

Atkinson, New Hampshire

Transportation Profile

KEY FINDINGS:

- Atkinson’s transportation system is composed of a rural and suburban roadway network with some regionally important state routes carrying higher traffic volumes.
- Atkinson is a largely residential community with dispersed development that results in an automobile focused transportation system with limited pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- Atkinson residents appear to have good access to the regional transportation system, but limited access to public transit options currently.
- Public transit exists in adjacent communities, but Atkinson has no direct interstate access, no formal local park and ride lots, and no mass transit system.
- Atkinson’s Elder Services is an innovative and locally funded program that provides rides to Atkinson residents aged 60 and older.
- Route 93 to the west in Salem/Windham and Route 495 to the south in Haverhill, MA are the two most relied upon highway systems for Atkinson residents. Access to these highways is primarily via Routes 111 and 121, respectively.
- Atkinson’s dominant traffic patterns reveal a strong north/south orientation which is heavily reliant on Main Street, Maple Avenue, East Road, Providence Hill, North Broadway and Westside Drive.

DATA SOURCES:

- 2015 Atkinson Master Plan Update
- 1998 Atkinson Master Plan
- 2020 Atkinson Road Action Plan
- 2021 New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT)
- Rockingham Planning Commission 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan
- 2016 Coordinated Public Transit/ Human Services Transportation Plan for the Greater Derry-Salem Region
- Traffic Study: Atkinson 2015 Intersection Analysis: Island Pond Road and West side Drive
- 2022 Atkinson Zoning Ordinance Scenic Roads
- 2012-2021 Town Annual Reports
- 2021 NHDOT Traffic Count Data
- 2017 – 2021 Vehicle Accident Data – Atkinson Police Department
- 2015 Robert Frost /Old Stage Coach Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan

INTRODUCTION

Atkinson's transportation system is composed of the roadways and other infrastructure that support the chosen modes of transportation being used by residents, businesses, and visitors. Given its geographic location in southern New Hampshire on the border of Massachusetts and away from major highways and transit services, the town has limited transportation options. However, the current transportation system both impacts and is impacted by the land use pattern and future land use changes.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Roadways

Atkinson's transportation network includes roadways, culverts, trails, a bridge, and sidewalks. The existing roadway network includes 72 miles of state, municipal, and private roads as presented in Table 1. The length of state routes that extend through Atkinson is 9.5 miles. This includes NH 111 and NH 121 which provide access to Route 93 to the west in Salem/Windham and Route 495 in Haverhill, MA. These highway routes are the most relied on routes for Atkinson residents due to the town being predominantly a residential community; therefore, residents typically commute out of Atkinson for employment. The majority of Atkinson's roads are municipally maintained which gives the town control over their design and maintenance, but also the responsibility to maintain this infrastructure. Table 2 shows the definition of each roadway classification.

Table 1: Miles of all Roadways by Classification			
Road Class	Maintenance	Miles	Percent
0	Private	14	19%
II	State	9.5	13%
V	Local	48.9	68%
	Total	72	100%

Table 2: Miles by Classification	
Class	Class Description
0	Private Roads
I	Highways on the primary State highway system, excluding all portions of such highways within the compact sections of towns and cities of 7,500 inhabitants and over. The State assumes full control and pays cost of construction, reconstruction and maintenance of its sections; the portions in compact areas controlled by the towns and cities under Class IV highways.
II	Highways on the secondary State highway system, excluding all portions of such highways within the compact sections of towns and cities of 7,500 inhabitants and over. All sections improved to the satisfaction of the Commissioner are maintained and reconstructed by the State. All unimproved sections, where no state and local funds have been expended, must be maintained by the town or city in which they are located until improved to the satisfaction of the Commissioner.

III	Recreational roads which consist of all roads leading to, and within, State Reservation designated by the Legislature. The State Highway Department maintains full control of reconstruction and maintenance of such roads.
IV	Town and city streets which consist of all highways within the compact sections of towns and cities of 7,500 inhabitants and over. Extensions of Class I and II highways through these areas are included in this classification.
V	Rural highways which consist of all other traveled highways which the town or city has the duty to regularly maintain
VI	Unmaintained highways including all other public ways, including highways discontinued as open highways, highways closed subject to gates and bars, and highways not publicly maintained in suitable condition for travel for five years or more.

