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Memorandum

To: Land Use Committee
From: Brian J. Miller, AICP, Town Planning Consultant
Max Stach, AICP
Subject: Transportation Background
Date: September 17, 2010

The following is a compilation of information regarding transportation facilities and conditions within the Town of Beacon Falls. It is intended to guide the Land Use Committee in its development of the Plan for Conservation and Development.

Roadways

Generally, the Town of Beacon Falls is characterized by a street pattern that is dominated by the local topography. The major transportation element which dominates Beacon Falls' built environment is Route 8 and the Metro-North Railroad Waterbury Line, both which approximately follow the valley cut by the Naugatuck River in a north-south corridor. This ribbon of River, rail line and limited access highway cuts the Town in Half, with east west crossings only possible at the Route 42 Bridge and the Depot Street Bridge, currently undergoing renovations and nearing completion. East west movements are primarily accomplished via Route 42 which provides access to Oxford to the west (and access to Route 84 for those southbound) and Bethany to the east. Burton Road is an alternate method of travel to the east.

The 2007 -2035 Central Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (CNVCOG) Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) identifies State Route 42 at Cook Lane as the only congested intersection on a state road in the Town based on the volume to capacity ratio, "a first-look method" of assessing congestion.

Based on the report, the Town of Beacon Falls had no High-Hazard Accident locations, based on the State Suggested List of Surveillance Study Sites (SLOSSS) which considers dangerous locations as those locations which experienced more than fifteen accidents between the three years from 2002 through 2004.

Figure 1 – Intersection of Route 42 at Cook Lane



The COG also recently released a study of pedestrian and bicycle safety. The report shows that there are no areas within the Town with a high-density of pedestrian and bicyclist accidents. The report identifies three accidents within the Town of Beacon Falls within the five years from 2003 through 2007. These accidents occurred along Main Street and Route 42 west of the intersection with Main Street.

According to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, Beacon Falls contains three functional categories of roads. Route 8 is considered a principal arterial – expressway. These are defined as limited access highways, which primarily serve longer interregional trips at higher speeds. State Route 42, Burton Road, Skokorat Road, Main Street, Lopus Road, Rimmon Hill Road, and Back Rimmon Road are considered to be collectors. These are defined as Roads that carry traffic at lower speeds, linking traffic from local roads to arterial routes. All other roads within the Town are considered to be local streets. Local Streets are defined as roads that provide direct access, at low speeds, to properties, generally in residential or undeveloped areas.

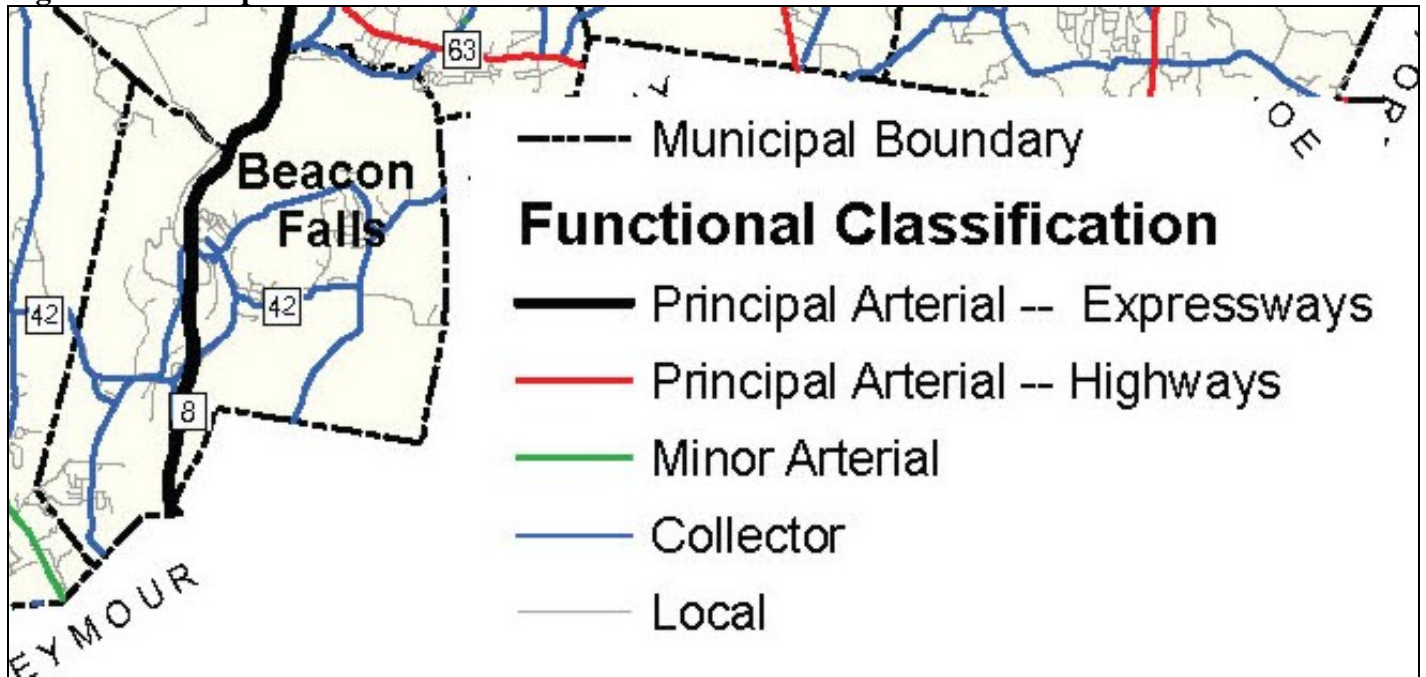
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Figure X – Excerpt from CNVCOG POCD: Functional Classifications



