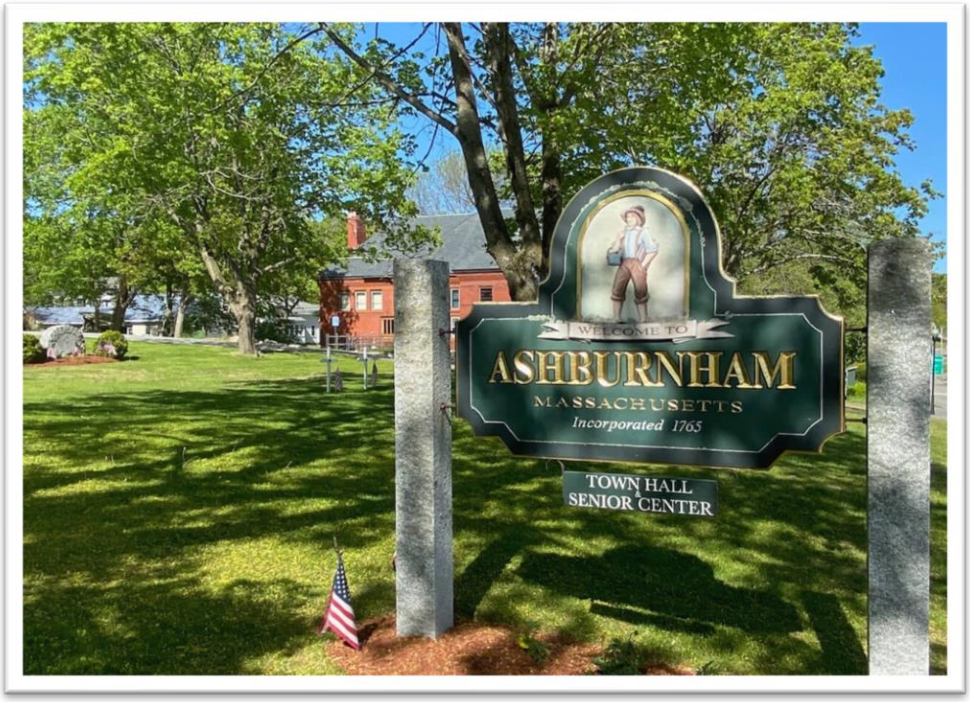
TOWN OF ASHBURNHAM

MASTER PLAN

CIRCULATION CHAPTER 8



Prepared by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)

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Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
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8. Circulation and Transportation

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8.1 Introduction & Purpose

The Circulation chapter of a Master Plan is designed to examine the movement of people and goods in a community. The physical, social, and economic well-being of the Town depends on successful planning for the circulation of people, goods, and services. This Element identifies Ashburnham's goals for circulation including: the classification framework, level of service standards, design requirements, and policies for circulation. These policies should be balanced with the Town's other planning, economic, social, and environmental goals. The underlying goals for the Circulation Element are to provide accessibility to essential destinations by as many modes of transportation as possible. Ideal plans should maximize the travel choices of residents, workers, and visitors.

Transportation is essential for economic development and financial stability. Transportation goals and planning done by the town can affect what modes of transportation are available to residents and the quality of that transportation. Limited funds must be used wisely for the good of as many citizens as possible. The efficiency of a transportation system can affect health and safety in a variety of factors including noise, energy use and air quality. Policies that encourage walking and biking provide clean air alternatives for those who can't afford vehicles. Alternative transportation options often also become essential for the young, the elderly or those who have disabilities who do not have options to operate personal vehicles. These and related factors must be considered when developing Circulation policies.

8.2 Existing Roadway System

Existing Network

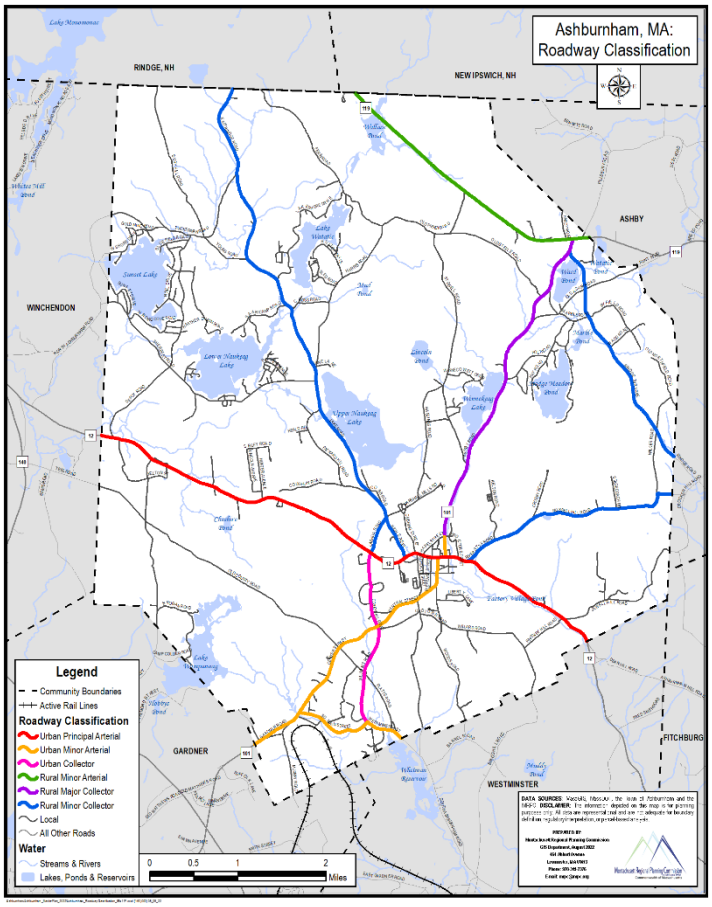
The road infrastructure of Ashburnham is comprised of three state highways (Route 12, Route 101, and Route 119) and a system of local and connector roads serving the town center and rural residential areas. Route 12 extends east-west through Ashburnham providing access to Winchendon to the west and Fitchburg to the east. Route 101 runs north-south, connecting to Route 119 in northern Ashburnham, and provides access to Gardner to the south. Route 119 runs through the northeastern part of Ashburnham providing access to New Hampshire to the north and Ashby to the east. Route 2 is easily accessible through Gardner or Fitchburg from Ashburnham and provides the quickest route to Boston via automobile. Because Route 2 is more accessible there is little out of town east-west traffic through Ashburnham but the State Parks and several destination locations across the border in New Hampshire mean that out of town travelers use Route 101 to travel north-south through Ashburnham.

Functional Classification

Functional classification defines the character of services that a particular roadway is intended to provide and identifies a roadway's purpose and use as part of the highway network. Roads serve to provide mobility for vehicle access to locations.

