



TOWN OF ESSEX TOWN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Volume II - Needs Assessment
Final Report • April 2011

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Public Participation Process 1-1

Pedestrian Activity.....	1-2
Bicycle Activity.....	1-2
Public Transit.....	1-5
Driving and Parking.....	1-5
Stakeholder Interviews.....	1-7

Chapter 2. Modal Needs Assessment 2-1

Pedestrian and Bicycle.....	2-1
Pedestrian Level of Service Analysis.....	2-21
Public Transit.....	2-25
Parking.....	2-26
Street Network and Traffic.....	2-31

Table of Figures

Figure 1	Public Input on Pedestrian Activity in Essex	1-3
Figure 2	Public Input on Bicycle Activity in Essex.....	1-4
Figure 3	Public Input on Driving and Parking in Essex.....	1-6
Figure 4	Generalized Needs Assessment – Essex Village	2-2
Figure 5	Specific Needs Assessment – Essex Village.....	2-3
Figure 6	Generalized Needs Assessment - Centerbrook	2-6
Figure 7	Specific Needs Assessment - Centerbrook	2-7
Figure 8	Generalized Needs Assessment - Ivoryton.....	2-16
Figure 9	Specific Needs Assessment - Ivoryton	2-17
Figure 10	Specific Needs Assessment – Exit 3/Gateway	2-19
Figure 11	Plains Road at Bokum Corner (Signalized Intersection) – Pedestrian LOS D.....	2-22
Figure 12	Main Street (Route 154) at Westbrook Road (Signalized Intersection) – Pedestrian LOS E.....	2-23
Figure 13	Route 154 at Route 153 (Signalized Intersection) – Pedestrian LOS E	2-24
Figure 14	Pedestrian LOS at Unsignalized Intersections.....	2-25
Figure 15	Parking Utilization in Essex Village on Friday June 11 at 12:30pm	2-27
Figure 16	Parking Utilization in Centerbrook on Friday June 11 at 12:00pm	2-28
Figure 17	Parking Utilization in Ivoryton on Friday June 11 at 11:45am	2-29
Figure 18	Parking Utilization in Bokum Corner on Friday June 11 at 11:30am.....	2-30
Figure 19	Summary of Key Traffic Concerns	2-33

Chapter 1. Public Participation Process

The Town of Essex held a Public Workshop on April 20, 2010 from 7:00pm to 9:00pm at the Essex Town Hall Auditorium to gather input from residents for the Essex Transportation Study. More than 30 residents participated. The attendees were asked to respond to two questions, posed in the form of posters on the wall, and with responses written on Post-It notes, rather than provided verbally.

The first question was “What do you most value about Essex today?” Many respondents mentioned the “small town” and “historic” feel of Essex and the sense of community present there. The quality of life in Essex was often cited, with other comments noting the feeling of safety in the downtown, “each village has its own personality,” and the town hosts “multiple gatherings and parades.” Natural features and connections to nature were mentioned, including the beauty of the river nearby, and the enjoyment of “walking in the village to the water.” One person mentioned Route 9 and another mentioned the proximity to many metropolitan areas as a positive feature of Essex.

A second question, posed in the same manner, asked participants “What would you most like to change for the future of Essex?” These responses were varied, but several themes emerged, including a preference for more retail options allowing residents to meet their needs locally, improvements for walking and biking, and several specific requests at certain geographic locations. Concerns regarding retail included “efforts to encourage retention of retail in Essex and Ivoryton Villages,” and a return to being a “self-contained community” with a mix of stores that can meet residents’ needs.

In regards to transportation, some attendees wanted to increase the number and safety of bicycle and walking routes, and would like to “see Centerbrook and Ivoryton built up to be more walking friendly”. Regarding transportation for children, one attendee would like a “toll booth at Essex Elementary to charge drop-off parents,” while another would like school buses to take all students to school, even

those that live within one mile. Several comments included references to specific places, such as to “address the end of Grove Street where it meets North Main Street, finish the sidewalk, [and] put in crosswalk”; repair the sidewalk in Ivoryton; “beautify the vacant lot where Duane’s Building used to be;” and add more parking at The Griswold Inn.

The perspective was also voiced to keep Essex much as it is, expressing the preference that “not much” be changed about the town. Other people expressed concerns about the Town’s money, wanting lower taxes, to “stop doing unnecessary projects that waste money,” and for Essex to stop receiving grants.

The participants then provided comments about several modes of transportation within Essex. They were encouraged to raise needs and concerns as well as opportunities for improvement. Additionally, participants could also share any positive aspects of the modes, such as a particularly pleasant walking path.

Pedestrian Activity

As seen in Figure 1 below, workshop attendees exhibited general support for walking as a mode of transport. Some participants mentioned it as an opportunity for exercise and enjoyment, and others noted that it was the primary mode of transportation for children and others without cars.

Concerns expressed by participants included the lack and inconsistent provision of sidewalks throughout Essex, which can often force people to walk in the street. In some places where there are sidewalks, they are too close to the road, and pedestrians do not feel comfortable. Compounding these problems are the high speed of cars on many of the roads and unmarked crosswalks or dangerous intersections, which pedestrians do not feel safe crossing. Other maintenance concerns include the fact that sidewalks are not cleared in winter often enough and that there can be trash on the road that can block pedestrians' paths. Ivoryton, in particular, was noted as a difficult place for pedestrians.

Opportunities for improvement for walking include implementing traffic calming mechanisms and building off-road pedestrian paths that separate people walking from traffic. Other suggestions included better maintenance of the pedestrian infrastructure the town has currently. Another concern expressed, in regards to expanding sidewalks, is to ensure that the impacts upon landowners are minimized. Participants noted several areas with pleasant trails for walking.

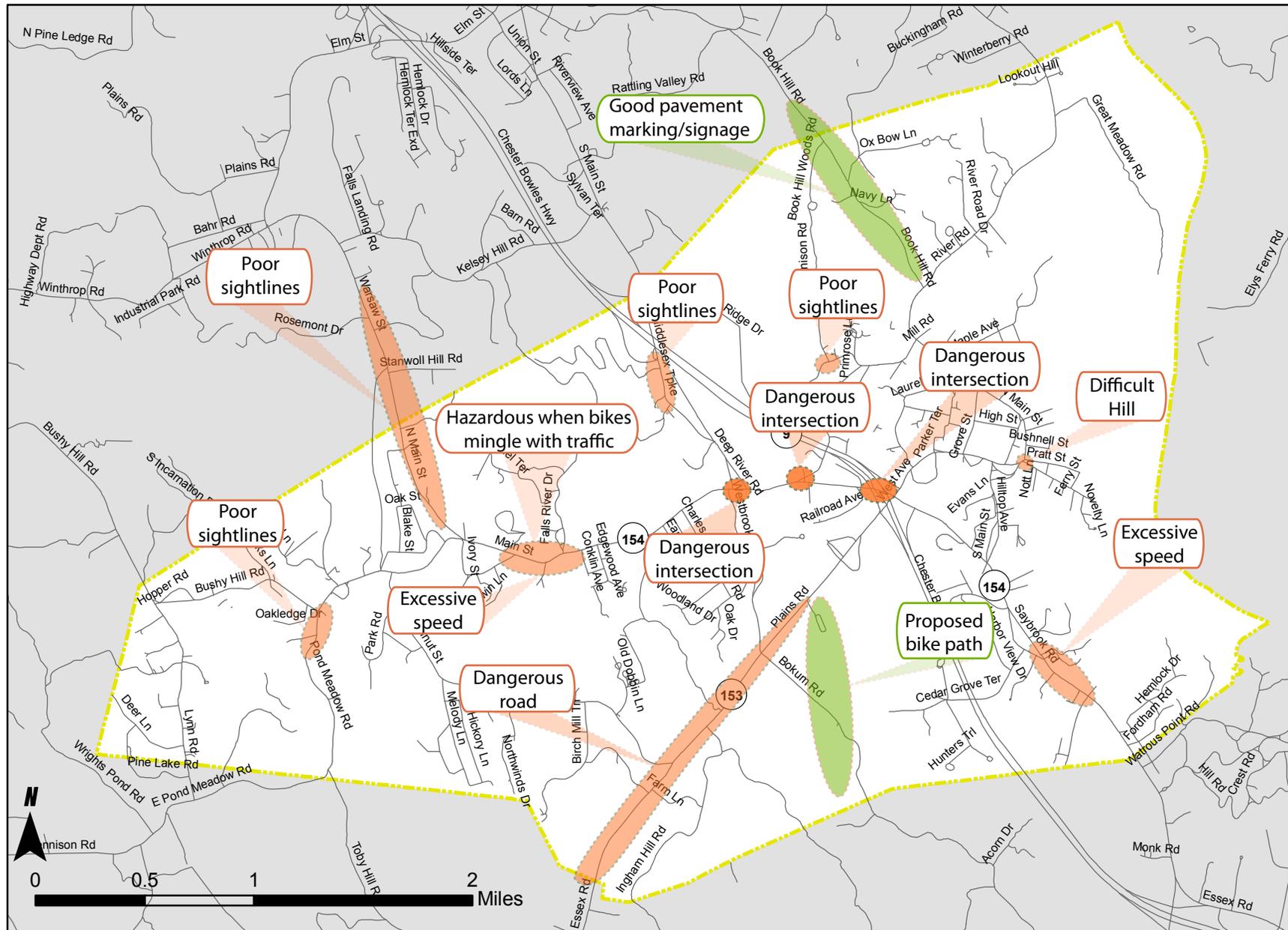
Bicycle Activity

There were clearer differences in interest levels for bicycling between workshop participants. Some expressed enthusiastic support for this mode, while others were less supportive. Most agreed that bicycling is currently not a safe activity in much of Essex. While there is a bike trail along the railroad that goes to Centerbrook, those in support of bicycling believe that much more can be done for cycling locally, as shown in Figure 2 below.

Concerns expressed include the high speed of cars, with which cyclists are often forced to share lanes, and the fact that cars do not often see or look for cyclists, particularly when backing up. Limited sightlines also make riding difficult in various places throughout Essex. Young cyclists are encouraged to ride on sidewalks, which can conflict with pedestrians. One attendee noted that some cyclists race to beat the light at Exit 3, which can create a hazard for driver and bicyclist alike.