Many of the roads in Atkinson are paved except for a small stretch of Woodlock Park Lane where the Brush and Recycling Center is located. As shown in Table 3, Atkinson has about 71 miles of paved roads and about 2 miles of unpaved roads.

Table 3: Miles by Surface Type		
Type	Miles	Percent
Paved	70.5	97%
Unpaved	1.9	3%
Total	72.4	100%

According to NHDOT 2021 Pavement Condition Data, the state roadways in Atkinson are in good surface condition. Municipal roads are managed through an eight-year Road System Action Plan. The Pavement Management Program, led by the Road Agent and Town Engineer, was implemented in 2020. The purpose of this program is to protect and preserve the town's investment in earlier roadway base rehabilitation and or reconstruction. In the 2020 Atkinson Road System Action Plan, sixty public streets were identified as needing shim and overlay treatment over the next five years (2021-2025).

Bridges and Culverts

There is one bridge in the Town of Atkinson. This bridge is municipally maintained and is located on Mill Stream Pond Road. According to NHDOT's 2021 Bridge Conditions data, this bridge has not been identified as structurally deficient.

It is important to also maintain culverts as critical water crossings and any catch basins that connect to these culverts. In 2022, 289 catch basins were inspected and cleaned by the Highway Department and eight tons of material was removed. According to the 2022 Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Report, there are a total of 414 known catch basins in Atkinson. A Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) includes the stormwater collection, conveyance, and outfall structures within a city or town. For more information about the Town of Atkinson's MS4 System and Permit, visit the Town Facilities and Services Profile and the Natural Resources Profile of this Existing Conditions Report. The Town of Atkinson has a plan to increase culvert sizes as roads are rebuilt and culverts are replaced. Increased culvert size will accommodate larger storms and ensure climate resilience while also improving habitat connectivity.

Sidewalks and Trails

Atkinson has a small section of sidewalk located on NH 121 (Main Street) near the Haverhill, MA state line. The sidewalk is in front of the Post Office and the Atkinson Community Center.

There are 20.5 miles of trails in Atkinson maintained largely by the Atkinson Conservation Commission. The Woodlock Fitness Trail is maintained by the Recreation Committee. These trails are primarily used for access to conservation lands and for recreation and few, if any, play a role in the transportation system.

Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway

In May 2014, the Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway was designated in Atkinson. This scenic route is part of a 44-mile scenic byway that travels through the towns of Derry, Atkinson, Auburn, Chester, and Hampstead. In Atkinson, the Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway is located on NH 121 (Main Street) and extends from Robie Lane to the town line near Hampstead. The Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway Council was also formed; and is comprised of representatives from the five communities and the Southern New Hampshire and Rockingham Planning Commissions. The Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway Council and the planning commissions developed the Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan in 2015.

The state scenic byway program was established in 1992 and includes historically and culturally significant landscapes and landmarks. The Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway includes the following landmarks in Atkinson: The Green Tunnel, Atkinson Congregational Church, Atkinson Town Center, Dow Common and Civil War Memorial, Atkinson Academy, Atkinson Historic Sites (41 Buildings), Atkinson Cemetery, and Atkinson Town Pond. More information on these historic landmarks in Atkinson can be found in the Historical and Cultural profile of this Existing Conditions Report, and some can also be identified on the 1980 Scenic Vistas and Pronounced Landscapes Map. In order to preserve these scenic and cultural landscapes and maintain the scenic byway, Atkinson had established Section 505 Scenic Vista and Pronounced Landscape Regulation in the Zoning Ordinance which provides setback requirements by zoning district.

RECOMMENDED BIKE ROUTES

The NH Department of Transportation maintains an interactive bicycle route map found here: <https://nh.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=49c702c328d84a29af3b4a27eb271b37>

Included on this map are NHDOT recommended bicycle routes. The state identifies 7.6 miles of paved road in Atkinson as being good candidates for bicycle infrastructure. Currently, Atkinson does not provide designated and separated bicycle lanes. Some of the roads included in the

recommended bicycle routes include Meditation Lane, Maple Avenue, Academy Avenue, East Road, and NH 111. The state recommended bike routes can be seen on the NH State Bike Routes interactive map with the link above.

