updated traffic counts and reflects changes that were ongoing or planned at the time of the 1997 update, including the addition of sidewalks in Jaffrey Center and the rebuilding of the Fitch Road bridge. The draft pays particular attention to alternative means of travel (pedestrian, bicycle, public transportation), which is a welcome addition to the 1997 update.

In this review we will first call out specific changes (additions, primarily) that were made relative to the 1997 update and then list areas that we would like to see developed to a more detailed level. We recognize that there are budgetary constraints to consider and it's likely that some of these further developments, if pursued, would need to be addressed by the subcommittee as opposed to the SWRPC.

**II. Major changes from 1997 update**

A. Traffic counts

Tables 2 and 3 (pages 5 and 6) offer more detailed and up-to-date information on the traffic flow on major thoroughfares throughout town and will be helpful in prioritizing road maintenance and defining land use parameters.

B. Transportation problem matrix

Tables 8 and 9 (pages 13-15) are useful tools for both prioritizing infrastructure projects and communicating to residents the official awareness level of existing problems – for example, a resident who is especially affected by one particular issue can consult the matrix to make sure the issue is included and see at a glance where it falls in terms of priority relative to other concerns in town.

C. Alternative transportation modes

Inclusion of commentary on the importance of allowing safe travel on foot and by bicycle is very much appreciated. The section on the rail trail will be addressed in more detail later. Also appropriate is the addition of information regarding public transportation; residents now have one location to which they can refer to find the type of transportation they need.

### **III. Suggestions for further improvement**

#### **A. 202 bypass**

Results of the 2005 community survey indicate that 57% of the respondents would like to see Jaffrey obtain “a bypass of Route 202 out of the center of town”, although the exact form such a bypass might take was left vague. Table 8, the Transportation Problem Matrix, also lists the bypass of Route 202 as an issue of “high” priority (#4).

The June 2004 Downtown Traffic Study concluded that the most appropriate design was what they referred to as the “South Crossing Two-Way Flow”, in which westbound traffic arriving from the direction of Peterborough would continue straight on Blake Street and cross the Contoocook River somewhere south of Main Street, connecting with River Street on the other side. This design also included replacing the lights at the 5-way intersection with a rotary. We would like to see additional discussion of the bypass added to the Chapter regarding the following details.

##### **1. Cost and timing**

Although it is listed as having “high” priority in the Transportation Problem Matrix, the bypass is not included in the current state 10-year transportation plan (which according to Economic Development Director Brandon Gray is now stretched to about 15 years). We would like to see this called out specifically, along with alternative possible means of moving ahead without state aid (e.g. town funding, possibly with the help of Federal highway money).

##### **2. Alternative designs**

The Downtown Traffic Study chose their recommendation from a selection of three different design possibilities. One of those rejected was referred to as the “North Crossing One-Way Loop”, in which a bridge across the Contoocook would be added north of Main Street and Downtown essentially turned into a large rotary with all traffic moving in a counter-clockwise direction around the Jaffrey Mills complex.

We would like this design to be brought forward as another possible solution because we see it as having several advantages over the currently proposed design:

a. Cost

Although either design requires one bridge to be built, the north crossing loop would require fewer linear miles of roadway and the purchasing of less property.

b. Loss by eminent domain

The north crossing loop would require the taking of fewer buildings by eminent domain.

c. Downtown economy

With Route 202 still traversing the dogleg, downtown businesses will continue to get the visibility that they currently enjoy, but since traffic will be one-way there are opportunities for improving the parking situation; and businesses on Main Street immediately west of the dogleg will actually have improved visibility from people traveling west toward Rindge on what is now just North Street.