Aside from the Interstate Highway system, streets and highways are classified into four functional highway systems: Principal Arterials, Minor Arterials, Collector Streets and Local Streets: The classification of all roads in Ashburnham is displayed in **Map 8.1**. Roads classified as "local" are not eligible for Federal-Aid and are maintained solely by the municipalities. Local roads are eligible for State Highway funds under Chapter

90. Ashburnham is also able to apply for limited federal aid funding (through competitive grants) to repair their Federal-Aid eligible roads through the annual TIP process.



***Principal Arterials*:** Multi-lane roadways that connect major activity centers, they carry the highest volumes of traffic at high speed. In some cases, they can be entirely or partially controlled-access facilities with interchanges, such as Route 2, or grade separations at major crossings. Route 12 is classified as a Principal Arterial, even though it does not feature some of the same attributes as some larger principal arterials.

***Minor Arterials*:** Feed into principal arterials and serve the dual function of carrying high traffic volumes, providing access to adjacent land uses; on-street parking is generally permitted but is heavily regulated. In Ashburnham, Route 119, South Main Street, Westminster Road, and parts of Route 101 are classified as Minor Arterials.

***Collector Streets*:** Collect traffic from local streets and channel it into the arterial street system with a focus more towards on land access than on mobility, providing general traffic circulation and typically having lower travel speeds and parking restrictions. Roads classified as Collectors in Ashburnham are Williams Road, Corey Hill Road, Lashua Road, High Street, Lake Road, East Rindge Road, Rindge Turnpike, River Styx Road, Russell Hill Road, and parts of Route 101.

***Local Roads and Streets*:** Include all the remaining streets that are not included in one of the higher systems.

Functional Reclassification

Reclassification of a roadway may be done by the town through a submission process to the MPO and Mass DOT. Reclassification is sometimes necessary due to a change in use over time and could affect a roadways eligibility for federal aid. If the town wishes to propose the reclassification of any roadways, it should contact the MPO.

The MRPC and MassDOT Highway Division have regularly taken traffic counts at numerous locations in Ashburnham, as part of its regional traffic count program.

Pavement Conditions

Road and street surfaces are the largest single cost of building and maintaining a transportation system. Forty to fifty percent of public funds spent on roadway systems are for the road surface. For smaller communities such as Ashburnham the percentage can be much higher. The role of a pavement management system is to provide an opportunity to improve roadway conditions while making cost effective decisions on maintenance priorities and schedules.

A pavement management system relies heavily on pavement preservation early and often for the purpose of preventing an increasing deterioration of pavement structure. By maintaining an accurate database with up-to-date road conditions, the needs of a road network are better diagnosed.

Pavement management systems

A well-run pavement management system applies the principle that it is far more economical to preserve roads than to delay repairs and reconstruct roads. While it is important to preserve a pavement condition in good standing for as long as possible by implementing various preventative and routine maintenance techniques throughout its lifecycle to keep cost low, it is a reality that budgets often do not allow for this. It is encouraged that a pavement management plan be implemented to keep on track of maintenance needs and schedules to contribute to a cost-effective approach to maintaining roadways.

Ashburnham developed a 3-year pavement management plan that began in 2020. A study was conducted in Spring 2019 by BETA Group, Inc. of every public street and road in Ashburnham. The data collected was a key component to developing their 3-year pavement management plan. The key goals of their 3-year pavement management plan are listed below:

- Fully reconstruct some of the roads in the worst condition
- Perform less costly preventative maintenance to extend the life of additional roads.
- Identify additional funding sources to be set aside for maintenance, repair, construction and
- Reconstruction of public streets and sidewalks
- Increase current funding levels dedicated to roads.

The plan is intended to be fluid and will experience change as it evolves. It will be maintained at a 3-year level, meaning that as one year is completed the plan will be upgraded with a new fiscal year and any changes will be made to the existing plan years. Each year the Board of Selectman will vote to approve the plan based on the recommendations of the Town Administrator and the Department of Public Works Director. Once the Board of Selectman have voted on the annual plan, the plan can only

be modified by an additional notification to the Board of Selectman by the Town Administrator except for an emergency.[1]

Table 8.3: General Correlation Between Condition, Repair Strategies and Associated Cost

Condition	Associated Repair	Average Cost Per Mile (26' Wide Road)
Poor	Reconstruction	$686,385
Fair	Rehabilitation (Mill/Overlay)	$274,554
Good	Preventative Maintenance	$129,651
Excellent	Routine Maintenance	$11,440

Bridges

Ashburnham currently has 14 bridge structures, with five bridges on the National Bridge Inventory and nine being short span bridges. Of these structures, the municipality owns 12, with MassDOT owning a single bridge at Fitchburg Road, and one culvert on Winchendon Road. Of the 9 short span bridges that Ashburnham owns, currently 3 of them are rated as being structurally deficient, along with the culvert on Ashby Road.

Table 8.4: Bridges in Ashburnham

Feature Intersected	Facility Carried	Year Built	Year Reconstructed	Type of Service	Bridge Owner	Structurally Deficient	Year Inspected	Structure Category
WATER WATATIC LAKE OUTLT	CROSS RD	1938		Highway	MUN	NO	2020	Bridge (NBI)
WATER WATATIC LAKE OUTLT	LAKE RD	1938	2010	Highway	MUN	NO	2019	Bridge (NBI)
WATER BR MILLERS RIVER	DUNN RD	1988		Highway	MUN	NO	2021	Bridge (NBI)
WATER BR MILLERS RIVER	SHERBERT RD	1936		Highway	MUN	NO	2021	Bridge (NBI)
WATER S BR SOUHEGAN R	OLD ASHBY RD	1950		Highway	MUN	YES	2019	Short Span Bridge
WATER S BR SOUHEGAN RIVER	OLD ASHBY RD	1950		Highway	MUN	YES	2019	Short Span Bridge
WATER CHESHIRE POND OTLT	WINCHENDN RD/ R	1980		Highway	DOT	NO		Culvert
WATER BLUEFIELD BROOK	TUCKERMAN RD	1850		Highway	MUN	NO		Culvert
WATER BLUEFIELD BROOK	DUNN RD	1850		Highway	MUN	NO		Culvert
WATER PHILLIPS BROOK	FITCHBURG RD/ Rt	1936		Highway-pedestrian	DOT	NO	2021	Short Span Bridge
WATER MILLERS RIVER	SHERBERT RD	1936		Highway	MUN	YES	2021	Short Span Bridge
WATER PHILLIPS BROOK	WHITNEY HL RD	1900	1938	Highway	MUN	NO	2021	Short Span Bridge
WATER PHILLIPS BROOK	PUFFER ST	1900	1950	Highway	MUN	NO	2021	Short Span Bridge
WATER PHILLIPS BROOK	MILL ST	1970		Highway	MUN	NO		Culvert
WATER PHILLIPS BROOK	ASHBY RD/ Rt 101	1938		Highway	MUN	YES	2005	Culvert
WATER MILLERS RIVER	DEPOT RD	1970		Highway	MUN	NO		Culvert
WATER BLUEFIELD BROOK	YOUNG RD	1935		Highway	MUN	NO		Culvert
WATER BLUEFIELD BROOK	DUNN RD	1935		Highway	MUN	NO		Culvert
WATER WHITMAN RIVER	WILLIAMS RD	1970		Highway	MUN	NO		Culvert
WATER WHITMAN RIVER	WESTMINISTER ST	2007		Highway	MUN	NO	2021	Short Span Bridge
WATER WHITMAN RIVER	CENTER ST/ Rt 101	1960		Highway-pedestrian	MUN	NO	2020	Short Span Bridge
WATER WARD POND OUTLET	RINDGE TNPK	1950		Highway	MUN	NO	2021	Short Span Bridge
WATER WHITMAN RIVER	WILLIAMS RD	1960		Highway	MUN	NO	2021	Short Span Bridge
WATER WATATIC LAKE INLET	LAKESHORE DR	2002		Highway	MUN	NO	2021	Bridge (NBI)

