

Transportation

A safe, efficient, flexible, and economically viable transportation system is crucial to the quality of life, economic well-being, and future growth of Watertown. As a suburban community, Watertown residents and businesses not only need to be able to travel within the community but also to surrounding towns and cities where they may work, shop, sell their goods, or access services. The current system is comprised of the surface transportation network, which includes highways, streets, bus transit, walkways, bikeways, and greenways. The system is intricately connected with land use and dramatically influences the type and density of development that can occur. Tying development and conservation priorities to the transportation network is a crucial component of Watertown's future land use plan.

Travel Patterns

Journey to Work

According to the latest 5-year estimates from the ACS, the average commute time for Watertown residents is 25.3 minutes. This is an increase of 0.8 minutes since 2000 when the average travel time was 24.5 minutes. One of the reasons explaining the increase in commuting time is the decreasing number of residents working in Watertown and nearby Waterbury. In 2002, over 42% of Watertown residents worked in either Watertown or Waterbury. By 2014, this had decreased to just 35% of residents.

About 94% of Watertown residents commute to work in a car. This is comparable to other suburban communities in Litchfield County. As of 2015, 88.9% of Watertown residents drove alone to work while another 4.7% carpooled. Currently, no state park-and-ride facilities exist within the town boundaries, which may limit opportunities to carpool. The closest park-and-ride facilities are on Route 63 in Middlebury, Chase Parkway in Waterbury, and Route 6 in Thomaston. Very few Watertown residents commute by transit, with just 32 persons (0.3% of the total) commuting by bus. Most areas of Watertown lack transit access, and those having transit access only have hourly service to downtown Waterbury. The infrequency of transit service, availability of vehicles, and availability of parking in downtown Waterbury leaves the bus system not capturing many "choice riders." Choice riders are persons who have two or more travel options but choose to ride transit. As jobs decentralize, carpooling and transit become less practical commuting options for many workers.

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Table 3-1. Means of Transportation to Work for Watertown Residents: 2011 to 2015

Means of Transportation to Work	Number	Percent
Car, Truck, or Van:	10,761	93.6%
Drove alone	10,221	88.9%
Carpooled	540	4.7%
Public Transportation:	32	0.3%
Bus or trolley bus	32	0.3%
Walking, Biking, or Other:	699	6.1%
Bicycle	0	0.0%
Walked	146	1.3%
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	148	1.3%
Worked at home	405	3.5%
Total	11,492	100.0%

Source: American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates: 2011-2015