TRANSIT AND REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

Many segments of Atkinson's population would benefit from greater access to public transit options. According to Rockingham Planning Commission's 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan, *"Accessibility in the region is excellent for individuals with a motor vehicle. In contrast accessibility is very limited in much of the region for senior citizens, individuals with disabilities or other residents who lack a private motor vehicle or who are otherwise unable to drive to get to work, perform errands, or travel for other reasons"*. NHDOT provides three park and ride lots near Atkinson in Salem, Plaistow, and Hampstead.

Along Atkinson's southern border adjacent to Plaistow, NH, and Haverhill, MA, a small section of the Pan Am Railway passes through town. The Pan Am Railway was previously known as the Boston and Maine (B&M) Main Line West that runs between Boston and Portland, and the Amtrak Downeaster is the current rail service on this line. The Amtrak Downeaster can be picked up in Haverhill, MA. The train and bus stop access in Plaistow is no longer available. The Merrimack Valley Transit Service provides a 13-bus route from the Plaistow Walmart to Washington Square Transit Center in Haverhill, MA. Other transportation services in Rockingham County (as identified in the Rockingham Planning Commission's 2016 Coordinated Public Transit/ Human Services Transportation Plan for the Greater Derry-Salem Region Plan) are listed below. These transportation services are offered in Atkinson, adjacent communities, or are available throughout the whole region.

- **Atkinson Elder Services** – is a municipal program that offers rides to Atkinson residents aged 60 and older. Rides are provided free of charge to eligible riders and are available Monday-Friday between 8:00am-5:00pm. The phone line to request a ride is staffed Monday-Friday from 8:30am-12:00 noon. Drivers are part-time town employees. Medical trips are prioritized, and the program is funded through the town's annual operating budget and donations.
- **Granite State Independent Living** – is a statewide non-profit organization whose staff provide a range of services, including evaluation, skills training, and on-going support to enable eligible consumers to pursue independent lives. Four core service areas this organization provides includes information and referral; peer support and counseling; skills training; and individual and systems advocacy. GSIL maintains six wheelchair accessible vans and minibuses, which provide transportation statewide for social and civic activities. Historically, GSIL has not provided trips for medical appointments. However, since 2011, GSIL has become a provider of Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) for trips within a 20-mile radius of Concord.
- **Lamprey Health Care Senior Transportation** - provides rides for elderly and disabled residents of Rockingham County and parts of Strafford County. The program offers

weekly service on Fridays to residents of the towns of Hampstead, Atkinson, Danville, Sandown, Epping, Fremont and Raymond for shopping and medical appointments, with destinations largely in Plaistow. Other demand-response rides for medical appointments can also be scheduled by reservation at least a week in advance. The program operates a fleet of three cutaway buses as well as one station wagon. All of the buses are lift-equipped and have the capacity for two wheelchairs and up to 16 passengers.

- **Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels** - has a primary mission of delivering meals to elderly and handicapped clients throughout the county and transporting elderly residents to meal sites. The meals on wheels program provides direct transportation to the meal site at the Vic Geary Center in Plaistow, and partners with Easter Seals and CART to provide meal site transportation in Derry and Londonderry. RNMOW also provides limited support for meal transportation to the Salem Senior Center. A seven-passenger minivan is based at the Vic Geary Senior Center in Plaistow.
- **Seniors Helping Seniors** – is a home care provider offering companion care, light housekeeping, errands, transportation assistance and dementia care. Care is provided by other seniors employed by the agency. Seniors Helping Seniors is a national organization with a Southern New Hampshire office in Bedford. Their service area includes the whole Rockingham Planning Commission region.
- **Kimi Nicholas Center** – is a private, non-profit human service center targeting the needs of disabled citizens in the towns of Londonderry, Derry, Salem, Windham, Atkinson, Hampstead, Chester, Sandown, Danville, and Haverhill, Massachusetts. Services include day habilitation, and communications and vocational training for adults with serious developmental disabilities. KNC operates a fleet of nine vehicles to pick up clients and bring them to the service center and return them home. The Kimi Nicholas Center also works with Atkinson’s Kimball Library, and surrounding town’s libraries, to deliver books and other content to elderly residents of these communities.

CIRCULATION AND DESIGN

Atkinson’s transportation system requires long-term planning and good design objectives which may be informed by the analysis of vehicle trips, commuting patterns, traffic counts, accidents, traffic calming, access management needs, and identified bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure needs. Atkinson’s dominant traffic patterns reveal a strong north/south orientation which is heavily reliant on Main Street, Maple Avenue, East Road, Providence Hill, and North Broadway.