Opportunities for improvement include the establishment of bike lanes and marked bike routes on the roads. One very basic suggestion is to widen the road shoulders, to at least provide some additional space out of the lanes of traffic for bikes. Like the opportunities for pedestrians, potential bicycling improvements include traffic calming measures and off-road paths. They also include improved shoulders for safer on road bicycling. One potential off-road path mentioned by a group is the steam train right-of-way. Increasing the awareness of drivers regarding cyclists could be achieved through education and signage. Bike signals at intersections were suggested, particularly in Centerbrook, as well as at the narrow highway bridge on Dennison Road, and around Exit 3. As one group noted, if basketball courts are being built in Essex, safe bike routes should be available to get there.

Figure 2 Public Input on Bicycle Activity in Essex



- Strengths
- Concerns
- Repeated Concerns
- Opportunities

Public Transit

Of all the alternative modes of transportation considered at the workshop, transit inspired the most questions as to whether or how it best fits into Essex. Some people expressed concern that Essex may lack the population density to support transit. However, others noted that it provides a safer alternative to biking, given the current lack of infrastructure for that mode, and that some people are dependent upon transit.

A major concern is whether money is well-spent on this mode, as it may not serve the full town population. One group suggested that local funding should not go to the bus and there should not be an expansion of services. Another concern was the lack of information about services available.

Opportunities for transit include providing more transit for tourists, particularly a circulator loop that includes route deviation and remote parking might provide good service and keep additional cars off of Essex roads providing more travel options for residents and visitors. The same group would like greater use of the summer trolley. A bus between village centers was another idea recommended, and one group suggested that volunteer drivers might cut down on some of the costs associated with transit. Adding a bus shelter on Main Street near Essex Court would be helpful. Addressing specific populations, people believe a senior shuttle to Middletown is needed and public transit for schools, beyond school buses which run very limited times, would also be helpful. Once services are provided, ensuring that information is disseminated about them is very important.

Driving and Parking

There were a variety of concerns related to driving and parking in Essex. Most of the comments addressed specific issues, but one general concern was the slow traffic and congestion in Essex. Specific topics included the lack of gaps to get onto Route 153 from smaller streets and a cut-through for Route 9, I-95. Several intersections in Ivoryton need signals, and more crosswalks there and in Centerbrook would be helpful to both drivers and pedestrians. Several parking problems also were raised, including the need for more parking at the library; the fact that there are many empty parking lots at churches, particularly at Main and Prospect Streets; and that there is not enough parking in Ivoryton. Additionally, many business owners often park on the street in front of their establishments, which limits the available on-street parking. Maintenance was also a concern for attendees, noting that the shrubs at Exit 3 and also along Dennison Road need to be cut, as they limit visibility, and like cyclists, drivers face limited sightlines on various roads throughout Essex.

Just as there were specific areas mentioned as concerns, there were also many solutions offered to address those particular needs. Providing those needed intersection signals in Ivoryton, crosswalks there and in Centerbrook, as well as a crosswalk at North Main Street and Grove Street would be improvements for both drivers and pedestrians. Experimenting with angled parking on Main Street was another suggestion. Attendees also recommended more police visibility throughout the day, to aid with enforcement, such as the no right turn requirement for Bokum at Cumberland Farms, which is often ignored. One group suggested the development of gateways to activity points throughout Essex. Another group recommended that students ride the bus, so that traffic at the beginning and end of school days is reduced.

Stakeholder Interviews

Between February and May 2010, the consultants conducted about ten stakeholder interviews. The interviews helped gain a better understanding of current conditions in the town and region through the lenses of residents, Town employees and volunteers, and regional representatives. Knowledge acquired was particularly useful to grasp what cannot always be documented through reports and on paper. The input received from these stakeholders is included in this existing conditions and needs assessment report and will be considered when developing recommended transportation improvements. As a follow up to these interviews, a working group was formed to help guide the project moving forward.

Interviewees include:

- Joseph Comerford and Paul Tyrrell, Estuary Transit
- Tom Danyliw, Steering Committee/Planning Commission member
- Janice Ehle-Meyer, Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Association
- Rich Gallecher, Town of Essex Department of Public Works – Roadways
- Mike Hammond, Local Attorney and Bicycle Advocate
- Phil Miller and John Guskowski, Town of Essex
- Members of the Planning Commission

Chapter 2. Modal Needs Assessment

This is an assessment based on the existing conditions from Volume I of the report and incorporates input from the public and working group, stakeholder interviews, and field work and observations collected by the consultants. The Modal Needs Assessment serves as the foundation for making strategic recommendations to the Town of Essex.

Pedestrian and Bicycle

The Town of Essex has a lot of potential for improvements in terms of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The following assessment, organized by village, identifies details in each area that are ripe for improvement, or that serve as an model example.

Figure 4 Generalized Needs Assessment – Essex Village

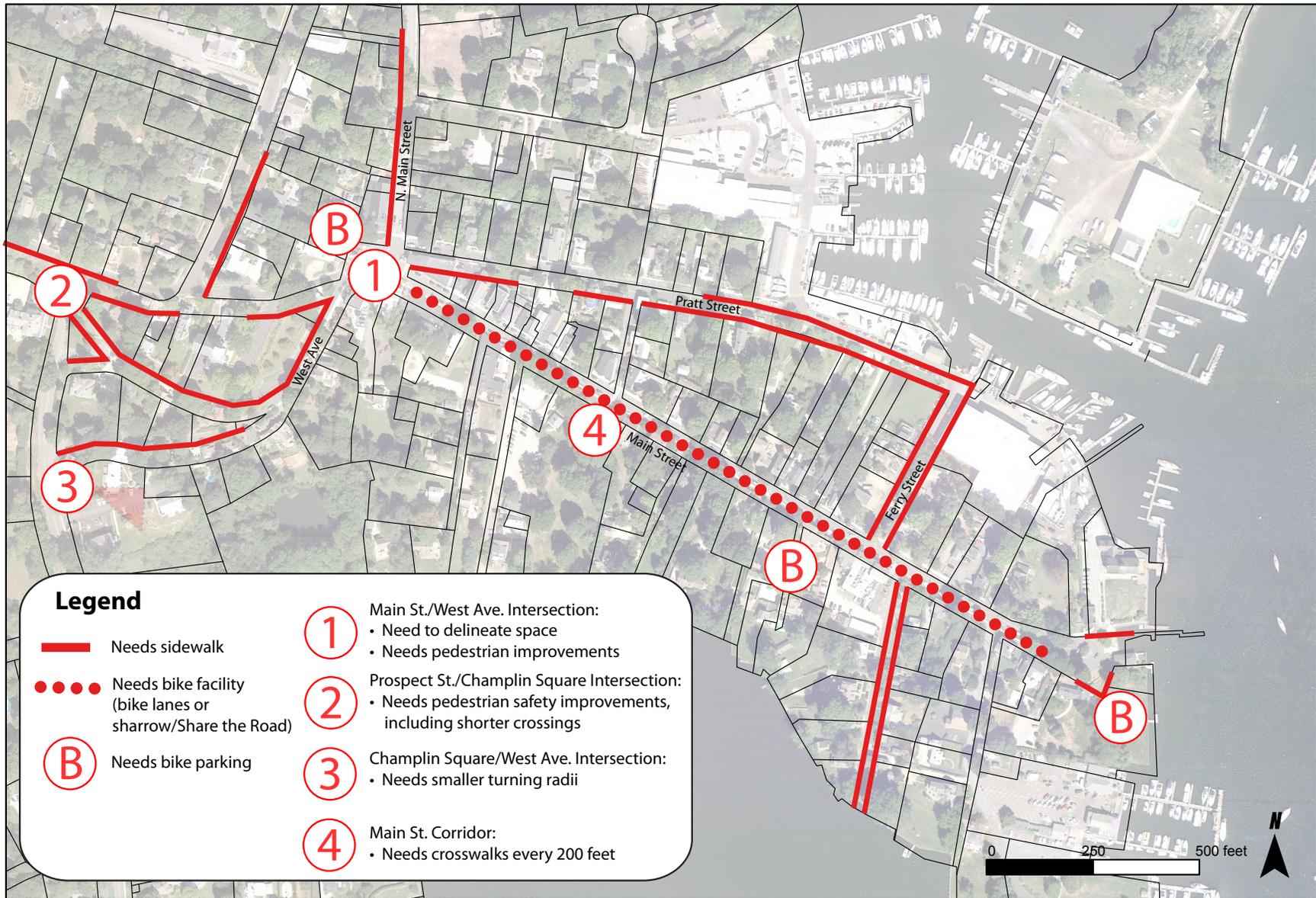
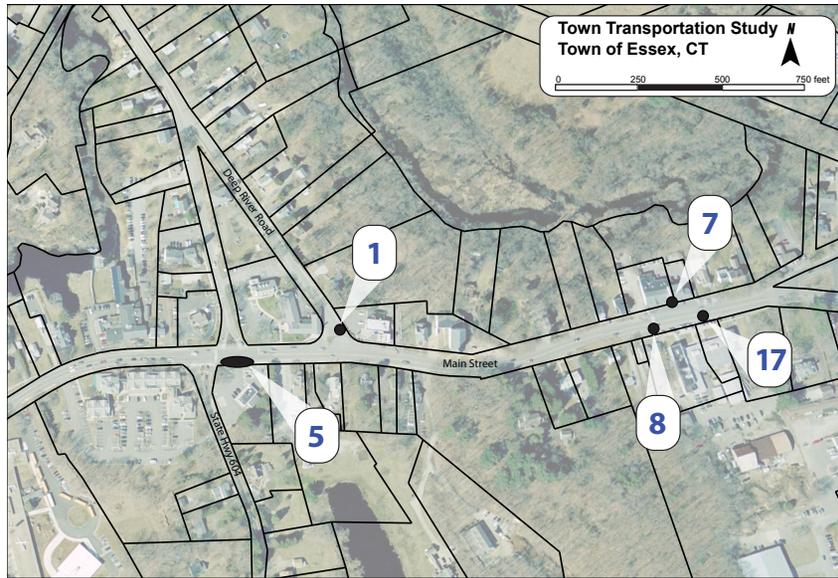