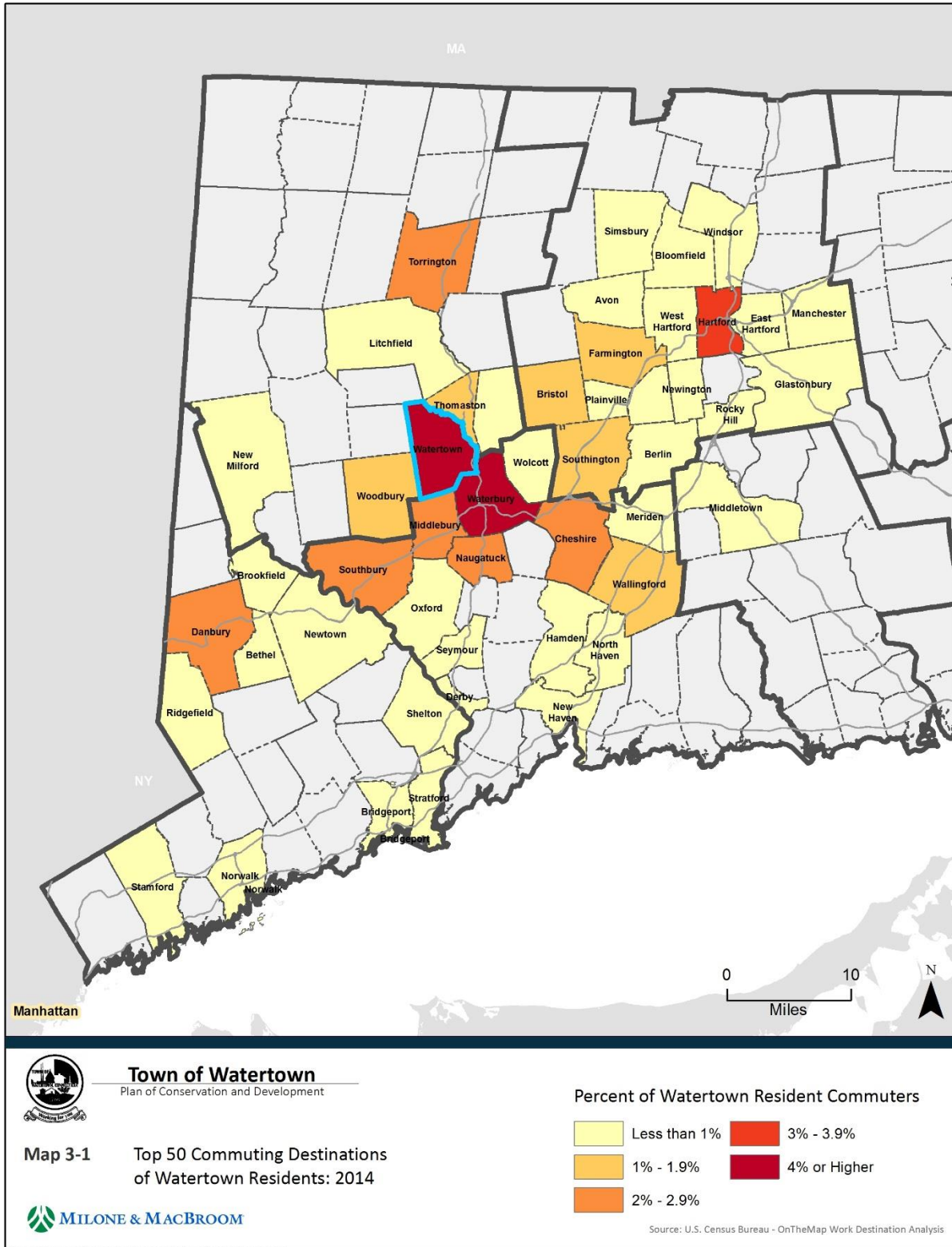
Most Watertown residents commute to jobs that are easily accessible by the regional highway network, notably Interstate 84 and Route 8. Waterbury (19.2%) and Watertown (16.0%) have the highest percentages of resident commuters. Other major commuter destinations for Watertown residents are Hartford (3.5%), Danbury (3.0%), Cheshire (2.5%), and Torrington (2.5%). The top 50 commuting destinations for Watertown residents can be seen on Map 3-1.