[1] https://www.ashburnham-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif266/f/news/bos_ashburnham_-_pavement_management_plan.pdf

Average Daily Traffic

For many years the MRPC and MassDOT Highway Division have taken traffic counts at numerous locations in Ashburnham, as part of its regional traffic count program. Table 3 lists traffic counts that were taken along major routes over the past 10 years by location. Several locations mentioned in the table have been conducted regularly for volume comparison purposes, with other locations having less frequently conducted counts.

Table 8.5: Ashburnham Traffic Volumes Table 8.5.

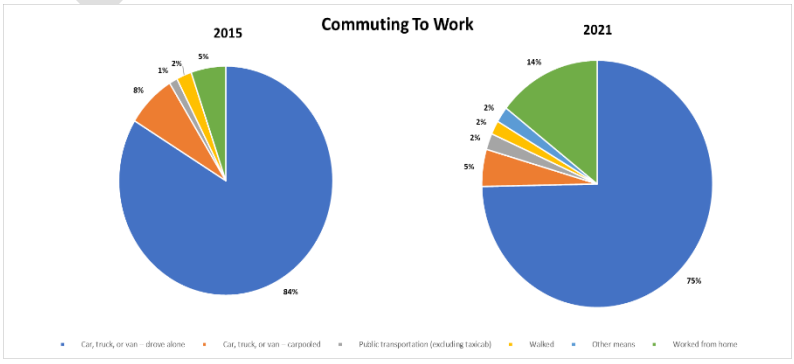
Street/Route	Location	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Winchendon Rd (Rt 12)	East of Lashua Rd					1430			1524	1530	1261	
Rindge State Rd (rt 119)	New Hampshire Stateline							2809	2840	2874	2532	
Main St (Rt 12)	East of rt 101		3638	3658	3859	3901	3952	3995	4051	4067	3351	
Main St (Rt 12)	West of rt 101		5430	5462	5762	5825	4525	4575	4639	4658	3838	
Water St (rt 101)	North of Rt 12		2360	2373	2447	2503	2881	2930	2939	2927	2415	
Central St (101)	South of Rt 12				3638	3722	3930	3997	4009	3993	3294	
Corey Hill Rd	North of Central St					2484	2638	2683	2691	2680	2211	
Williams Rd	South of Central St					2180	2315	2354	2361	2352	1940	
Lake Rd	South of Sherbert Rd			1791	1870	1851	1857	1777	1797	1819	1603	
Winchendon Rd (Rt 12)	East of Depot Rd			2901	3061			2693	2731	2742	2259	
Rindge State Rd (rt 119)	East of Ashby Rd				3498	3463	3473	3476	3514	4149	3655	
Rindge State Rd (rt 119)	West of Ashby Rd				2863	2834	2843	2846	2877	3427	3019	
East Rindge Rd	New Hampshire Stateline		421	453	473	468	469	346	350	354	312	
Main St North	West of Water St		4532	4558	4809	4862	6652	6725	6819	6846	5641	
Pleasant St	South of Main St				577	590	627	638	640	637	526	
Rindge State Rd (rt 119)	North of Rt 101	2218	2233	2432	2257	2234	2241	2243	2268	3451	3040	
Fitchburg rd (rt 12)	South of Jewell Hill Rd		3474	3448	3345				3635	3650	3008	
Fitchburg rd (rt 12)	North of Westminister TL	3967	3912	3608	3806		3457	3495	3544	3148	2594	
Lashua Rd	North of Winchendon Rd					1049			1118	1131	996	1128
Russell Hill Rd	North of Crosby Rd					449	450	450	455	460	405	

The counts consist of data collected during a period of at least 24 weekday hours. To reflect seasonal differences in traffic volumes, MassDOT Uses Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volume adjustment factors. These factors were applied to all counts listed on **Table 8.5**.

Journey to Work

An individual's access to a motor vehicle is a major driving factor in Ashburnham, with over 80% of residents commuting to work by driving. Even with recent changes due to technological advancements and societal impacts from the Covid-19 Pandemic, residents in Ashburnham are still overwhelmingly dependent on their own cars to travel to and from work. The Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) statistics show that 75% of the Town's labor force drives alone to work each day, with an additional 5% carpooling. This is a decline from 2015, when 84% of residents drove alone, with another 8% choosing to carpool. This 9% decline in driving alone is almost perfectly mirrored in the growth of the working from home category, which nearly tripled in size from 5% to 14% in just 6 years.

Figure 8.1: Ashburnham Commuting



8.3 Public Transit Systems

Montachusett Area Regional Transit (MART) Service

There is no fixed route bus service provided in Ashburnham. However, the Montachusett Area Regional Transit Authority (MART) runs a bus service throughout the broader region that could potentially be expanded or connected to, providing the opportunity for future transit service to parts of Ashburnham. Services in local, abutting Towns includes fixed local routes in the towns of Fitchburg and Gardner, and regional "link" routes from Gardner to Winchendon and the MBTA Commuter Rail's Wachusett Station, located on the Fitchburg and Westminster border. A regional "Inter-City" route also exists connecting the nearby towns of Gardner, Fitchburg, and Leominster, and the main- and satellite-campuses of Mount Wachusett Community College, respectively. Individual route schedules are available online at MART's website.[2] MART contracts with social and human service agencies for paratransit service.