3. Rotary

The proposed design incorporates a rotary at the 5-way intersection but we feel that this can be decoupled from the overall proposal and addressed separately, i.e. the “South Crossing Two-Way Flow” design does not require the rotary in order to be effective as a bypass. Particular concerns surrounding the rotary are:

a. Traffic calming

Although a rotary will undoubtedly slow traffic, it will not stop it. Typically a rotary that connects a major throughway with local side streets will tend to favor through traffic, in spite of the fact that entering traffic technically must yield to vehicles already in the rotary (a good example of this is the Route 2 rotary in Concord, Massachusetts). We feel there is a danger that a rotary at the 5-way intersection will turn Route 202 into a barrier that prevents safe travel to and from downtown relative to points east on Turnpike and Stratton Roads.

b. Pedestrian travel

The Transportation Problem Matrix indicates that its developers (the Public Works Director, engineer and police chief) saw the rotary as a potential problem for pedestrians and we agree. Currently, despite the high traffic volumes through town on the existing Route 202, it is not too difficult for pedestrians to move around, primarily as a result of the traffic lights but also partially due to the geometry of the dogleg itself. With the non-stop traffic of a rotary it is difficult to imagine being able to easily walk from a point on one side of Route 202 to a point on the other.

c. Downtown economy

Once again, having traffic stop at a traffic light as opposed to moving non-stop through town should afford downtown businesses some additional visibility.

B. Parking

We feel more attention was paid in the 1997 update to the issue of downtown parking. We would like to see the following details fleshed out to some degree:

1. Existing conditions/map

The 1997 update included a map of all downtown municipal parking as well as private parking locations. We would like to see that map updated and included in the new chapter.

2. Problem areas

It would be helpful to include a matrix similar to Table 8 listing particularly troublesome parking areas, for example the on-street parking at the intersection of Main Street and Goodnow Street, along with potential solutions (removing the two closest parking spaces, making Goodnow Street one-way, etc.)

## C. Bridges

The bridge summary is helpful but we would like to see detail added in two areas:

### 1. Clarification of status

It's concerning to see bridges listed as "functionally obsolete" and we feel it should be explicitly called out that this does not mean the bridge is unsafe; and we would like to understand why some bridges are listed as "not applicable".

### 2. Locations/map

Although it is not present in the 1997 update, a "Map #5" showing bridge locations is referenced on Page 9. We would like to see an updated bridge location map added to the Chapter.

## D. Maps

The 1997 update included several maps, showing the roads in Jaffrey by class (class I, II, etc.), classification (major arterial etc.), vehicle volume and trouble areas. The two we would like to see brought forward into the new update are those showing class and classification.

## E. Rail trail

The addition of a section describing the Rail Trail is an important change from the 1997 update. We would like to expand this section with the following potential enhancements to the trail.

### 1. Upgrading the remaining Jaffrey portion

The rail trail between the end of Blake Street and the Rindge town line is well-maintained gravel, however the trail from Webster Street to Peterborough is not comfortably passable by bicycle or on foot. We would like to add a survey of the tasks that would need to be completed to bring this section up to the quality level of the southern portion (bridge replacement or repair, surface treatments etc.) The section in question can be conveniently divided into two subsections that could be addressed separately as the budget allows.

a. Webster Street to Old Sharon Road

Upgrading this section to the level of the trail between Blake Street and Rindge would allow cycling access from downtown to the remaining businesses on Peterborough Street north, including Colls Farm Stand. At least one bridge, across from the rest area on Peterborough Street, needs to be replaced as called out in the draft; others need to be made safe for bicycle travel.

b. Old Sharon Road to Peterborough town line

Upgrading the remaining section would help promote access between downtown Peterborough and Jaffrey (with the participation of Peterborough for the portion between Noone Falls and the town line). At least one bridge, just north of Old Sharon Road, needs to be repaired.

2. Enhancing the paved portion

We feel that the paved portion of the rail trail, although short, has the potential to be a significant pedestrian/cycling artery connecting downtown businesses with nearby neighborhoods. In particular, if low-level nighttime lighting were added to the section between the Rite-Aid and Webster Street, it would be a more inviting way to get to businesses such as Athens Pizza and Mr. Mike's that stay open after dark. It's possible that enhancements such as this could be funded by voluntary contributions from local retail establishments as a business-development effort.

**IV. Conclusion**

The draft represents a good assessment of existing conditions and highlights a number of areas that can be considered as we move forward. We believe that adding the detail described in this document will help make the assessment of current conditions more complete and accessible, and help us make improvements by more explicitly outlining the things that need to be accomplished.

Respectfully submitted,  
The Traffic and Transportation Sub-committee of the Master Plan Committee  
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