Figure 5 Specific Needs Assessment – Essex Village



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Most of the primary roads in Essex Village have sidewalks, but there are several key segments that lack sidewalks for pedestrians. Both photos show pedestrians walking in the street next to parked cars due to a lack of a sidewalk on most of Pratt Street. This street is well-suited to provide safe conditions for pedestrians due to its on-street parallel parking, which provides a protective barrier between the pedestrian and the road.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

The photos above illustrate two examples of necessary sidewalk presence in Essex Village: on the left, a pedestrian is walking without sidewalk infrastructure where she needs it. This is a main road with curves, and poor sightlines make it difficult to see pedestrians around curves. On the right, this is an example of a road that does not have a sidewalk, but does not necessarily require one. Side streets with minimal traffic do not always need sidewalk infrastructure, as the traffic is quiet and calm enough for individuals to walk on the street.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

There are few bicycle facilities in Essex Village. On the left, a bicyclist is riding along Main Street with no pavement markings, bike lanes, or signage, but on a quieter, one-way street, these are still fairly safe conditions. On the right, there is a bike rack for a cyclist to use to lock up. However, this is unusable: there is nowhere for a front tire to go, as the rack is too close to the building, and the rack would be used improperly if the bike was locked parallel to the rack. Even if the bike was locked parallel, then the frame and tires would block the adjacent bench. Proper placement of bike parking is essential for the racks to be properly utilized.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Figure 6 Generalized Needs Assessment - Centerbrook

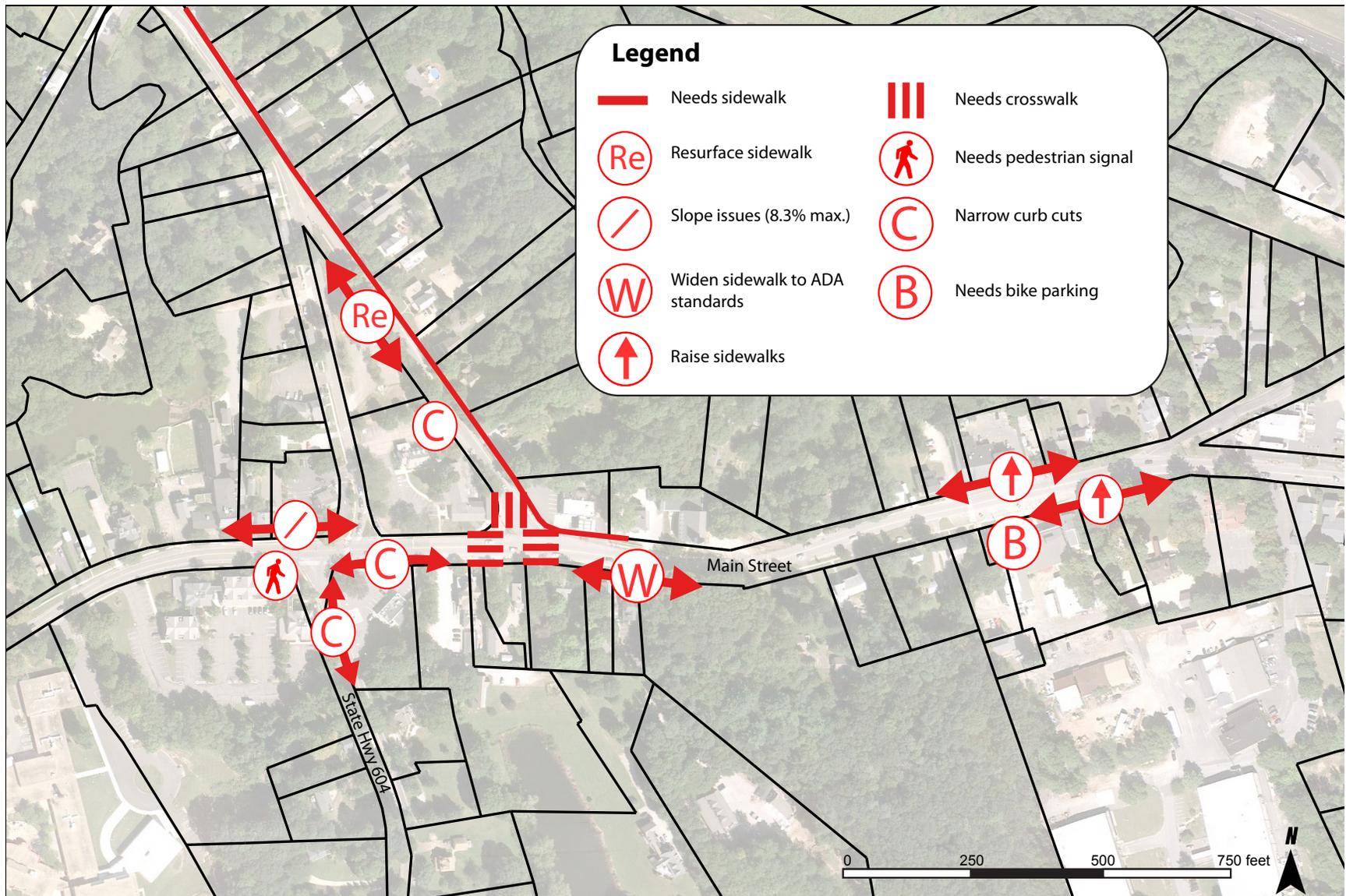
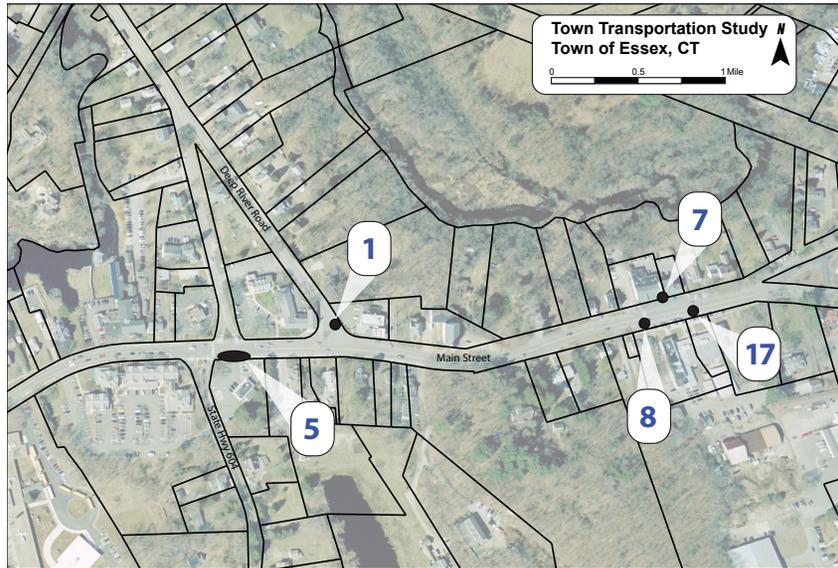


Figure 7 Specific Needs Assessment - Centerbrook



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Centerbrook does have several substantial crosswalks, including three in the village center, but there is also a variety of insufficient infrastructure. To the left, there is no crosswalk to delineate a safe place for pedestrians on a very wide turn onto Route 154. The median in the center is a sufficient pedestrian refuge, but the crossing to get into the median is wide open. In the photo above, there is a crosswalk in place of a sidewalk across a curb cut. This is not a sufficient condition for a pedestrian, as they step off the sidewalk, they are now walking across a driveway to get to the other sidewalk. This is an opportunity to raise the driveway to be at grade with the sidewalk to give pedestrians a safe area to cross.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

These are examples of pedestrian crossings to nowhere – there is no infrastructure to support pedestrians after they cross this crosswalk. Pedestrian on the left has no sidewalks or crosswalk for safety. On the right, once the pedestrian crosses the street, they are forced to walk in the grass. On a rainy or snowy day, this is extremely unpleasant, as well as impossible for a person in a wheelchair or with a stroller.

*Photos 3 and 4 not shown on zoom map.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Curb cuts in Centerbrook provide unsafe conditions for pedestrians. On the top left, the curb cut is extremely wide for entrance in and out of the service station. Cars are able to enter and exit at higher speeds because of the large curb cut, which makes it hazardous for pedestrians. The sidewalk is also in poor condition, and its slope towards the street also makes it easier for cars to travel quickly, as well as shifts the pedestrian into the street. The top right exhibits a condition where the sidewalk ends at a curb cut. The pedestrian has a buffer between the street and sidewalk until the curb cut, and then the trend ends and the street and sidewalk become one.

*Photo 6 is not shown on zoom map.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

The photo on the left is another example of a large curb cut. Here, the sidewalk virtually disappears and is in limbo between the driveway and the street. The photo on the right is an example of a crosswalk ending at a curb cut, which again leaves the pedestrian in not ideal conditions. The pedestrian is left in a parking lot after crossing the street.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Poor sidewalk conditions in Centerbrook do not provide a pleasant walking environment for pedestrians. These types of sidewalks, shown above, are also insufficient for those with physical disabilities, those traveling with strollers or other devices on wheels. Sidewalks are uneven, in poor, cracked condition, and are extremely narrow.

*Photos 9, 10, and 11 are not shown on zoom map.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Above are more examples of insufficient sidewalk conditions in Centerbrook. To the left, this is an example of a sidewalk ending abruptly, sending the pedestrian out into an intersection; in the middle, the sidewalk from Centerbrook to Bokum ends; and on the right, an example of a “crosswalk to nowhere”, as the sidewalk ends at a curvy intersection.

*Photos 12, 13, and 14 are not shown on zoom map.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

The above three photos illustrate some examples of extremely narrow sidewalks. On the left and middle, the narrow sidewalk sets pedestrians very close to traffic, and on the right, pedestrians are hindered by parked cars coming onto the sidewalks. In all examples, it would be difficult or impossible to even have two people walk next to each other, and is even uncomfortable for just one pedestrian.

*Photos 15 and 16 are not shown on zoom map.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Centerbrook lacks sufficient bicycle facilities, with no designated bike lanes and bike parking. The photo on the left shows a nice wide shoulder for cyclists, but there is a car parked in the shoulder. On the right, there is a bike route sign, but no markings on the road for cyclists or drivers. There is no parking for bikes in Centerbrook, so if bicyclists want to stop at a store or restaurant, there is no designated, safe place for bike parking.