In Ashburnham (and other Montachusett Region Towns) MART administers a subsidized Council on Aging Transportation Program through a partnership agreement with the Town and its Council-on-Aging. Under this program, the Ashburnham Council-on-Aging (COA) offers transportation for senior citizens and disabled residents by providing on-call van shuttle services for aging and disabled residents. This service is in part provided and subsidized by the Montachusett Regional Transportation Authority (MART). The Town leases a van from MART and operates a town-owned van that was procured through a MassDOT grant in 2020. The Town has participated in this program and offered this important service for many years. It is the main source of transportation for many of Ashburnham's aging residents. Without the COA Transportation Service, alternate (or in many cases, primary) transportation options for seniors are very limited. While there are occasional Uber-driver ride-share services that occasionally operate within or provides services to Ashburnham, there are currently no private taxis or other private transportation services that directly serve this community. Further, there are no other public transit options within this rural community.

Ashburnham's MART/COA Transportation Program has part-time dispatchers who take the calls, book the rides (i.e., van service), and give schedules to our drivers who are also hired by the COA. The Town pays the drivers and MART reimburses the town for drivers and fuel. The Town pays for 1/3 of the dispatchers' salaries while MART reimburses for the remainder. There are 1,600 seniors in this town and although many still drive and get rides from family, a great number of them rely solely on COA/MART vans. This past year (2023) has seen a sharp rise in program usership, which has resulted in a challenge for Ashburnham's COA to provide the staff required to handle the logistical requirements (booking and scheduling) and an adequate number of drivers to provide the transportation services at the necessary times and places. Between January and October of 2023 there were as many as 61 individuals who utilized the service accounting for over 700 scheduled rides. Considering that the senior center is only open/staffed for 20-hours a week, this program, and its high level of user participation and staff logistical responsibilities (e.g., dispatch/transportation), the program accounts for as much as 90% of staff-time effort/hours. In other words, available staffing could be a limiting factor in meeting the current and future service needs shown by the recent increased demand for those services. Planning to address those needs will be critical to continuing to provide this important, much-needed service. Eventually, Ashburnham COA may need hire additional, or full-time van drivers (all current drivers are retired

[2] www.mrta.us

and do this part time) and consider increasing operational hours and staffing to ensure that logistical operations are adequate to schedule, coordinate, and operate the use of both program vans simultaneously daily.

Consideration of local, daily fixed routes for public MART bus service to parts of Ashburnham connecting to Gardner and Fitchburg may be beneficial and worthy to consider in the future.

Commuter Rail

Ashburnham is located nearest to the two terminal Fitchburg Line commuter rail stations of Wachusett Station, located at 55 Authority Drive in Fitchburg, and (Downtown) Fitchburg Station, located at 100-150 Main Street. These commuter rail parking lots have respective capacities of 360 parking spaces and 425 parking spaces each. North Leominster Station, located at the intersection of Route 2 & 13, is also nearby. The Fitchburg Rail Line runs from Wachusett Station to North Station in Boston.

The Montachusett Area Regional Transit Authority (MART) provides a fixed bus route service (and linkages) to the commuter rail stations (as described above) from (and connecting to) Gardner, Leominster, and Fitchburg, serving much of the region, but does not currently serve Ashburnham as part of a fixed route or link. The fixed bus routes and link-line maps and schedules are available online at MART's website (https://www.mrta.us/schedules-maps/).

8.4 Other Transportation Systems

Freight Railroads

There are no Public At-Grade Crossings on Active Rail Lines in Ashburnham. CSX Transportation (formerly Pan Am Railways) owns approximately 1.5 miles of active railroad track that enters Ashburnham from the south, leaving Westminster and traveling northerly on a steep grade, then makes a large switchback in a southerly direction and follows the perimeter of the High Ridge Wildlife Management Area in South Ashburnham, still gaining grade before eventually entering Gardner and crossing Route 140 then parallels Route 2 westbound before crossing over Timpany Boulevard and entering Union Square (site of the former Union Station) near Gardner center. The former Chesire Branch (now a defunct rail-bed and potential course of a future rail trail) runs from the switchback in South Ashburnham northerly, crossing the Whitman River and passing Lake Wampanoag and Cheshire Pond before crossing Route 12 and then the Millers River and coursing through Winchendon and beyond through Fitzwilliam and toward Keene, New Hampshire[3].

Aviation

Within the Montachusett Region, there are three general aviation airports: the Fitchburg Municipal Airport located in Fitchburg on the Leominster City line; the Gardner Airport in Templeton near the

[3] Portions of the former Chesire Branch Railroad between Fitzwilliam (at Route 12) and Keene, NH is now a recreational rail trail. Development of a similar rail trail along the privately-owned Ashburnham segment of the Cheshire Branch is a vision of the Ashburnham Rail Trail Committee that continues to be explored. If achieved, the Ashburnham "Cheshire Branch" rail trail would connect the existing Ashburnham Rail Trail to the North Central Pathway rail trail which currently connects the towns of Gardner and Winchendon.

Gardner City Line; and the Sterling Airport in Sterling. Fitchburg Municipal and Gardner Airport are both owned by their respective municipalities and are public airports, while Sterling Airport is under private ownership by the Monadnock Reality Corp. but is open to public use.

Commercial airports serving the region include Worcester Regional Airport (ORH), Manchester-Boston Regional Airport (MHT) in Manchester, New Hampshire, T.F. Green International Airport (PVD) in Providence, Rhode Island, and Boston's Logan International Airport (BOS).

8.5 Bicycles and Pedestrians

Bicycle Travel

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of bicycles around population centers and on the highways. Bicycles have found a place on the highway network by default, as have pedestrians. There is strong support from the regional communities for designated bikeways for recreational and commuting traffic. Individual bikeway projects are being implemented in some towns within the region. Construction of bikeways will encourage cycle commuting by providing a direct, separate, and safe route between communities. Also, increasing concern for air quality and energy conservation is leading to renewed interest in the development of adequate facilities for bicycles throughout the Montachusett region.

Bikeways are special routes and/or facilities established to facilitate the movement of bicycles as an energy efficient transportation and/or recreation mode of travel. There are three types of bikeways: bike paths, bike lanes, and bike routes. These have been categorized as Class I, II and III bikeways respectively. Class I bike paths are routes totally separated from automobile or pedestrian traffic. Class II bike lanes are lanes at the edge of streets marked for exclusive use of bicyclists. Class III bike routes are roadways that bikes share with cars.

Legally, the bicycle has been recognized as a vehicle in Massachusetts since 1973, subject to basically all the rights and responsibilities of an automobile. Bikeways are public rights-of-way, maintained by a responsible state or local agency, just as a municipality's streets are owned and maintained. Where the land for a proposed bike path is privately owned, an easement to permit public passage may be obtained, or the right-of-way may be purchased outright. Bikeways which parallel roads may be located within the existing publicly owned right-of-way, extending beyond the roadway itself.

