7. Transportation

Objectives

1. Reduce dependence on private vehicles as the primary mode of transportation in Putney.
2. Reduce the adverse environmental impacts of road maintenance practices.
3. Use capital budgeting to plan for needed road improvements and ongoing maintenance in a cost-efficient manner.
4. Consider resiliency in response to climate change when planning and designing transportation projects.

Policies

1. Continue to support the Moover transit service and explore ways to increase ridership.
2. Use investment in alternative transportation strategies to enhance the role of the village center providing community facilities, employment, and retail opportunities.
3. Work to ensure that when state highways and bridges are rebuilt or upgraded that special attention is paid to bike and pedestrian safety.
4. Support the creation and use of rideshare boards and apps to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips for commuting and other trips.
5. Discourage the creation of new public or private roads to serve low-density development, particularly when such roads would contribute to forest fragmentation.
6. Continue to support the Moover transit service.

Actions

1. Develop a plan that integrates bike and pedestrian facilities with the existing transportation network to facilitate connections to other transport modes (transit). This will include bike racks, bus shelters and EV charging stations.
2. Ensure that needed bike and pedestrian facilities are included in the capital improvement plan.
3. Ensure that maintenance of bike and pedestrian facilities is included in annual highway department work plans.
4. Install Level three EV chargers in multiple village locations so that more vehicle trips are powered by electricity, not fossil fuels.
5. Ensure through the development review process and maintenance agreements that any private roads meet town standards.
6. Review and revise the land use regulations as necessary to ensure that private roads and driveways incorporate stormwater management that will be more resilient to climate change.
7. Consider the condition and capability of roads when establishing allowed densities of development under the land use regulations.
8. Continue to participate in the Traffic Advisory Committee hosted by the WRC.

Current Conditions

Highways

Putney is served by Exit 4 off Interstate 91, eighteen miles north of the Massachusetts border. US Route 5 and Kimball Hill Road/Westminster Road are the main roads through the village. These roads generally follow the north-south orientation of the Connecticut River. US Route 5 and Interstate 91 (I91) are the

primary corridors between Putney and the communities of Brattleboro and Bellows Falls, which are the commercial centers of the region.

In addition to the network of maintained roads, there are several Class 4 roads and legal trails that are not regularly maintained. These roads and trails offer recreational and resource extraction opportunities and frequently traverse mapped forest blocks. Based on the State of Vermont Agency of Transportation (AoT) 2016 Highway Map mileage summary, there are approximately 66 miles of "travelled highways" in the Town of Putney, and about 4 miles of legal trails. Of the roads maintained by the town, there are approximately 50 miles of gravel and 16 miles of paved roads.

State Class	Road Mileage
I91	5.55
State Highways (incl. Route 5)	5.95
Class 1 Town Highways	0
Class 2 Town Highways	15.67
Class 3 Town Highways	38.98
Class 4	4.95
Legal Trail	4.11
Total	75.2

Table x: Town of Putney Classification Mileage (Source: 2016 Highway Map)

A review of estimated average annual traffic counts data collected by AoT suggests an overall decline in vehicular traffic over the past twenty years on all major roads including US Route 5.

US Route 5 is designated as part of the Connecticut River Byway. The Connecticut River Byway was designated a National Scenic Byway in 2005 by the Federal Highway Administration. This designation recognizes roads for their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities, and draws visitors to the Town.

Road maintenance costs represented approximately 28 percent of the annual operating budget in FY2021. These costs have been increasing at a significantly higher rate than inflation for the past 20 years. Recent dramatic cost increases for fuel and oil products underscore how much of this municipal work Is dependent on fossil fuels.

In 2019 the towns of Putney and Dummerston purchased the 32-acre Hidden Acres Gravel pit in Dummerston. Engineering estimates suggest that the pit can provide seventy years of material at current rates of use. With this purchase both towns hope to control material costs for their Highway Department operations.

Parking

Public parking in the village is in designated areas along Main Street (US Route 5) and Kimball Hill Road, and at the town lot, south of Town Hall. Off-street parking is available in several private lots and driveways and parking areas throughout the village. In its 2005 study on village density the Planning Commission learnt through public forums and workshops that parking and pedestrian facilities in the village were a concern. The study included recommendations to reduce on-site parking requirements to promote more diverse, mixed-use village development that incorporated retail, office, and residential uses. [Were these changes made?]