*Photos 18 and 19 are not shown on zoom map.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

There are several areas of the village that do not comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. On the left, the “sidewalk” in front of the driveway has too steep of a slope, and on the right, a gravel, narrow sidewalk in front of the church does not provide sufficient conditions for persons with disabilities.

*Photos 20 and 21 are not shown on zoom map.

Figure 8 Generalized Needs Assessment - Ivoryton

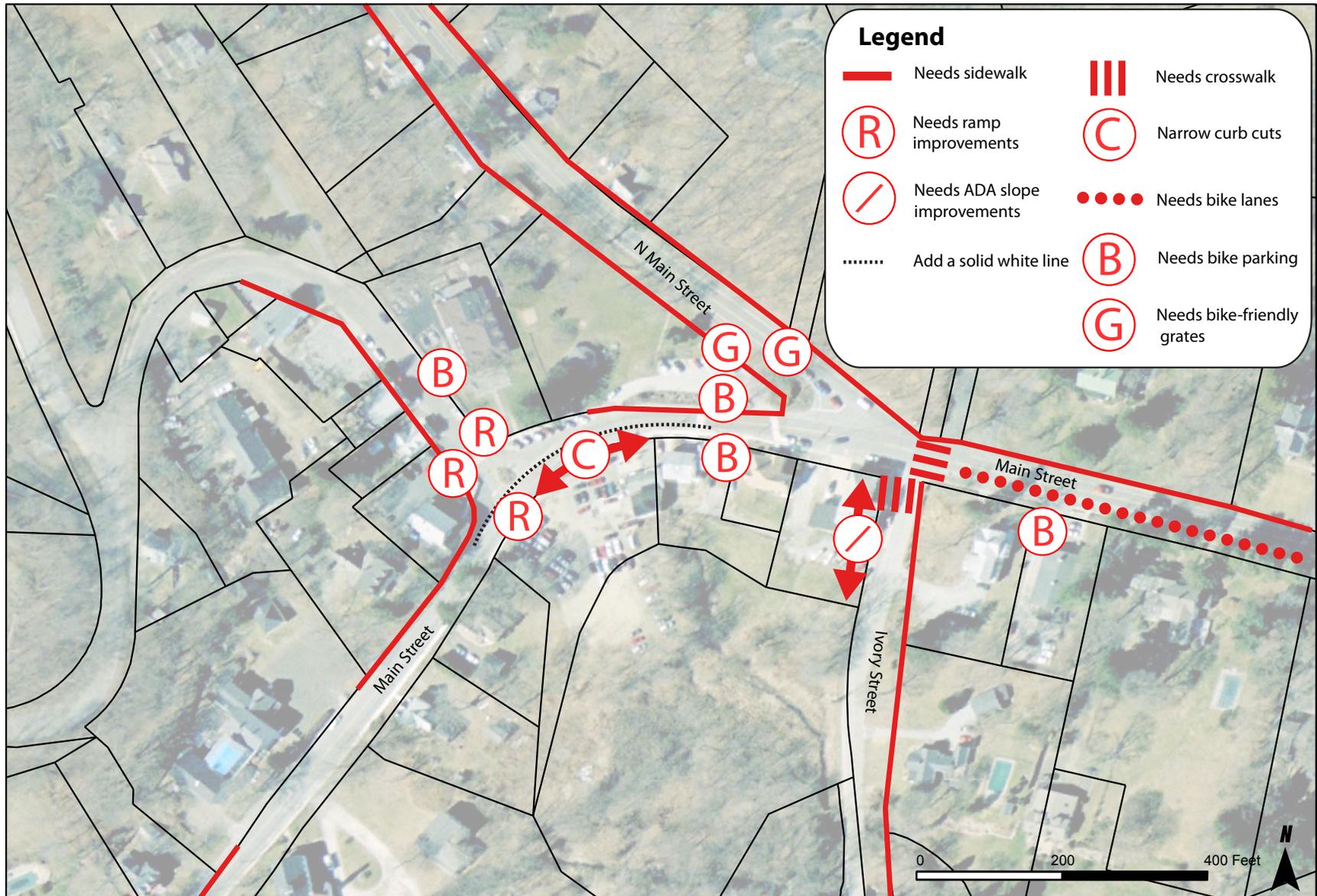
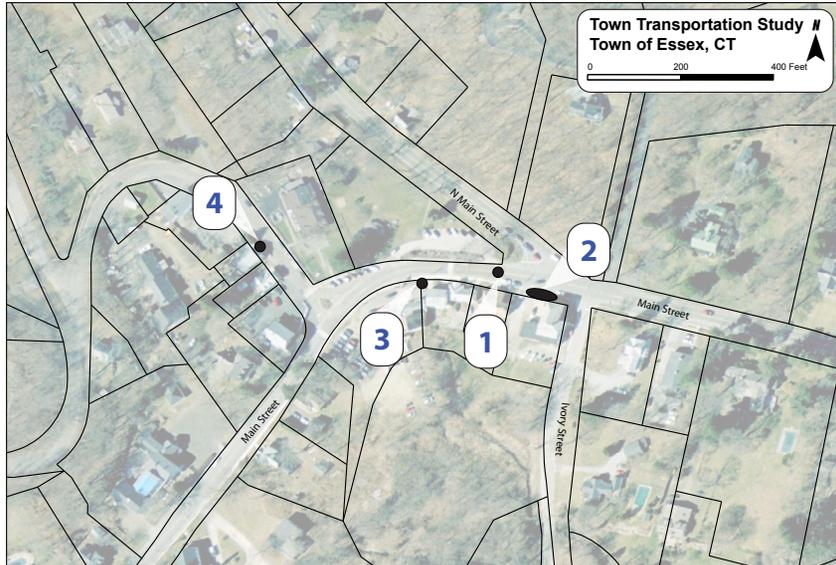


Figure 9 Specific Needs Assessment - Ivoryton



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Ivoryton has several crosswalks present, but not all are sufficient for safe pedestrian crossings. On the top, there are ramps for pedestrian access, but one side of the street is very narrow and has too steep of slope to meet ADA standards. On the left, the crosswalk is partially blocked by a parked car.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

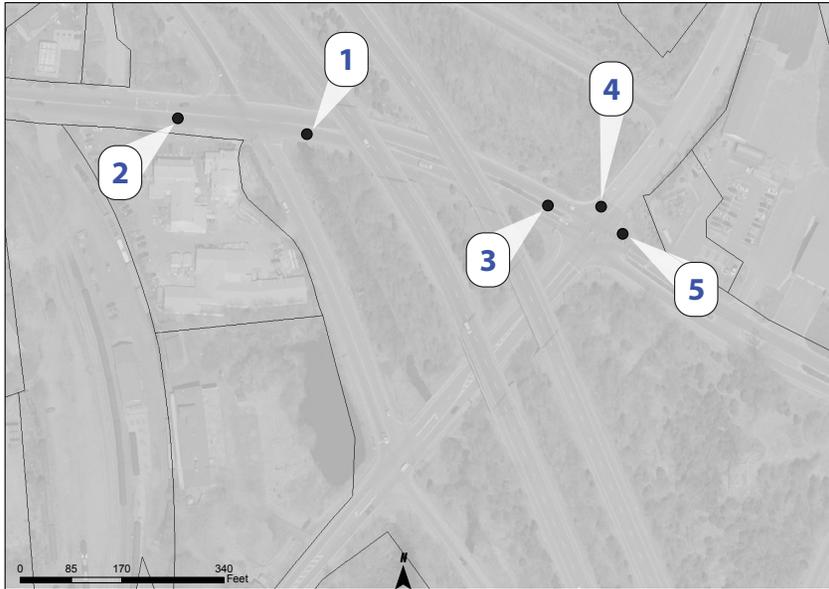
This curb cut at the service station is extremely wide, which leaves pedestrians out in the open and unprotected from traffic entering and exiting the station.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

This is another example of an existing, well-marked crosswalk in Ivoryton, but here there are no ramps leading from the crosswalk to the sidewalk. Persons with disabilities or those with strollers may have difficulty getting from the sidewalk to crosswalk, and this does not meet federal ADA design standards.

Figure 10 Specific Needs Assessment – Exit 3/Gateway



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Exit 3 at the Intersection of 154 and Route 9 leads to some interesting pedestrian and bicycle challenges. With limited accommodations, a bicyclist navigates the curves above. The shoulder is too narrow to serve as a bike lane, but there is room in the width of the road to allow for more of a shoulder. On the left, there is a discontinuous sidewalk just west of Route 9, as well as many curb cuts, leaving to an unfriendly pedestrian environment.



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

The Exit 3 area has several crosswalks in many key locations for pedestrians. However, even when crosswalks are present, there are instances where there is nowhere for the pedestrian to safely travel after crossing. On the left, this is an example of a sidewalk that ends at a large intersection that lacks a crosswalk. Incomplete conditions result in an incomplete pedestrian network, and sufficient crosswalks are a necessary component.

Pedestrian Level of Service Analysis

As seen in the images above, pedestrian facilities are often infrequent and discontinuous, and some crossings are particularly challenging. A pedestrian level of service analysis was conducted and described below to evaluate the challenges and needs for pedestrians in Essex. For cyclists, there is a lack of bicycle facilities and parking. Future work on the transportation study will make specific recommendations as to locations and types of facilities to best benefit cyclists.

Field work conducted by consultants evaluates pedestrian level of service (LOS) at intersections in terms of safety and delay. Intersections, by their very nature, are locations where there is considerable potential for conflict between different traffic streams and different users. At busy intersections, motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians often have to deal with complex situations and be aware of the position, movement, and intent of other users. Efficiency of intersections greatly affects the entire network performance. The demand for the improvement of pedestrian facilities is raised due to reasons such as difficulties in crossing heavily trafficked intersections, turning vehicles across their paths during the green signal, physical barriers, low visibility, improper design of handicapped accessible ramps, and so on.

Pedestrian LOS describes the degree of pedestrian accommodations in a transportation corridor. The methodology used in this study utilizes the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) measures, which calculates pedestrian LOS based on capacity and space requirements. The LOS is rated using a scoring system of A through F, with A having minimal delay and a low likelihood of pedestrian noncompliance (under a 10 second maximum delay), to F, which has a very high likelihood of noncompliance and a very long maximum delay for a pedestrian - over one minute (HCM 2000 Exhibit 18-9). Although the HCM describes LOS criteria for pedestrians at intersections based on pedestrian delay, it does not include other factors such as crossing facilities, turning vehicles, and pedestrian-bicycle interactions at crosswalks.