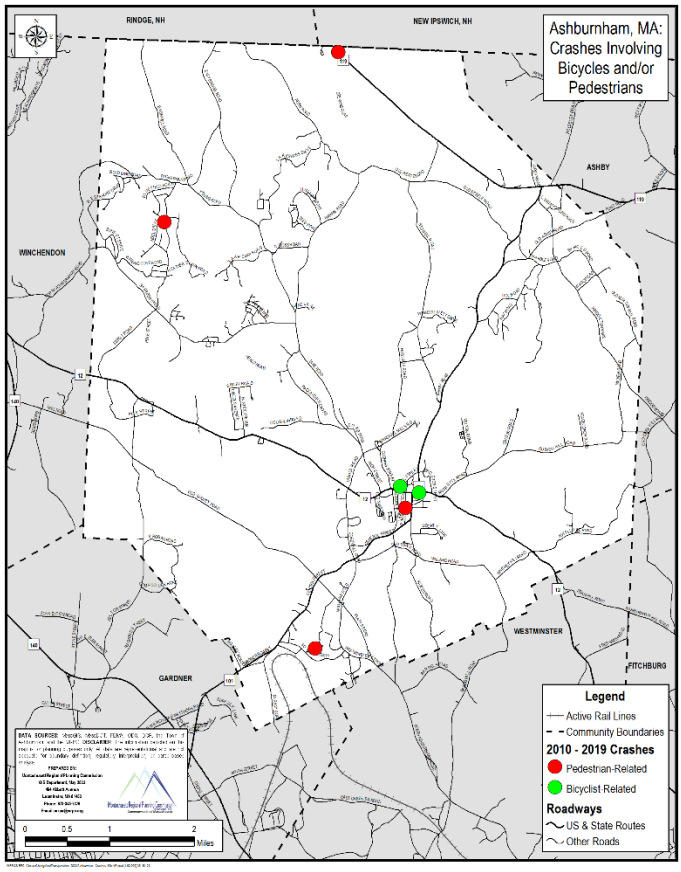
Pedestrian Access

Pedestrian activity is generally limited to small areas within town (i.e., schools, libraries, town hall, parks, etc.). Some residential streets abutting these areas do not currently have sidewalks. Sidewalks should be included in new roadway construction, roadway improvements, and residential and non-residential subdivision development. Along major arterial roadways, land should be secured for sidewalks or pathways as development occurs. Pedestrian actuated signals should be in place in densely populated areas were warranted to allow safer movement of pedestrians.

Map 8.2

Safety

Bicycles mixed with motor vehicle traffic can be dangerous and create traffic delays. Safety problems have increased as evidenced by the number of bicycle-automobile accidents. It was reported in the MassDOT crash files for the 10-year period of 2010-2019 that those 849 crashes occurred that involved bicycles and/or pedestrians (261 bicycle and 588 pedestrian). In Ashburnham there were a total of 6 crashes where two were bicycle and four were pedestrian related. There were no fatalities but five out of the six resulted in personal injury from these bicycle and pedestrian crashes. **Map 8.2** shows the locations of the pedestrian and bicycle crashes in Ashburnham.



Notable Existing Trails & Bikeways

Ashburnham Rail Trail - The Town of Ashburnham and Ashburnham Rail Trail (ART) Inc., a private not for profit, are working together toward their goal of a safe, non-motorized route between Ashburnham Center and South Ashburnham. This relatively flat, shared use path will benefit residents and visitors by providing a safe route along a very busy 2.5-mile section of Route 101 where sidewalks and bike lanes are currently unavailable due to geographic constraints.

Ashburnham is working toward two major aspects of this project:

Turnpike Road intersection looking west - Completion of the engineering and design of the 2.5-mile section of the Rail Trail, which will provide users convenient access to the many existing businesses and service of Ashburnham Center, as well as providing excellent opportunity for future growth in this area. Along the route, the Rail Trail would offer access to the Post Office, municipal soccer fields, J.R. Briggs Elementary School, and the William J. Bresnahan Community Center. The Town has purchased the abandoned railroad bed, and both the Town and volunteers maintain and improve the trail. A multi-use path is included in the Reconstruction of Rte. 101S MassDOT TIP currently scheduled for completion in FY25. The path will allow safe pedestrian and bike access between Turnpike Road and the Bresnahan Community Center.

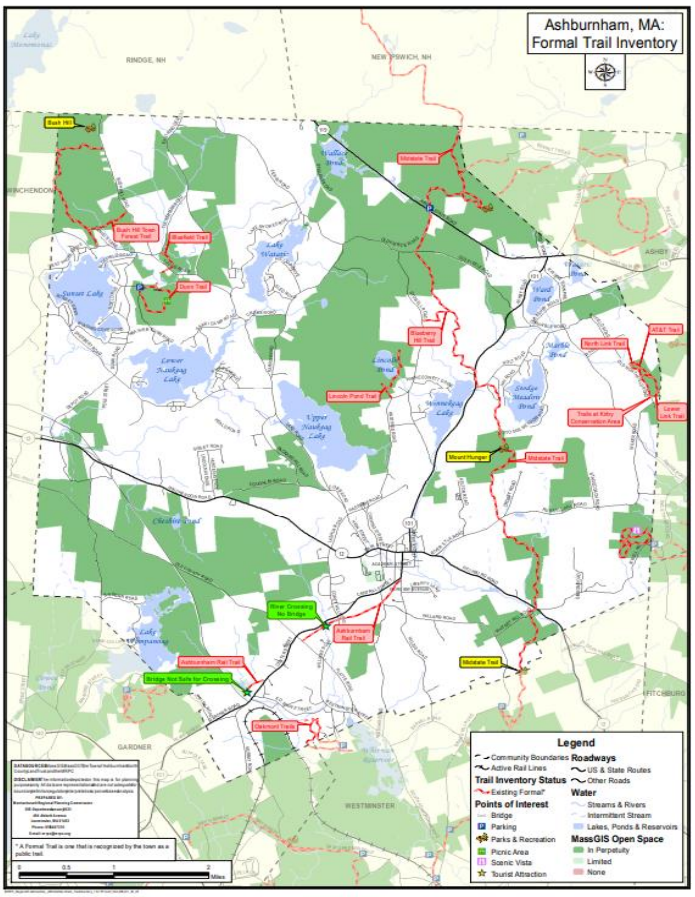
Bridge over Whitney Pond - At the South Ashburnham termination of the current Rail Trail, the goal is to connect the Ashburnham Rail Trail to the North Central Pathway of Greater Gardner and Winchendon via the abandoned Cheshire Branch of the former Boston & Maine Railroad. With this connection, Ashburnham would be a major entryway to a tri-state network of rail trails. Progress on the 2.5-mile section of the trail has been difficult, slow, and will be expensive. However, the project is vital to Ashburnham's goals future economic development.