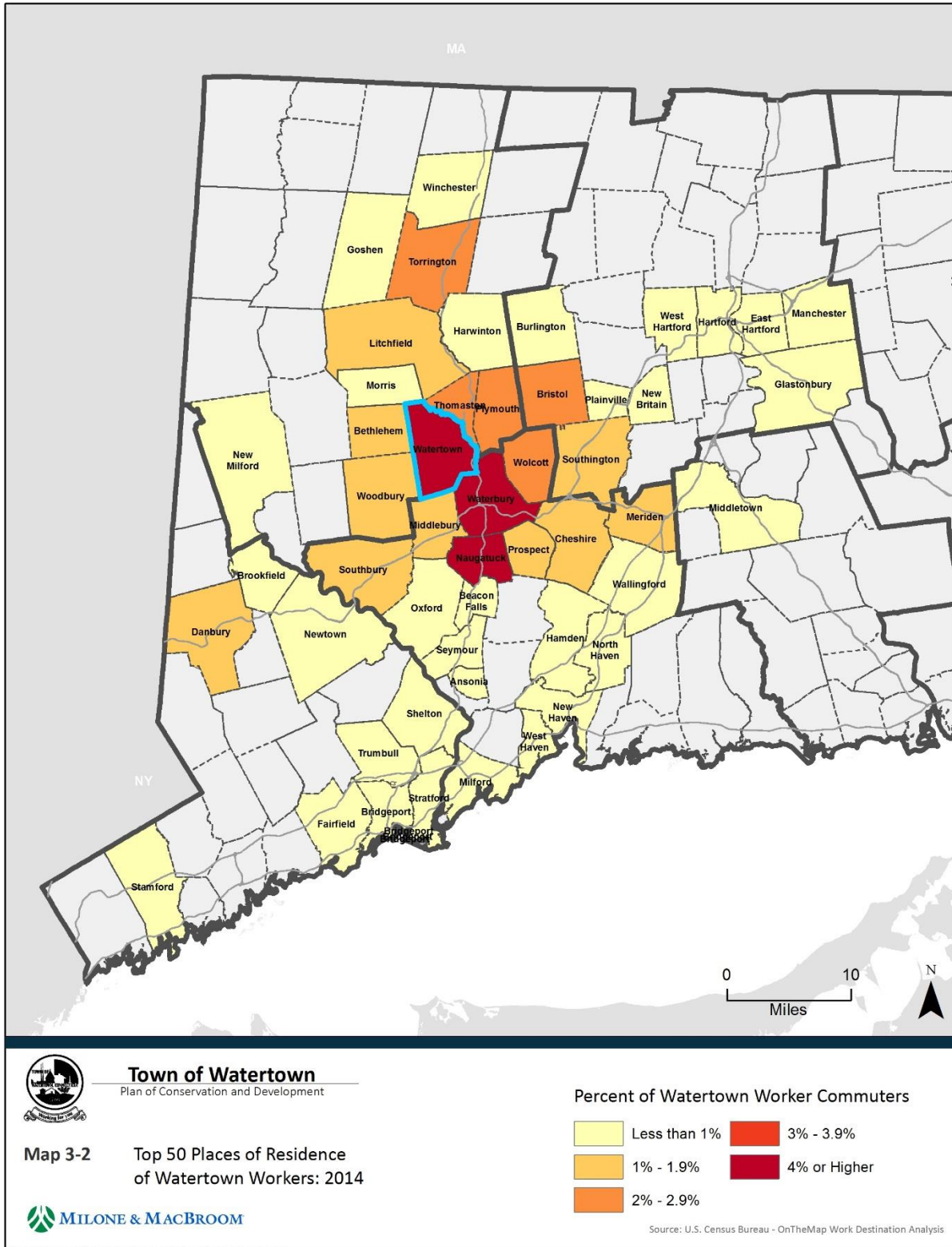
Similarly, just 16% of Watertown's workforce lives in Watertown. As a result, Watertown businesses rely on workers who live in surrounding communities. After Watertown, the most popular places of residence for Watertown workers are Waterbury (15.0%), Naugatuck (3.2%), Torrington (2.1%), and Thomaston (2.1%). In general, most Watertown workers come from the neighboring towns and cities within the Naugatuck Valley region as seen on Map 3-2.

Table 3-2. Top Commuting Destinations for Watertown Residents and Watertown Workers

Watertown Residents				Watertown Workers			
Rank	Place of Work	Number	Percent	Rank	Place of Residence	Number	Percent
1	Waterbury	2,173	19.2%	1	Watertown	1,809	16.0%
2	Watertown	1,809	16.0%	2	Waterbury	1,694	15.0%
3	Hartford	392	3.5%	3	Naugatuck	362	3.2%
4	Danbury	338	3.0%	4	Torrington	236	2.1%
5	Cheshire	287	2.5%	5	Thomaston	233	2.1%
6	Torrington	283	2.5%	6	Wolcott	202	1.8%
7	Naugatuck	279	2.5%	7	Bristol	188	1.7%
8	Southbury	258	2.3%	8	Plymouth	186	1.6%
9	Middlebury	250	2.2%	9	Woodbury	160	1.4%
10	Thomaston	210	1.9%	10	Southington	140	1.2%
Total All Residents		11,309	100.0%	Total All Workers		8,225	72.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau OnTheMap - Work Destination Analysis: 2014





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Roadways

Cars remain the predominant form of travel in Watertown. Over 94% of households have access to at least one vehicle. Watertown has a well-developed roadway network consisting of 188 centerline miles of road. A balanced roadway system provides ample opportunities for both accessibility and mobility.

Accessibility is the ability to interact with surrounding land uses and activities. A local road that has narrow lanes, slow traffic speeds, and ample sidewalks has good accessibility and facilitates interactions between transportation users and surrounding land uses. Accessibility is especially important along Main Street in Oakville and Watertown. On the contrary, mobility is the ability for goods and people to move from one place to another quickly and easily. Mobility is most commonly measured in terms of travel time. High-speed arterial roadways have the highest levels of mobility due to their high speeds but often lack connections to surrounding land uses due to their limited access and egress points. High-mobility roadways are necessary for long-distance travel and commuting but may be detrimental to a residential neighborhood or Main Street business district.