The pedestrian LOS was calculated at three major signalized intersections in Essex and at a number of unsignalized intersections. Signalized intersections received LOS scores of D and E, which indicate that pedestrian delay is between 31-60 seconds (Figure 11, Figure 12, and Figure 13). All unsignalized intersections received scores of F, which indicate a very high level of delay for pedestrians.

Figure 11 Plains Road at Bokum Corner (Signalized Intersection) – Pedestrian LOS D

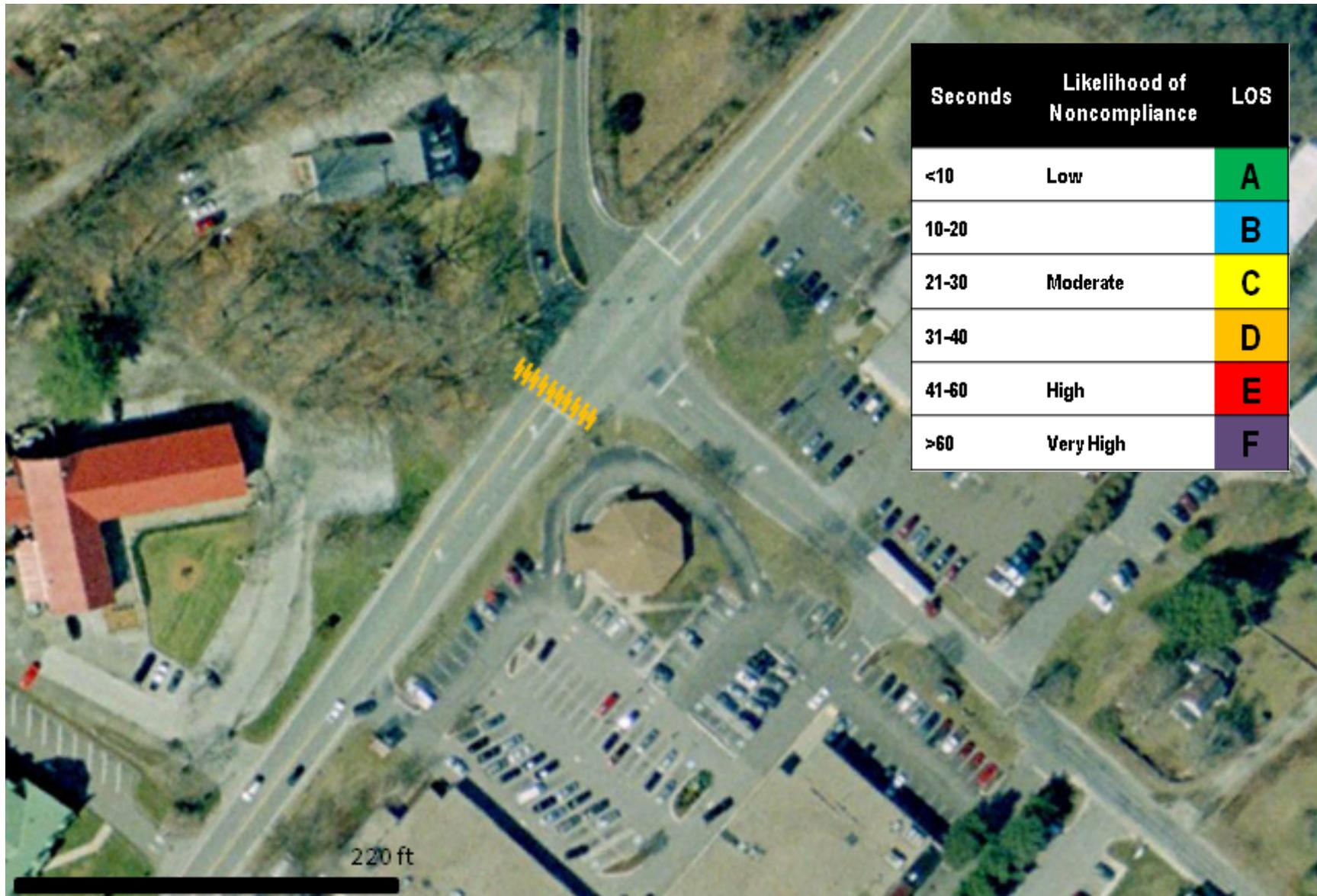


Figure 12 Main Street (Route 154) at Westbrook Road (Signalized Intersection) – Pedestrian LOS E

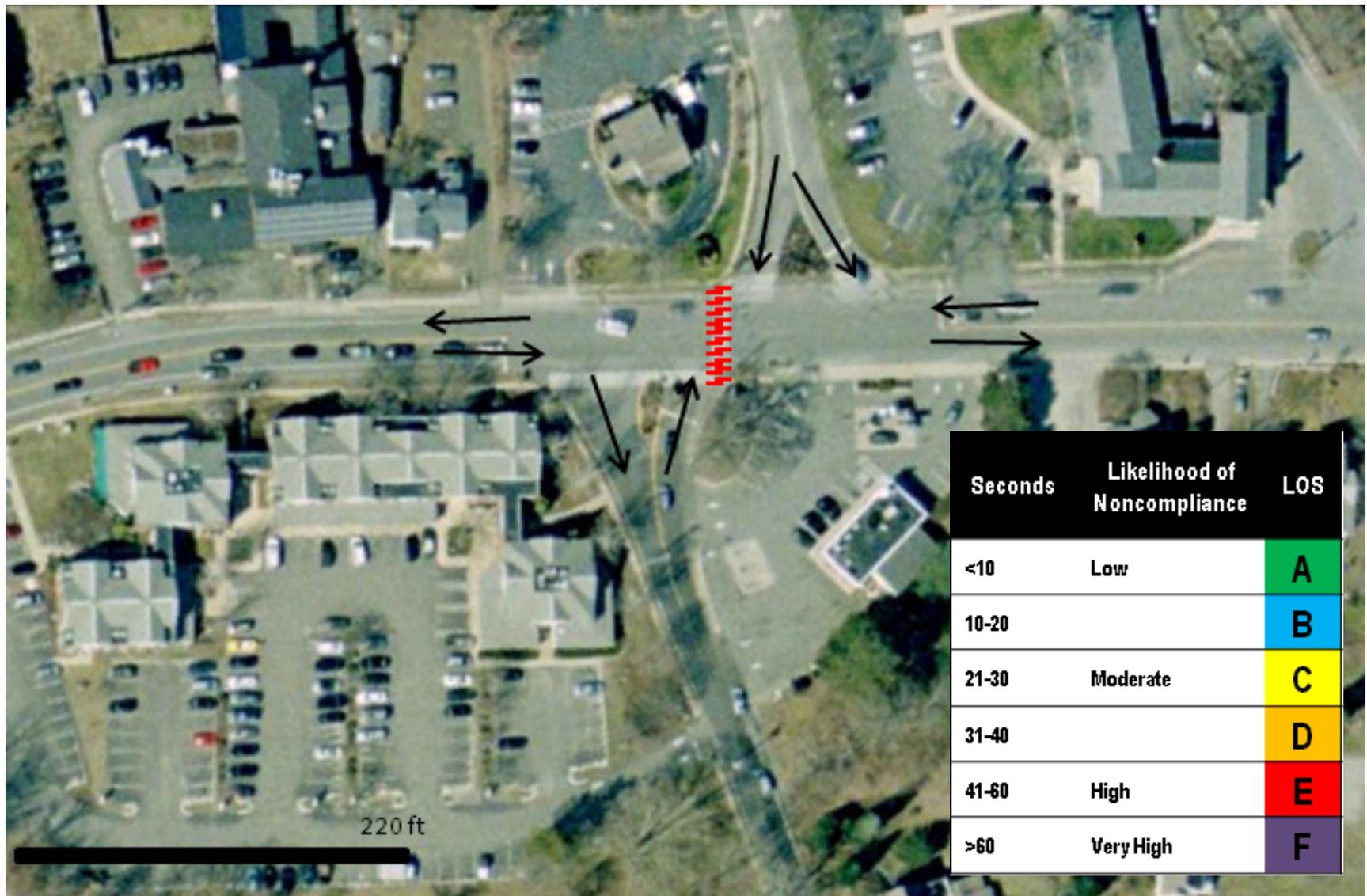
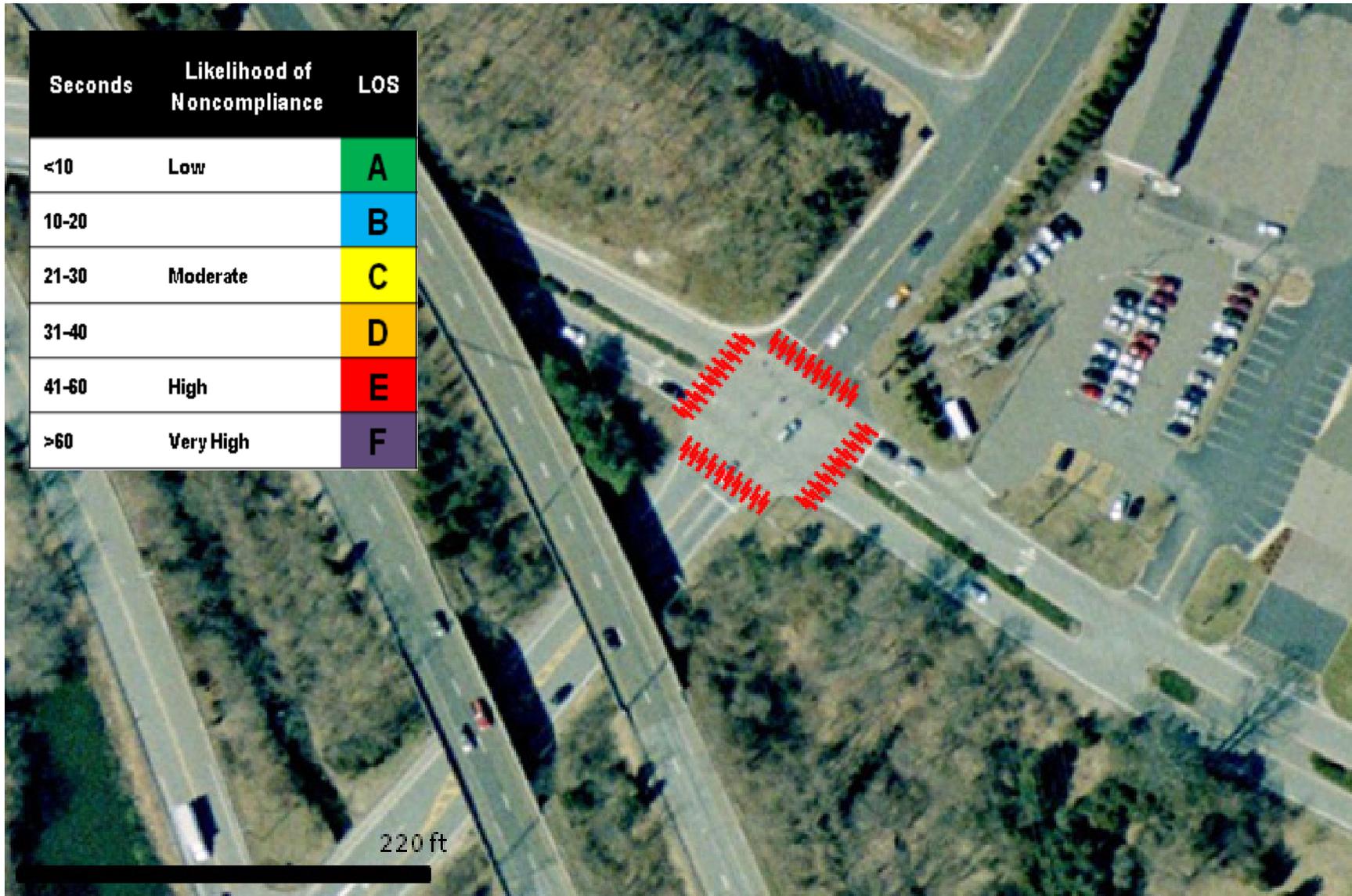