To date, the Town has acquired ownership and/or rights to most segments that comprise the Rail Trail. In 2007 and with support of Ashburnham residents at Town Meeting, a 25% Design Plan was completed for the Rail Trail and an application for an Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation was submitted to the Ashburnham Conservation Commission. In 2022, MassDOT expressed an interest in linking the Rail Trail segment from downtown Ashburnham and Turnpike Rd. to the Rte. 101S TIP multi-use path. The Town must complete 100% of the design plan between Williams and Turnpike Rd., which includes a bridge before possibly receiving state funding to complete the project segment. This will complement the existing formal trail inventory in Ashburnham, which can be seen in **Map 8.3**.

Challenges that lie ahead for completion of the Rail Trail include:

- Parking and access point delineations
- Clearing, grading and surface preparation
- Whitney Pond Bridge reconstruction
- Bridge construction at the washed-out gulley behind the soccer fields
- Municipal, State and Federal permitting
- Applying for and receiving state and federal grant funding

Map 8.3



The financial constraints have left Ashburnham and ART, Inc. with few options for moving forward with these expensive and major projects. Funding and grant money are limited for such a short but vital section of the rail trail. That is why the Cheshire Line is such an important piece of the plan. With greater awareness of the incredible asset they have in Ashburnham, the Town and ART, Inc. hope to keep their dream of a Tri-State Rail Trail alive.

Midstate Trail - The Midstate Trail is a scenic footpath located in Worcester County, 45 miles west of Boston. This 92-mile hiking trail (approximately 8.65 miles of which run through Ashburnham) extends from Rhode Island crossing the gentle hills of central Massachusetts and eventually connecting to the Wapack Trail just north of Mt. Watatic in Ashburnham. The Midstate Trail is highly accessible, easy to hike and the best way to enjoy the natural side of the region. The Midstate Trail is close to large population centers, yet it is remarkably wild and scenic. Wachusett Mountain and Mount Watatic, the last undeveloped mountain east of the Connecticut River, can be found on the Trail as well as many interesting geologic, historic, and natural features.

Major Funding Opportunities

The desire for more multimodal transportation options within the community, state and beyond, has increased significantly over the past few years. More people are seeing the value in having these types of transportation options and are also advocating for the development of new, safer, bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the region. Programs such as Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School are gaining support from our communities –

- Complete Streets – 19 out of 22 communities have approved policies, one is registered, and 15 have received funding for multi modal projects
- Safe Routes to School – 18 out of 22 communities are partners with the program

Complete Streets

This program offers incentives to adopt policies and practices that provide safe and accessible options for all travel modes (walking, biking, transit, and vehicles) for people of all ages and abilities. The town of Ashburnham created a Complete Streets Policy and Implementation Plan in 2019 and was awarded infrastructure funds in 2020 for a project along Main Street from Lawrence Street to Cushing Street.

Safe Routes to School

Briggs Elementary and Overlook Middle School are currently enrolled with Safe Routes to School. It is recommended that the town of Ashburnham continue to work with the Safe Routes to School Program. By doing so you will not only promote healthy alternatives for children and parents in their travel to and from school but you will also educate students, parents and community members to the value of walking and bicycling for travel to and from school. This program aims to reduce congestion, air pollution, and traffic congestion near participating schools, while increasing health, safety, and physical activity of elementary and middle school students.

"Safe Routes to School utilizes five major strategies of implementation – the 5 E's:

- **Education**: Walking safety training for young children, classroom lessons and community presentations.
- **Encouragement**: Creating fun activities and events that draw children to walk to school
- **Enforcement**: Enforcing existing laws to curb traffic violations that endanger young walkers on their way to school
- **Evaluation**: Monitoring outcomes and documenting travel trends through data collection before and after Safe Routes to School activities.
- **Engineering**: Assessing and improving the built environment to increase safety.

By participating in this program your community could be eligible for engineering funds. Safe Routes to School efforts focus first on addressing and changing the elements of the environment that are most practical and affordable. In some districts, more generous programs have allowed significant new facilities such as trails or traffic signals to be installed. Some of the elements of the built environment to consider are described below.

- School drop-off and pick-up procedures – the congestion caused by cars, buses and other traffic arriving at schools can be hazardous to walkers.

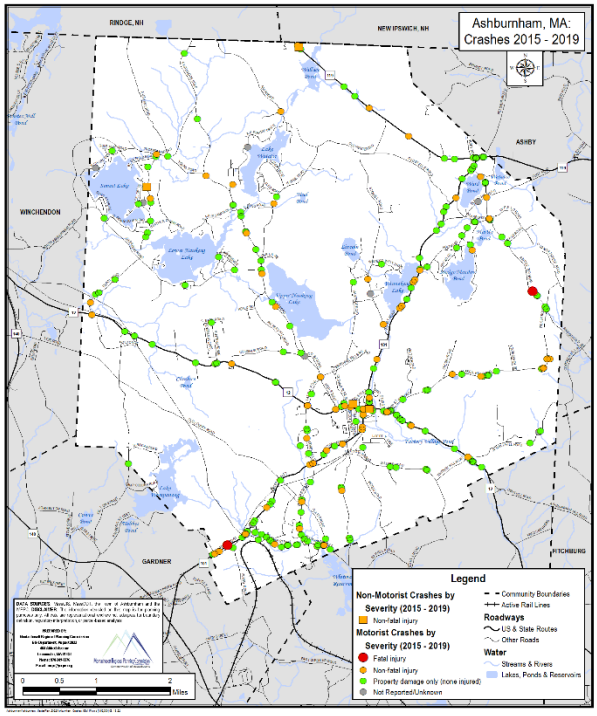
- Crosswalks are often the simplest and least expensive signal to drivers and pedestrians about how an intersection works – and they can improve safety for both. Creating a new crosswalk in the right place can alleviate many of the daily aggravations between walkers and drivers
- Speed warnings and reminders – Drivers are less likely to ignore school zones when there are new, clear and reflective signs. Signs that monitor speed making it easier to track speeds near schools.
- Curb painting – can improve safety by signaling to drivers where they can and cannot drive, drop or pick up children, or idle when parked
- Removing snow and debris – Snowy and icy sidewalks pose a challenge to Massachusetts pedestrians. Most cities and towns hold property owners responsible for clearing sidewalks next to their property, yet sidewalks often remain blocked and dangerous days after a storm." (www.walkboston.com)

8.6 Safety

Traffic crashes are often unpredictable, unavoidable events. Most traffic crashes are the result of driver error; however, driver error can be magnified by poor roadway or intersection design, or by inadequate traffic control measures. When crashes occur in high numbers at a particular location, there is probably a common reason for the crashes related to the design and/or signage of the road. Detailed study of crash records can identify these high-crash locations and lead to design improvements that will reduce the numbers and severity of future crashes.