Road Design

Generally, Beacon Falls's local streets and the Route 42 arterial are generally narrower than widely accepted design standards. These roads convey a more rural character also due to lack of curbs, horizontal and vertical enclosure by trees, and lack of street lighting in many areas. Some more recent subdivisions are not consistent with these standards. More recent subdivisions generally have wider streets, curbs, greater setbacks and are markedly different from the established development pattern and character of the Town. Over the last ten or so years, many communities have been moving toward reinstituting older design standards for local roads, which provide many advantages including cost, maintenance, traffic calming, and reduced stormwater runoff. The Town's requirements for street width and design should be compared with more contemporary back to basics requirements. Standards include paved road widths of 26 feet instead of the more widely required 32 feet, with only 22 feet required where on-street parking is unlikely. Culs-de-sacs radii of 30 feet are acceptable to fire apparatus with one backing movement, as opposed to 42' which allows most fire apparatus to turn around without backing up.

During previous visioning sessions, members of the Land Use Committee and the public cited traffic calming as desirable, especially along Route 42 and Burton Road. Narrower travel ways, on-street parking, dedication of travel way for bike lanes, horizontal enclosure by street trees, choke points, and traffic roundabouts are all non-obstructive methods for traffic calming. We are attaching a small report on traffic calming options prepared for another community, for consideration.

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Mass Transit

Bus service provided by CT Transit is from the T-114 Tripper Route. This route provides shuttle bus access between the Town of Beacon Falls and the City of Waterbury. The bus will stop along its route which travels into the Town of Beacon Falls at Exit 24, south along Main Street to Route 42 (Pines Bridge Road) up to Murtha Industrial Park, where it turns around and travels back up Route 42 and Main Street to enter Route 8 at exit 24. It travels to the Rowland Government Center at Waterbury Green in Waterbury via exchange place, from where several transfers and multiple destinations are possible. Paratransit, Dial-A-Ride service is not available in Beacon Falls, but the Town maintains its own Mini-bus service for elderly residents.

Passenger rail service is provided by Metro-North on the Waterbury line between Waterbury and Bridgeport. Six trains daily are provided on weekdays and four daily on weekends. Transfers to the New Haven Mainline are available at Bridgeport and provide access to New Haven, Stamford and New York City. Further transfer from New Haven to the Shore East line is possible for travel to New London. Average weekday ridership is 476 persons on the Waterbury line. One-way fare to Waterbury is \$2 and \$2.25 to Bridgeport. The average State Subsidy per rider is \$22.

Based on the CNVCOG LRTP, Beacon Falls commuter parking lot is at less than 75% maximum occupancy. Based on this, there are no plans for expansion. The study notes that proper placement of commuter lot signs on Route 8 are important.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel

The Naugatuck River Greenway is a project of Statewide significance and is envisioned to run 42.5 miles from Derby to Torrington along the Naugatuck River. Trails are currently proposed from Beacon Falls to Thomaston. The COG recently released the Routing Study for the Greenway in July of 2010. Several routing options are proposed by the study including direct trails along the Naugatuck River, along existing access roads and along the Metro-North Waterbury Branch rail line. Considerations are given to connecting the Greenway with downtown, existing parking facilities at Cold Springs Road, Town Hall, Woodland Regional High School, Naugatuck State Forest, and the Pent Road recreational fields. The trail is intended to provide non-motorized options for residents traveling to the Town's several park, recreation and shopping locations. A notable obstacle to development of the greenway is the steep slopes along the River. Initially, these are planned to be overcome, by routing the greenway away from the River through these areas along roads and existing blazed trails in the Naugatuck State Forest. Two future options are considered however, including a long span suspension pedestrian bridge that spans the rail line, the Naugatuck River and Route 8 and provides access from the Naugatuck State Forest east and west of the Route 8 Corridor.

Other Modes

General Aviation services are available at the Waterbury-Oxford Airport located in the Town of Oxford and Middlebury. Scheduled passenger flights are available from Hartford's Bradley International Airport.

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Funding and Planned Projects

There are currently no projects listed on the Connecticut DOT 2010-2014 Transportation Infrastructure Capital Plan. The Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan for 2010 indicates two funded projects - \$673,000 for the Naugatuck River Pedestrian and Bicycle Greenway and \$5M for pavement improvements to Route 8.

The Long Range Transportation Plan does not make specific recommendations for improvements of roads or transit in the Town of Beacon Falls. General recommendations include encouraging further use of the Waterbury Metro-North line and upgrading commuter lot signage along Route 8.

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