Figure 13 Route 154 at Route 153 (Signalized Intersection) – Pedestrian LOS E



Unsignalized intersections pedestrian LOS is calculated differently than signalized intersections, as there are no walk signals or green lights for the pedestrian. Unsignalized intersection pedestrian LOS is calculated using the vehicular traffic on the roadway and the crossing length for the pedestrian. Automatic traffic recorders were used to determine the amount of vehicular traffic on Route 154 (in four locations), on Route 153 (in two locations), and on Main Street (one location). All crossings generated a pedestrian LOS rating of F. This indicates that crossing these roads have particularly high delay for pedestrians.

Figure 14 Pedestrian LOS at Unsignalized Intersections

Location	Delay (seconds)	LOS
Main Street (Rt. 154) - between Centerbrook and Route 9 ramps	48	F
Deep River Rd (Rt. 154) north of Rt. 9 (Exit 4) Northbound Ramps	128	F
Deep River Rd (Rt. 154) south of Rt. 9 (Exit 4) Southbound Ramps	308	F
Westbrook Road (Rt. 153) - north of Mares Hill Road	163	F
Plain Road (Rt. 153) - north of Bokum Road	154	F
Main Street - west of Centerbrook near Essex Elementary School	59	F

Source: Timing data from Fitzgerald & Halliday Inc., July 2010, Calculations provided by Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Public Transit

Transit service within Essex is very infrequent and connections to other services are not always timed to allow convenient transfers. Access to New Haven requires one or two transfers, and access to other regional destinations is limited by the level of service available. Where transfers are possible, such as between gTT routes and those provided by other local operators such as DATTCO and Middletown Area Transit, fares are free at designated locations, but may not be timed to make transfers sufficiently convenient to induce casual travelers to ride. Therefore, while there is a convenient fare arrangement among agencies, schedules are less closely coordinated. Shoreline East and Amtrak provide regional connections, but fares are more costly and similarly require service connections to access.

Transit circulator service within Essex is provided by the Trolley, but the service is oriented toward tourism service rather than local trips, and does not operate early enough to serve work trips. Moreover, the service is not expected to operate in 2010 except as a demand responsive service for groups wishing to access local businesses.

A lack of widespread availability of information may pose a challenge to potential riders wishing to use services of gTT and the Essex Trolley. Information is posted inconsistently; for example, the gTT website features route information and mapping in several different formats, which may confuse riders. Additionally, printed information is inconsistently available, and is not available directly within the Old Saybrook Rail Station. While flag-stop service allows a level of flexibility for riders, bus stops often act as an advertisement for the availability of services, and the current lack of stops therefore means a promotional opportunity is missed; this is being partially improved by the installation of new bus stops in key locations, but overall availability of information is still uneven.

The existing convergence of services at the Old Saybrook Rail Station provides a natural opportunity to more strongly coordinate services with Old Saybrook as a convenient transfer location. If schedules were more closely coordinated to converge in Old Saybrook, service improvements could be made that would benefit residents of Essex. Additionally, while an 11 minute travel time from Essex to Old Saybrook Rail Station is a reasonable fast trip, the return trip time of 32 minutes on the Riverside Shuttle, which operates the most daily trips, is a disincentive to riders.



A lack of clear parking regulations in many areas of Essex result in haphazard parking. On the left, an SUV parks on the sidewalk. On the right, Essex Village allows for parking in the village center.

Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Parking

Parking utilization counts were conducted on Friday, June 11, 2010 between 11:30am and 12:30pm in Essex Village, Centerbrook, Ivoryton, and Bokum Corner. Aside from periods with very high tourism induced demand, Fridays at lunchtime are often considered a very high peak for parking utilization. During this snapshot, almost all parking areas were at or below 50% utilized, which means that the overall supply of parking is significantly higher than the demand. This is not to say there are not locations where parking supply is constrained and unable to meet peak demand. The observations particularly showed that there is plenty of available off-street capacity. In Essex Village, there are some locations, both on-street and off-street, where parking is utilized more heavily than others, but on the whole, most of the parking spaces are underutilized. On summer weekends and during special events, parking in Essex Village, Ivoryton (during Ivoryton Playhouse events), and Centerbrook (during school events) is much more heavily utilized.

A Zoning Commission public hearing on the topic of Essex Village Parking was held on May 17, 2010. At that meeting most attendees indicated that the parking “problem” was not an overall parking supply issue, but an abuse of on-street parking by long-term parkers (many days or rarely used commercial vehicles -storage) and downtown business employees. At this hearing a number of parking strategies were discussed including:

- A potential parking permit system that would allow for long term parking for residents in the village but not for employees or visitors.
- Parking meters were not desired
- Strategies to get better utilization of off-street lots for longer-term parking – including better signage alerting visitors to the presence of such lots
- Tour bus parking
- Commercial vehicles and trucks arriving before 7 AM
- Better enforcement of time limits for on street parking
- Additional remote public parking lot
- Street cleaning notifications

