



Stroudwater Transportation Context

Stroudwater has always stood at the confluence of transportation routes and modes. Not only does the neighborhood straddle what has long-served as a major regional traffic route, it hosts the region's primary airport, numerous trails, and the intersection of the Stroudwater and Fore Rivers. This confluence has historically worked to the neighborhood's advantage - the area first developed in the 18th century as an important link in the transport of masts, later hosted the Cumberland and Oxford Canal, and currently benefits from proximity to the airport as a major economic driver – but it has also been a hindrance, as the neighborhood has struggled to maintain its largely residential historic village character in the face of growing regional transportation demand.

Over the past decade, the success of the city's airport has resulted in an increase in passengers, downstream suburban development in Westbrook and South Portland has continued, and development pressures have come to Stroudwater itself. High traffic volumes and speeds, bicycle and pedestrian accessibility and safety, and quality of life have arisen consistently as neighborhood concerns. In response, the city has undertaken a number of efforts to address Stroudwater's existing transportation (and land use) issues:

1. In 2006/2007, the city conducted the *Outer Congress Street Corridor Study*. This study looked at opportunities for traffic, bicycling, pedestrian, and streetscape improvements on Congress Street from the South Portland line east to St. John Street. It placed a priority on maintaining vehicular mobility through the corridor, but also recommended a multi-phase set of actions to improve the biking and walking environment.
2. In the late 2000s, the city implemented a series of traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures on Westbrook Street. The work included the installation of two islands on the west end of the street near the Westbrook line and flashing beacons at a crosswalk at Partridge Road. A radar speed indicator sign was installed in 2015.
3. In 2012, when the MaineDOT announced their intent to repave outer Congress Street, the city took a second look at the recommendations of the *Outer Congress Street Corridor Study*, this time through a more expansive lens which emphasized safety, walkability, bicycle access, and livability over the through movement of vehicles. The result was a succession of plans collectively known as the *Outer Congress Street Streetscape Study*, which recommended reducing the number of travel lanes on Congress Street through Stroudwater, narrowing lanes, installing landscaped medians and pedestrian refuge islands, adding sidewalks, improving crosswalks, upgrading pedestrian signal heads, providing bus platforms and maneuvering space, and installing bicycle signage. In conjunction with the paving project, the city piloted Phase I of this work, which reduced the number of travel lanes and resulted in the basic lane configuration that currently exists on Congress Street through Stroudwater, and found that the lane configuration had acceptable impact on commute times and positive impacts on quality of life. The city followed with Phase II in late 2016 and early 2017, constructing many of the study's



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pedestrian safety improvements. Additional safety improvements were implemented when MaineDOT installed in a new signal at Westbrook and Congress Streets in 2016. Traffic calming elements of Phase II, including landscaped islands and pedestrian refuges, remain to be built.

4. In 2016, the city approved an office park development at 1945 Congress Street, conditioning the approval on future work at Congress Street and UNUM Park Drive, including a signal timing plan as well as installation of a hardwired interconnect cable to better coordinate this signal with the new signal installed by MaineDOT at Congress Street and Westbrook Street. This work is expected to be completed within the next year.

It should be noted that, even as the city has progressively increased its efforts to address neighborhood quality of life issues in Stroudwater while respecting its role as a host to regional transportation routes, other municipal and state entities have experienced a similar paradigm shift regarding the impacts of regional land use on corridors and downstream communities. For instance, the *Gorham East-West Corridor Feasibility Study*, completed by MaineDOT and the MTA in 2012, acknowledged the need for a regional solution to traffic congestion and safety issues along major routes between the western communities of Westbrook, Scarborough, and Gorham and Portland (including Route 22/Congress Street), and recommended regional land use, transit, and roadway strategies designed to address them. While the study made no specific recommendations for Portland, it strongly supported a regional smart growth approach designed to better manage inter-municipal transportation demand.

Even with these capital investments and changing perspectives, the balance between regional mobility, local mobility, and quality of life in Stroudwater remains a challenge. In this light, the city and its partners continue to investigate a variety of options to optimize this balance:

1. The *Gorham-East West Corridor Feasibility Study* identified a number of transit system improvements that could impact the transportation demand on regional corridors that flow through Stroudwater. Among these, the study tested improved headways on existing transit routes, implementation of bus-only highway lanes, and the addition of new express bus and commuter rail. The study showed some potential for substantial peak hour mode shift in transit routes using the Mountain Division rail line as well as 295. These routes would need to be further tested to fully understand the potential benefits and costs.
2. The 2016 *Hub Link Feasibility Study* analyzed potential transit service improvements between the city's transportation major 'hubs' – the Jetport, PTC, and Casco Bay Ferry Terminal/Ocean Gateway. The study recommended a Hub Link alignment along the length of Congress Street between the Jetport, the PTC, and the METRO Pulse on Elm Street. In the long term, the study also recommended a set of transit priority treatments on the outer portion of this alignment, including dedicated bus lanes, queue jumping lanes, and signal prioritization. Collectively, the implementation of the Hub Link could encourage a mode shift away from single-occupancy vehicles on outer Congress Street.
3. The Department of Planning and Urban Development has engaged in recent discussions around the potential for traffic diversion from the local road network to the interstate system, particularly 95, as a means of reducing volumes on connecting streets within the city, including



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those through Stroudwater. While the *Gorham East-West Corridor Feasibility Study* initiated some of this analysis, further study, including a comprehensive examination of origins and destinations for through vehicles, would be required to fully understand the potential impacts of a diversion effort.

4. Last, the city is investigating the potential of new transportation technologies as a means of enhancing transit options, particularly in areas, like Stroudwater, where population density may not be high enough to support traditional, fixed-route transit. Autonomous vehicles, for example, have the capacity to open up new markets to shared, demand-responsive transit service.