Commuting Data

As identified in the Population and Housing Profile of this Existing Conditions Report, the commuting patterns of Atkinson residents over the age of 16 are related to their place of employment and their need for housing. Most working residents commute alone by automobile to their jobs. The 2021 American Community Survey Data identified that majority of Atkinson residents commute out of state and most of those that do are likely heading to Massachusetts. The average commute time for Atkinson workers is about 30 minutes. Additional commuting

data from the American Community Survey can be found in the Population and Housing profile and the Economy Profile.

Traffic Counts

Atkinson's most recent traffic count data for the roads in town is included in Table 3. This table depicts the most recent traffic data for these roadways (2021) in comparison to the traffic count data from previous years. This data was collected by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation. Reviewing the traffic data from 2018 to 2021, it appears that in most cases there has been a steady decline of traffic on the roads listed. The reason for these declines in traffic volume are not yet clear and appear to have started ahead of the Covid 19 pandemic and the increase in remote work during this time.

Table 3: Miles by Classification						
Location	Total Weekday Vehicles (2021)	Total Weekday Vehicles (2020)	Total Weekday Vehicles (2019)	Total Weekday Vehicles (2018)	Total Weekday Vehicles (2013)	Total Weekday Vehicles (2010)
NH 121 AT HAMPSTEAD TOWNLINE	6,106	5,506	6,524	7,763	8,000	8,100
NH 121 WEST OF WILLOW VALE	5,481	4,942	5,855	7,233	5,300	5,800
PROVIDENCE HILL RD AT SALEM TOWN LINE	1,212	1,093	1,295	1,515	1,500	1,600
NH 121 (ATKINSON DEPOT RD) AT ATKINSON TL	9,908	8,934	10,585	11,986	12,000	12,000
WESTSIDE DR NORTH OF HAVERHILL RD	2,509	2,262	2,680	3,236	2,900	2,800
GREENOUGH RD AT ATKINSON TL	2,192	1,977	2,342	2,680	2,200	2,200
EAST ROAD AT ATKINSON TOWN LINE	4,183	3,772	4,469	5,115	5,100	4,500

SHANNON RD EAST OF ATKINSON RD	2,229	2,010	2,381	2,864	4,000	3,500
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Traffic Studies

In 2015, an intersection analysis was conducted by Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) for the Island Pond Road and West Side Drive intersection. This intersection carries a greater amount of commuter traffic than what would be generally anticipated of this type of roadway. Island Pond Road is in the north-central part of Atkinson and provides an east-west connection between state routes NH 111 and NH 121. Westside Drive provides a north-south connection from Island Pond Road to Main Street in Salem and allows commuters to bypass much of the congestion that is typically further west on NH 111 and on NH 28 in Salem. RPC was asked by Atkinson's Road Agent to examine the potential of removing stop signs at this three-way stop intersection at Island Pond Road and West Side Drive. RPC's 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan describes that there are several roads in Atkinson that have been identified as congested based on the results of a travel demand model that was conducted, and these results are supported by the current traveling experience of highways during peak hours. The most congested route identified in the travel demand model was NH 111 in Hampstead, Atkinson, and Salem.

Accident Data

Between 2017 and 2021, there was a total of 401 accidents recorded on Atkinson's roadways. Two of the 401 accidents resulted in fatalities. Table 4 shows the total number of accidents reported in each year from 2017 to 2021 as provided by the Atkinson Police Department.

Table 4: Atkinson Accident Data	
Year	# of Accidents
2017	77
2018	84
2019	77
2020	72
2021	91

The intersection with the most accidents over the past two years is NH 111 at Waters Edge. The other roadways accounting for a higher rate of crashes are NH 111, Main Street (NH 121), and East Road.

TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES AND PENDING INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

The Atkinson Public Works Department, Board of Selectmen, and the Planning Board are collectively responsible for overseeing the management of the town's transportation system, its maintenance, and future infrastructure investments. A review of the Rockingham Planning Commission's 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Plan identified no pending projects in Atkinson. A review of New Hampshire Department of Transportation's 2023-2032 Ten Year Improvement Plan also identified no pending projects in Atkinson. The Rockingham Planning Commission's 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan does identify an unfunded project in Atkinson to Plaistow on NH 121 for safety improvements.