Figure 15 Parking Utilization in Essex Village on Friday June 11 at 12:30pm

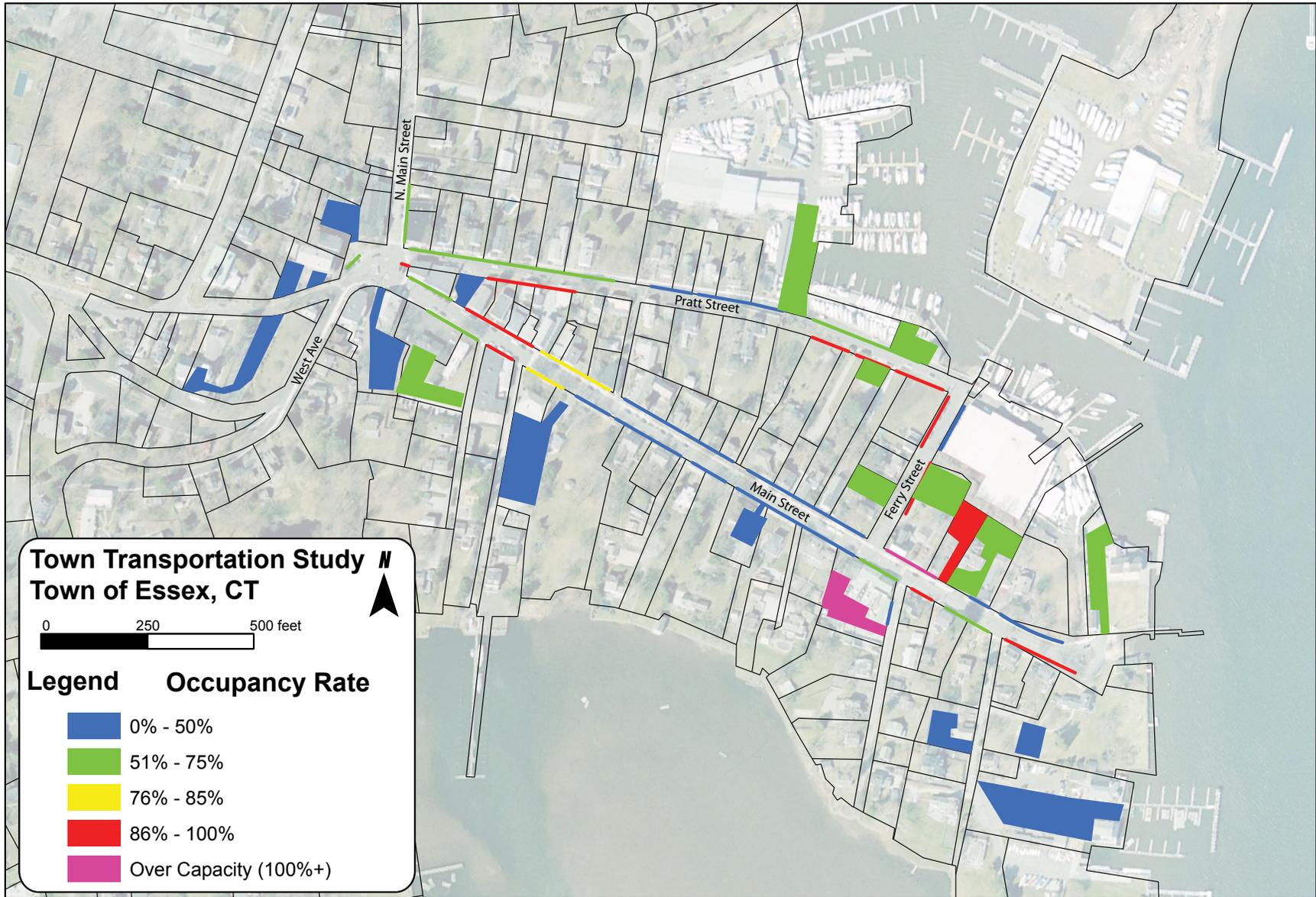


Figure 16 Parking Utilization in Centerbrook on Friday June 11 at 12:00pm

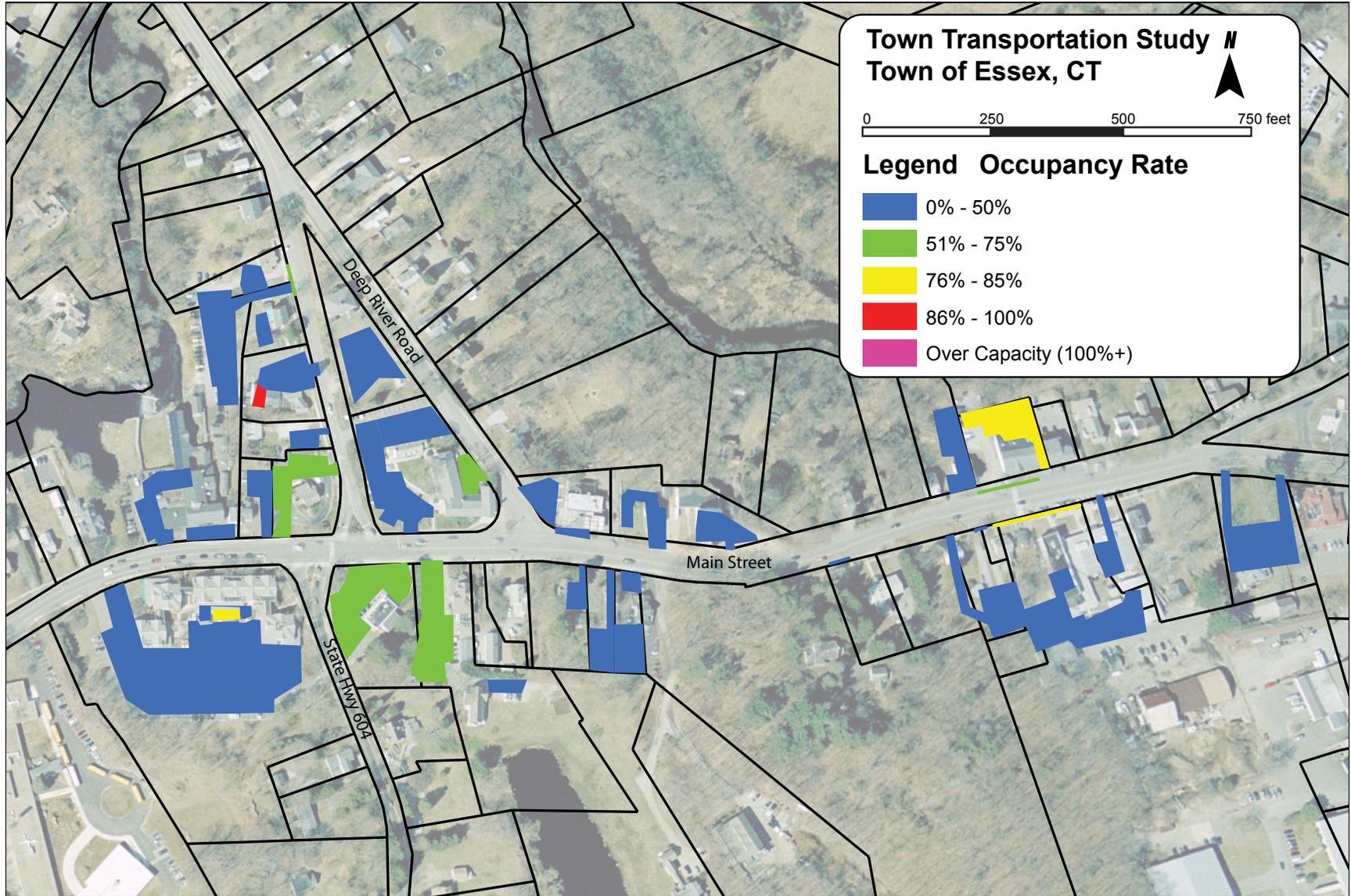


Figure 17 Parking Utilization in Ivoryton on Friday June 11 at 11:45am

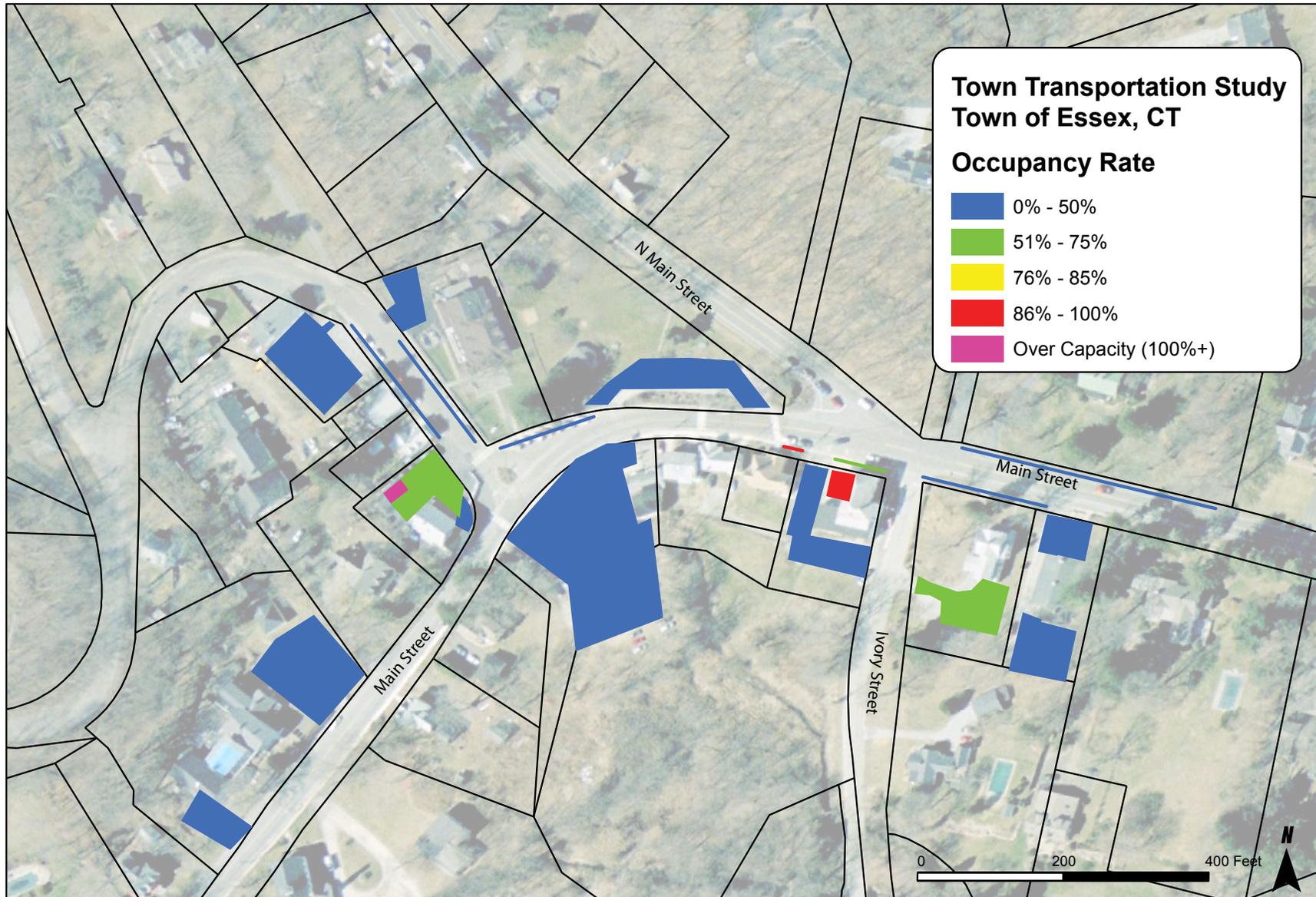
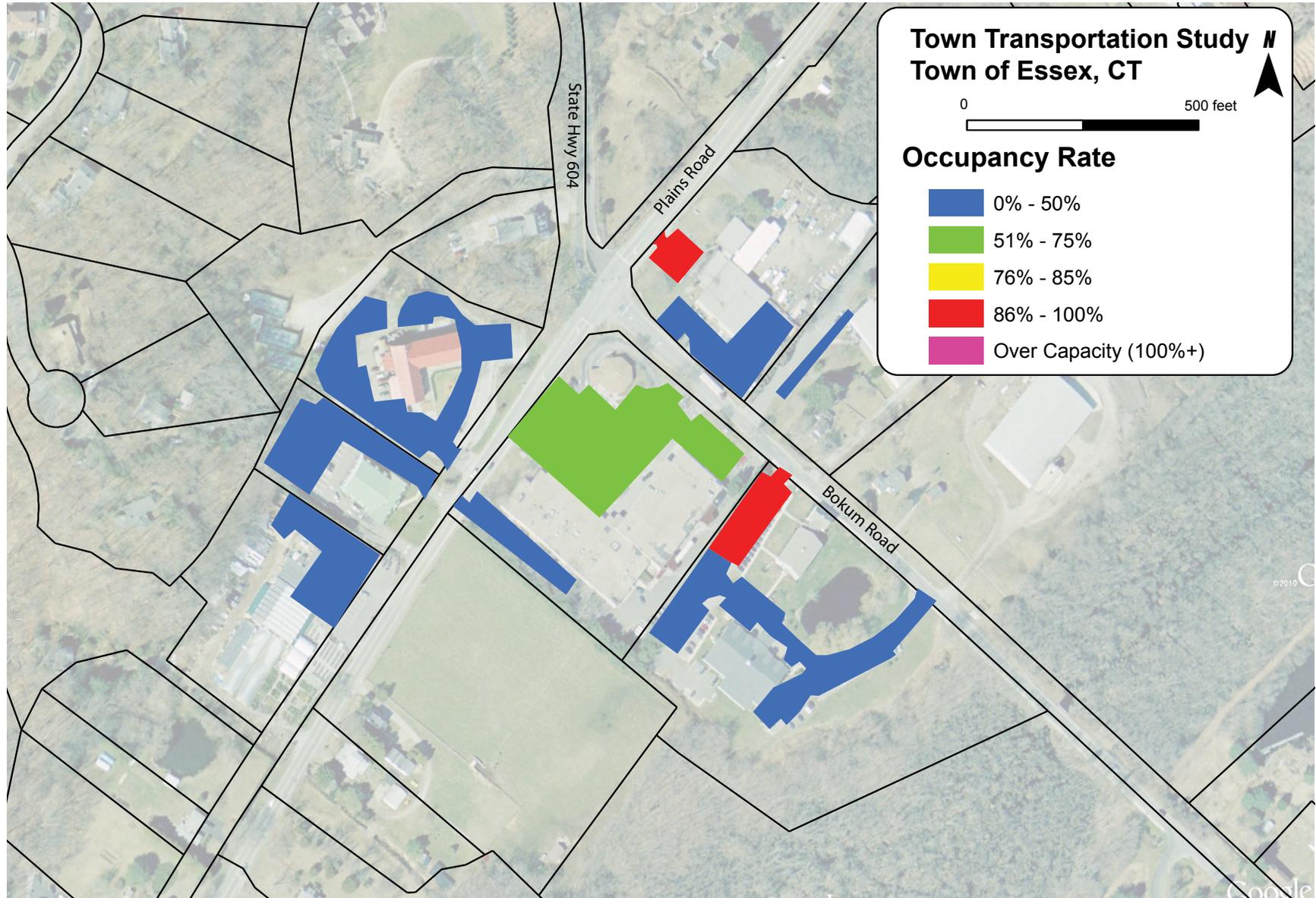