The MRPC Transportation Department maintains and continually updates a crash database for the purpose of gathering crash statistics on the Region using historical and the most recent MassDOT crash tables available that currently exist from 2017-2019. Crash severity states the types of harm or the most serious outcome of a crash. There are essentially three possible outcomes: Fatal Injury Crash, Non-Fatal Injury Crash and Property Damage.

Map 8.4



Crash statistics

MassDOT provides crash data and statistics for all communities in the State through the MassDOT IMPACT Crash Data Portal. Based on the crash data download for Ashburnham, a total of 354 crashes occurred in Ashburnham from 1/1/2015 to 12/31/2019 as follows:

- 64 (18.1% of total) occurred in 2015
- 75 (22.2% " ") occurred in 2016
- 61 (17.2% " ") occurred in 2017
- 68 (19.2% " ") occurred in 2018
- 86 (24.3% " ") occurred in 2019

Map 8.4 displays all 354 crash locations.

The location analysis conducted by MPRC staff focuses on the worst crash severity outcomes of crashes – the fatal or injury outcome of the crashes that occurred on the roadway corridors in Ashburnham. This focus is due to the goal of reducing fatal and injury crashes. However, the crash totals for each corridor are also provided. The analysis found that the 29 crash corridors (corridors) listed in **Tables 8.6a** and **8.6b** below experienced at least one (1) of the 72 injury crashes (20.3% of the total crashes) that occurred in Ashburnham for the years specified above. Two (2) of the corridors listed in **Table 8.6a** experienced a fatal crash. The 29 corridors experienced 304 (86%) of the 354 total crashes that occurred in Ashburnham.

The 11 corridors listed in **Table 8.6a** experienced a minimum of three (3) injury crashes and the two (2) fatal crashes as follows:

- The fatal crashes occurred on the Rindge Tpke and Gardner Rd corridors. The corridors also experienced two (2) injury crashes each
- The top three (3) corridors experienced seven (7) injury crashes each which when combined, accounted for 28.5% (21 of 74) of the total fatal and injury crashes:
    - Ashby Rd (Rt 101 N) (N = north of Rt 12)
    - Russell Hill Rd
    - Central St (Rt 101 S) (S = south of Rt 12)
- Four (4) of the corridors are Route 101 N and Route 101 S which experienced 20 injury crashes which accounted for 27.0% (20 of 74) of the total fatal and injury crashes.
- The 11 corridors accounted for 62% (221 of 354) of the total crashes.

Ashburnham may want to consider further study of the 11 corridors listed in **Table 8.6a** beginning with the top ranked corridors with the following exceptions:

- The Main St (Rt 12) corridor and the Winchendon Rd (Rt 12) corridor from Corey Hill Road to Old Nims Road are currently under study by the MRPC. The study is named the ***Route 12, Ashburnham Corridor Profile***. Please contact the MRPC for further information.
- A MassDOT project is scheduled on the Montachusett Transportation Improvement Project (TIP) list for 2025 for the Gardner Rd (Rt 101 S) corridor and the Center St (Rt 101 S) corridor (project ends just south of Corey Hill Road)

Ashburnham may want to consider reaching out to MassDOT District 3 to discuss project development for Route 12 and the remaining corridors listed in **Table 8.6a** due to the remaining fatal crash and the high number of injury crashes that occurred on the corridors.

Table 8.6a: Top 11 Crash Corridors

	Corridor	Rank	1. # of Fatal Crashes	2. # of Injury Crashes	1. & 2. Total	% of 1. & 2. TOTAL^	PDO*	NR/ UNK**	Cor Total
1	***ASHBY RD (RT 101 N)***	**1**	0	7	**7**	**9.5%**	22	0	29
2	RUSSELL HILL RD	"	0	7	**7**	"	13	2	22
3	**CENTRAL ST (RT 101 S)**	"	0	7	**7**	"	12	0	19
4	***MAIN ST (RT 12)***	**4**	0	6	**6**	**8.1%**	26	0	32
5	RINDGE TPKE	**5**	1	4	**5**	**6.8%**	13	2	20
6	RINDGE STATE RD (RT 119)	**6**	0	4	**4**	**5.4%**	8	0	12
7	***WINCHENDON RD (RT 12)***	**7**	0	3	**3**	**4.1%**	20	2	25
8	**CENTER ST (RT 101 S)**	"	0	3	**3**	"	17	2	22
9	***FITCHBURG RD (RT 12)***	"	0	3	**3**	"	16	0	19
10	LAKE RD	"	0	3	**3**	"	10	1	14
11	**GARDNER RD (RT 101 S)**	"	1	2	**3**	"	4	0	7
	TOP 11 Corridors TOTAL		2	49	**51**		161	9	221
	^Ashburnham TOTAL		2	72	**74**		261	19	354
	Percent of Ashburnham TOTAL		100%	68%	**69%**		62%	47%	62%

*PDO = Property Damage Only **NR/UNK = Crash Severity Not Reported or Unknown

The 18 corridors listed in **Table 8.6b** experienced a minimum of one (1) injury crash each.

- Ashburnham may want to consider including the Water St (Rt 101 N) corridor in any further study of Route 101 N
- Ashburnham may want to consider further study of the five (5) corridors that experienced two (2) injury crashes
- Ashburnham should consider monitoring the crash experience of the corridors listed in **Table 8.6b** for any increases in fatal and/or injury crashes

