

Traffic Committee Report

December 2018

The charge to the Traffic Committee was to study traffic on the local roads in order to promote safety for both vehicular and pedestrian use and to formulate recommendations based on collected data.

The Committee began meeting on Feb. 14, 2018, and developed a comprehensive plan of study. Interviews with Matt Rawson (Road Foreman), Jeff Duda (Champion Fire Chief), and the Rescue Squad identified areas of concern. The Committee did its own survey of roads to identify areas of poor sightlines and ineffective or absent signage. An email address was established for community members to voice their concerns; the Committee solicited feedback via the Londonderry Community Forum and the Town's email list, and Committee members interviewed many citizens to help identify additional areas of concern. The State's Guide to Setting Speed Limits was reviewed, as were all previous traffic counts and safety studies. A meeting was scheduled with the planners of the Route 11 resurfacing project. Finally, the Committee asked Windham Regional Commission to conduct traffic counts on Thompsonburg, Landgrove, and Spring Hill Roads, and requested that a Safety Audit of Thompsonburg Road be conducted by VTrans. (Middletown Road was not included in the traffic count requests, as a Better Roads Safety Study was conducted there in 2015).

In the absence of posted speed limits, Vermont sets the speed limit at 50 MPH for all roads, with an expectation that drivers will adjust their speed based on weather, road condition, curves, or poor sightlines. Over the course of the last year, a local Sheriff has reported to the Town Administrator five complaints of excessive speed on local roads which the Sheriff agreed were valid due to road conditions, but no tickets could be issued because of the 50 MPH speed limit on all of Thompsonburg Road. The WRC traffic studies show that between 1.2% and 13.6% of vehicles travelled in excess of 50 MPH, with the highest percentage on a short straightaway on Thompsonburg Road. The 85th percentile was between 43 and 49 MPH, and average speeds were between 38 and 42 MPH, with the highest again on Thompsonburg Road. (See pages 2 – 6 of the Londonderry Traffic Studies.) A visual review of Londonderry roads suggests that the characteristics of most roads include poor sightlines, awkward grade changes, places of significant tree and brush growth along the road, and sharp narrow curves. Based on the characteristics of local roads, speed limits can be set five miles below the 85th percentile of speeds recorded in traffic studies. People tend to remember and consider as their perception for all traffic, the speed of drivers exceeding 50 MPH, not the vast majority of drivers.

The VTrans Safety Audit identified a number of safety issues on Thompsonburg Rd., and the Audit Report makes recommendations for speed limits, improved signage, guardrails, and tree and brush clearing.

The Committee recommends the following based on the data collected:

1. That the Town adopt a Traffic Ordinance, with speed limits to be set on the basis of the traffic counts and the VTrans Safety Audit. The new ordinance will require posted speed limits (about \$100 per required sign). It is possible that the signs may be paid for by a grant. Because of the costs, the Committee recommends that if it has to be applied over several years, Thompsonburg Road and Middletown Road be prioritized, (There was grant funding available for the changes suggested by the grant-funded Middletown Road Safety Study.)
2. That all of the recommendations of the Thompsonburg Traffic Safety Audit (see pages 10 – 21), and all of the Middletown Road recommendations, be implemented as soon as possible.
3. That Spring Hill Road get three new warning signs: 'Narrow Bridge' near the intersection of Spring Hill Road and Livermore Mills Road, a more visible 'Stop' or 'Yield' sign at the bottom of Haven Hill Road, and a 'Stop' or 'Yield' sign at the intersection of Spring Hill Road and Livermore Mills Road. It should be noted that over the last two years, Spring Hill Road has experienced a significant increase in traffic load due in part to a new GPS redirection of traffic from and to Winhall, as well as the usual numerous visitors to Gale Meadows in the summer months.
4. A sign at all entrances to Londonderry and South Londonderry asking drivers to **“Please drive like your children live here. Please slow down.”**
5. Improve sightlines for intersecting roads and driveways by cutting brush, grass, and small trees. Remove large trees very close to the road.
6. Establish better traffic control on Lowell Lake Road by working more closely with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation. West River Road also has a large number of people who travel to the West River Trail who do not adjust to its characteristics. More signage is needed beyond that already provided to slow down traffic.

Because many complaints concerning Route 11 and 100 were expressed, and recognizing that those roads are under the jurisdiction of the State, the Committee asks the Select Board to make a request to VTrans for the following:

1. A complete and comprehensive Safety Audit for Route 11 from Thompsonburg Road to Reilly Road, emphasizing the Village of Londonderry proper. Of particular concern are:
 - The intersection of Old Stowell Hill Rd., RT 100, and RT 11.; the intersection of Hell's Peak and RT 11; and the intersection of Edgehill Road/Middletown Road with RT 11 (particularly the sightline).
 - The Utley Bridge as it relates to oversized vehicles.
 - The inability of trucks to slow down sufficiently when approaching Londonderry from the west on Stowell Hill, due to the placement of signs too close to the intersection of RT 11 and RT 100, a very awkward and dangerous intersection.

- The speed of traffic (trucks in particular) and poor sightlines on RT 11 approaching Thompsonburg Rd from the east.
 - The size, speed, and timing of trailered prefabricated homes and the speed of trucks through the commercial center of the Town.
2. Clarification of the proposed plan of a few years ago for the intersection of Edge Hill / Middletown Road / RT 11.
 3. Proposals to calm traffic and promote safer pedestrian and bike traffic and a safer capacity to walk across the two bridges.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dick Dale, Bill Barclay, Kelly Capen, Cynthia Gubb, Kevin Beattie, and George Mora (ex officio)