Figure 18 Parking Utilization in Bokum Corner on Friday June 11 at 11:30am



Street Network and Traffic

Chapter 6 of Volume 1 of this report presented significant detail related to the operational and safety characteristics for traffic flow on the street network within Essex. A summary of issues was presented indicating a number of needs relating to traffic flow and safety.

These could include operational and safety improvements to a few key intersections that experience significant delay due to either traffic demand or design.

Operational and safety improvements to consider include:

- Changes to intersection traffic control measures – such as new signals, modified signal timing or phasing, or other regulatory measures
- Changes to intersection or roadway geometrics to improve traffic flow
- Improvements to sightlines through grading or improved shoulders where appropriate
- Access management along heavily developed sections or roadways
- Traffic calming measures to slow traffic or discourage cut-through traffic on some roads
- Improved directional signage

The variety of roadway character in Essex contributes to a wide variety of traffic issues throughout town. Figure 19 summarizes many of the traffic issues that have been observed through field observations, quantitative analysis, and input from the Public Workshop held in April, 2010. These are summarized below.

Heavy Traffic Areas and Vehicular Delay

The roadways and intersections carrying the heaviest traffic volume and speeds are typically the major arterials (State roads) that traverse the town. These include:

- Signalized intersections at the Exit 3 interchange, in Centerbrook, and at the Bokum Corner
- The Route 9 highway ramps and Frontage Road between Route 154 and 153
- Plains Road/Westbrook Road (Route 153) between Route 9 and the Westbrook town line
- Saybrook Road (Route 154) between Route 9 and the Old Saybrook town line
- Main Street (Route 154) between Centerbrook and Route 9

Locations with deficient vehicular level of service, which is considered as excessive stopped delay, include:

- The Exit 3 Route 9 southbound off ramp at Route 154
- The Frontage Road southbound approach at Route 153
- The signalized intersection in Centerbrook

Traffic Safety Concerns

Typically in a small rural/residential town such as Essex, safety concerns are more significant than vehicle delay. Some delay at major intersections is generally tolerated as they are isolated inconveniences and problematic for very short periods of time each day. However, traffic delay at some locations can result in motorists getting impatient and taking more risks. This is especially true at unsignalized intersections such as the Exit 3 southbound off ramp at Route 154 and the flashing beacon at the Frontage Road intersection with Route 153 and the Route 3 southbound on ramp. The following safety concerns were recognized as a result of field observations, review of the 3-year accident history, and input from the Public Workshop:

- A high number of accidents were recorded at the Exit 3 Route 9 southbound off ramp at Route 154 and the signalized intersection of Route 154 and Route 153
- Poor sightlines and high speeds at the intersection of Mares Hill Road and Route 153, Dennison Road and Main Street, and Woodland Drive and Westbrook Road
- High speeds on Mares Hill Road and Walnut Street
- High speeds along North Main Street between Dennison Road and Essex Village
- High speeds on Grove Street between North Main Street and West Avenue (see speed data provided in the Appendix)
- Poor sightlines and challenging terrain along Mares Hill Road – particularly closest to Route 153 (including poor drainage and black ice on steep grade approaching Route 153)
- Cut through traffic and high speeds in the Southwinds neighborhood connecting Route 153 with Mares Hill Road
- High vehicle speeds entering and traveling through Ivoryton Center conflicting with parking maneuvers and pedestrian activity associate with businesses, Ivoryton Green, and the Ivoryton Playhouse
- Narrow bridge and poor sightlines on Dennison Road at Route 9 overpass

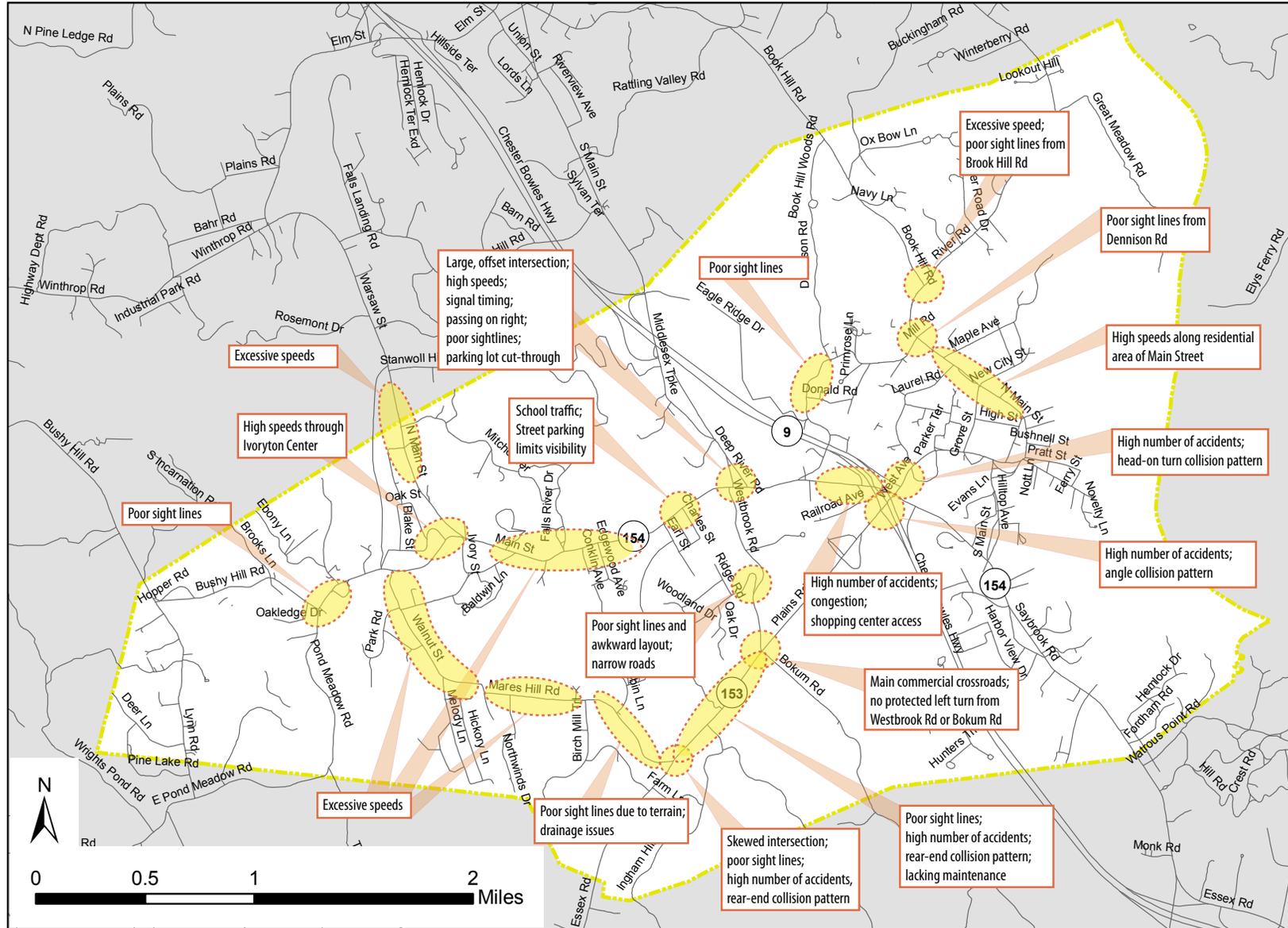
Other Traffic Concerns

- Heavy traffic volume along Plains Road consisting of both local traffic and through traffic between Route 9 and I-95 in Westbrook
- Increasing traffic volumes on Bokum Road associated with concentration of developments near assisted living complex (Essex Meadows)
- Lack of good directional signage and gateway signage at the Route 9 Exit 3 interchange area

A variety of strategies will be considered to address these issues including modification to intersection control, geometric modifications, traffic calming measures, sightline improvements and signage. All strategies will be considered in terms of how they align with the goals for the Town's transportation network and the Town's multimodal vision.

In order to provide a balance transportation system that works for all modes, any roadway or traffic-related improvements will have to be developed in concert with transit, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements. The next phase of the study will begin to develop and evaluate a large range or potential traffic improvements.

Figure 19 Summary of Key Traffic Concerns



Traffic Issues

Legend

Essex Town Boundary