Table 8.6b: Remaining 18 Crash Corridors

	Corridor	Rank	1. # of Fatal Crashes	2. # of Injury Crashes	1. & 2. Total	% of 1. & 2. TOTAL^	PDO*	NR/ UNK**	Cor Total
12	DUNN RD	**12**	0	2	**2**	**2.7%**	6	0	8
13	WESTMINSTER ST	"	0	2	**2**	"	5	0	7
14	WILLIAMS RD	"	0	2	**2**	"	5	0	7
15	COREY HILL RD	"	0	2	**2**	"	4	0	6
16	STOWELL RD	"	0	2	**2**	"	0	1	3
17	S MAIN ST	**17**	0	1	**1**	**1.4%**	12	0	13
18	***WATER ST (RT 101 N)***	"	0	1	**1**	"	7	0	8
19	DEPOT RD	"	0	1	**1**	"	5	0	6
20	E RINDGE RD	"	0	1	**1**	"	5	0	6
21	CASHMAN HILL RD	"	0	1	**1**	"	4	0	5
22	LAKESHORE DR	"	0	1	**1**	"	1	1	3
23	HARRIS ROAD	"	0	1	**1**	"	1	0	2
24	HASTINGS ROAD	"	0	1	**1**	"	1	0	2
25	S HIGH ST	"	0	1	**1**	"	1	0	2
26	STODGE MEADOW RD	"	0	1	**1**	"	1	0	2
27	CHAPEL ST	"	0	1	**1**	"	0	0	1
28	FERIN RD	"	0	1	**1**	"	0	0	1
29	TUCKERMAN RD	"	0	1	**1**	"	0	0	1
	19 Corridors TOTAL		0	23	**23**		58	2	83
	^Ashburnham TOTAL		2	72	**74**		261	19	354
	Percent of Ashburnham TOTAL		0%	32%	**31%**		22%	11%	23%

8.7 Town Coordination with Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) outlines the transportation priority needs and policies for the region. Before projects receive federal funding, they must be identified and incorporated into the policy goals and visions of the RTP which identifies both short- and long-range projects for local roads, highways, bridges, rail, transit, bike and pedestrian trails, freight, and airports as well as priorities, goals, visions, and strategies.[4]

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Air Quality Conformity program are intermodal programs of transportation improvements produced annually by MRPC. To receive Federal or State funding, a transportation project must be included in the TIP.

The TIP must also be consistent with the current RTP for the Montachusett Region. The agency responsible for implementing highway projects in the TIP, unless otherwise noted, is the MassDOT Highway Division and, for transit projects, the Worcester Regional Transit Authority or Montachusett Regional Transit Authorities.

Table 8.1: Current Ashburnham TIP projects

Project Number	Description	Project Type	Status
609244	ASHBURNHAM- ROADWAY REHABILITATION ON ROUTE 101 SOUTH	Reclamation	DESIGN

Route 12 Corridor Profile Summary

The Town of Ashburnham (Town) requested the MRPC to conduct this study of Route 12 in February of 2021. The study assesses the existing conditions and problems that exist along the Route 12 corridor from the Corey Hill Rd/Lashua Rd intersection to the River Styx Rd intersection and provides recommendations to make improvements where necessary. The MRPC outreach effort engaged Town officials and stakeholders through the Route 12 Corridor Profile Guide Committee that met regularly. The Committee contributed to the study by providing the Towns' concerns and issues with the corridor and reviewed and commented on the draft documents as the study proceeded through to the completion of the study.

The study includes the analysis of a range of MRPC Transportation Management System data, including Traffic Counting; Congestion Management; Transportation Safety Planning Program; Pavement Management System; Bridge Management System; and Freight Planning. Environmental constraints; land use; and roadway characteristics were also analyzed.

[4] https://www.mrpc.org/montachusett-metropolitan-planning-organization-mmpo/pages/working-towards-the-future

Key MRPC Improvement Recommendations:

The MRPC recommended that the Town consider Complete Street Concepts and additional Traffic Calming Measures as improvement alternatives to improve the Towns' concerns and the results of existing conditions analysis described in the study. The rehabilitation pavement condition repair strategy for about 60% of the CP Roadway is recommended to maintain a state of good repair for the pavement.

Possible locations for adding Traffic Calming Measures to the corridor to slow traffic before entering the Historic Downtown District (HDD):

- Near #25-#22 Winchendon Rd to slow EB traffic before entering the steep road grade / winding road east of Corey Hill / Lashua Rds.
- In the vicinity of #20-18 Main St (just east of the bridge) to further slow WB traffic before entering the HDD

The Town may want to consider narrowing the extremely wide High St Branch approach of the Route 12 at High St intersection and add pavement markings and directional signage to improve the geometry and unclear road delineation. Finally, the Town may want to consider placing regulatory No Thru Traffic and/or Local Traffic Only signs on the Chapel St approach to the Water St (Rt 101 N) at Chapel St intersection to prevent vehicles from using Chapel St to access Pleasant St. Please see the final Route 12 Corridor Profile for full details of this summary.

8.8 Goals and Actions

TC Goal 1: Develop and maintain and continue and continue to implement both new and existing transportation planning documents and procedures as needed to improve Ashburnham's infrastructure.

TC1.1: *Create a digitized, comprehensive, and up to date inventory of Ashburnham's culverts*.

Action 2: *Create a digitized and constantly updated map of all catch basins.*

Action 3: *Maintain and update the Pavement Management Plan as needed.*

Action 4: *Explore Safe Routes to School as an opportunity to fund or expand the downtown sidewalk prioritization plan.*

Action 5: *Continue to implement the proposed Action Items of the Complete Streets Prioritization Program through grant funding through that program and others grant programs that support transportation and trail improvements.*

Goal 2: Create a more walkable, pedestrian friendly downtown Ashburnham that is accessible and safe for all residents.

Action 1: *Explore funding opportunities to enhance parking and sidewalk flow in the downtown area to better promote more functional use and access to commercial areas.*

Action 2: *Address sidewalk and pathway connectivity, focusing on ensuring all municipal and public interest areas have adequate service, such as Winchester Park and Stevens Memorial Library.*

Action3: *Provide a gateway to the Rail Trail from the downtown area.*

Action 4: *Continue to explore the feasibility of developing a walkable riverfront area along the Phillip's Brook corridor between Water Street and Maple Ave.*

Goal 3: Improve intersections, roadways, and sidewalks throughout the community to increase the overall level of safety for both vehicular and non-vehicular circulation.

Action 1: *Improve roadway intersection safety for critical areas, prioritizing intersections, and areas with incidents of high crash rates.*

Action 2: *Continue efforts to expand and improve sidewalk coverage throughout the town, with a focus on connections between important destinations and high traffic routes, such as alongside Route 101, where existing infrastructure currently does not meet community needs.*

Action 3: *Explore additional funding opportunities to better support efforts towards roadway pavement and drainage improvements.*

Action 4: *Continue to repair and replace undersized culverts as needs arise and seek other funding sources to supplement ongoing work.*

Goal 4: Continue to expand and improve trail and pathway networks throughout town.

Action 1: *Continue with Rail Trail plans, exploring options for extensions, additional amenities, increased safety, accessibility and connectivity for greater convenience and utility and recreational opportunities.*

Action 2: *Improve signage along trails and trailheads to provide greater clarity to both residents and visitors to the community. Explore incorporating wayfinding markers and educational kiosks in to any existing and future signage.*

Action 3: *Investigate improvements to parking access at trailheads.*