There is an 82-vehicle AoT park and ride facility adjacent to the Putney Fire Station near the intersection of US Route 5 and Exit 4. AoT park and rides support intermodal (car, public transit, pedestrian and bicycle) transportation. However, this facility is on the edge of the village and is not served by a sidewalk.

A better pedestrian connection would improve the facility's linkage to the village for event parking, or possible over-night off-street parking during winter storms.

Public Transit

The non-profit corporation The Moover Transit bus service offers fixed route transit between Bellows Falls and Brattleboro during the weekdays. There are two stops in Putney, one at Putney Winery and one at Putney Meadows. Generally, the bus makes two morning, and two afternoon stops at the Putney locations. The Moover also provides elderly and disabled transit service for the Town. This service can be used for a variety of purposes including shopping trips, meal service, and medical service. The Moover is currently growing so-called micro transit to provide on-demand transportation. Putney frequently makes donations to the Moover as part of its annual budget process.

Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

Walking and biking are important elements in creating a balanced and sustainable transportation system. They have positive health, safety, and energy conservation benefits. The village is compact with centrally located services (stores, town offices, library, restaurants, etc.) making it walkable.

In 2011 a fully accessible sidewalk along Main Street, between Town Hall and the Putney Co-op. State was constructed. The sidewalk was extended in 2015 north along Route 5 to Landmark College with additional funding, including a significant contribution from Landmark College.

The Mabel Gray Walkway extends from the Town Hall to the Putney Central School and connects with the Main Street sidewalk. The Main Street sidewalk, and the continuation from the General Store to Landmark College have significantly improved pedestrian convenience and safety. An extension of the sidewalk from the Putney Coop south to the park and ride facility would offer a safe pedestrian link to the village for park and ride users. Reasonable improvements to accommodate more bicycle usage lower the town's carbon footprint and encourage cycling as a transportation alternative. Providing adequate facilities for bicyclists may involve the development of bike lanes or paths, park and ride bike shelters, bike racks, and ensuring that road improvements provide for a sufficiently wide paved shoulder to accommodate bicycles. Each of these improvements carry implications for the Capital Improvement Plan.

Rail

The New England Central Railroad Company operates a rail line that runs through Putney, along the western shore of the Connecticut River. The line carries freight and the Amtrak Vermonter passenger service which provides one train daily northbound (to Saint Albans, VT) and one southbound (to Washington, DC). Passenger rail stations are in Bellows Falls and Brattleboro. A siding remains in place accessed by Putney Landing Road which holds open the possibility of a more active link to rail transportation in the future.

Future Needs

The joint purchase of the gravel pit with Dummerston helps control highway maintenance costs, but the continued increase in costs for fuel, equipment and complying with more stringent regulations will require more commitment from the town. Importantly, these increased costs are not byproducts of increased levels of activity or population growth, these additional costs will be borne by current property owners.

A consequence of the climate crisis for highway maintenance is the increased frequency and intensity of winter storms with ice and rain in addition to tropical storms. The climate crisis calls for different maintenance practices, skills and equipment. Most of the impact is reflected in the need for improved stormwater management including increasing the number and size of culverts, ditches and swales to convey larger volumes of water and additional measures to avoid untreated stormwater entering

streams. These climate crisis adaptations are critical resilience measures and are a major commitment of town resources to mitigate hazards, minimize environmental impact and ensure safe access to the road network.

[what does the road and bridges inventory show?]

As the electrification of vehicles proceeds Putney will need to increase the number of EV charging stations. There are currently 12 110V Level 1 free outlets available at the Putney park and ride, but these are slow and require the traveler to provide their own charger. There are also two Level 2 (EV Charger) outlets that require payment at Landmark College. Increasing access to charging stations for vehicles and bicycles will encourage their use. Opportunities for partnering with local retail establishments to locate EV charging stations is one way to increase EV charging stations in places they are needed.

[this data is 4 years old and not necessarily reliable are there more EV charging stations?]

After a sustained period of making improvements to sidewalks ten years ago, there has been little progress made on transport projects in Putney. Currently there are no projects for Putney listed in the AoT Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). This program directs funds from the Federal Highways Administration to transportation projects in municipalities. This means that there are no plans for new transportation projects in Putney for the life of this municipal plan. The Windham Regional Commission (WRC) has a transportation planning program that coordinates closely with AoT, part of their work is to develop annual lists of bridge projects to receive funding support from AoT. Currently no Putney bridges are on the list. Again, this suggests that there is unlikely to be a bridge improvement project in Putney for several years. Planning transportation improvements and advocating effectively for their funding and construction is a key priority.