Traffic Volumes

Traffic volumes are influenced by many things including surrounding land uses, gasoline prices, roadway capacity, economic conditions, and personal preferences. It is important to remember that traffic is context sensitive and that different land uses are impacted by traffic in different ways. A high-traffic location along an arterial roadway is likely to benefit a local business, but this same location may be inappropriate for a single-family home. Therefore, traffic volumes are one of the factors that influence the "highest and best" use of land and therefore will impact the future land use map. Traffic volumes are measured in terms of Average Daily Traffic, or ADT.

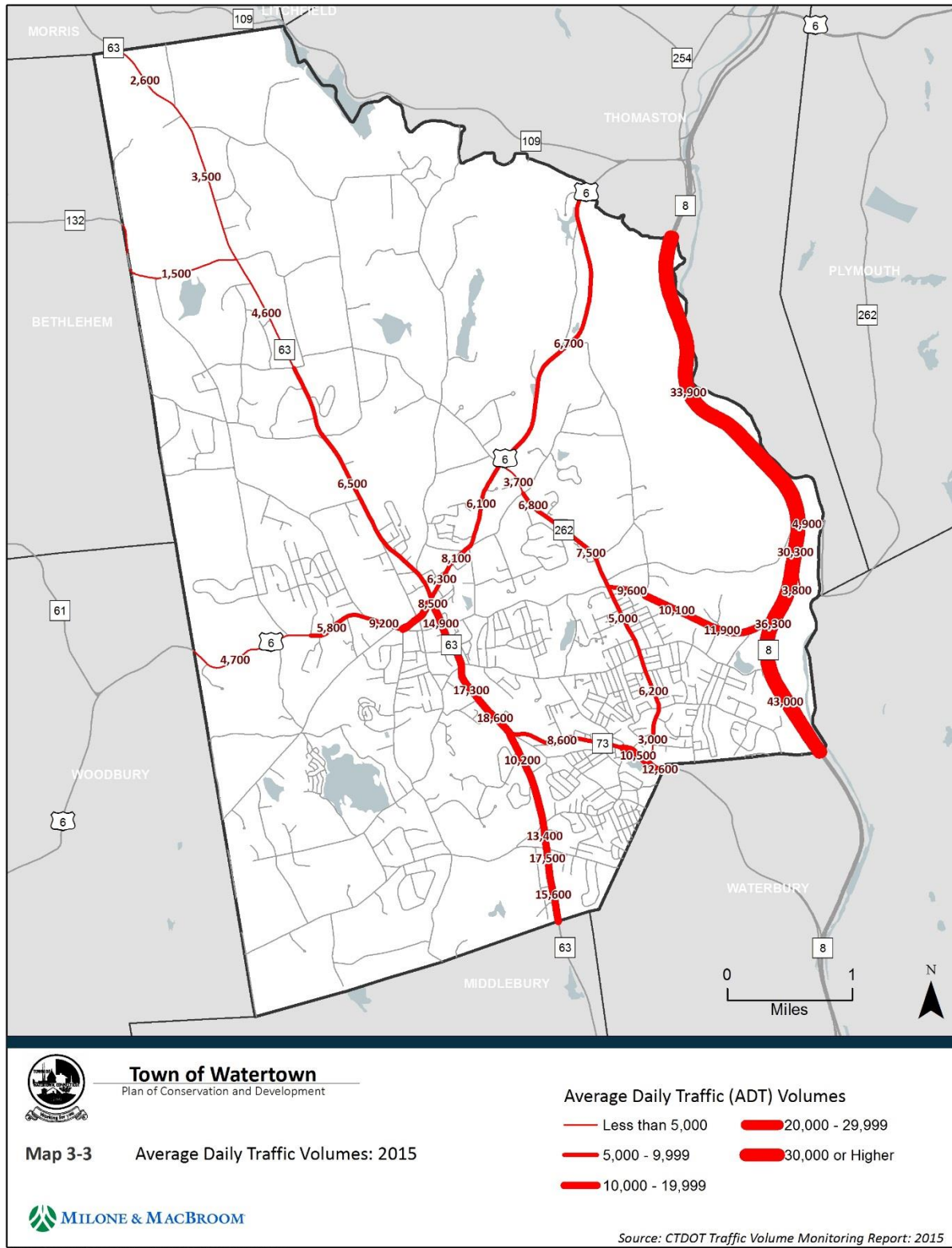
As of 2015, total traffic volumes on state roads in Watertown were higher than they were in 2010 but still slightly below their 2005 levels. Expressways have, by far, the highest ADT in Watertown. Route 8 had an ADT of 43,000 in 2015. Route 8 has seen traffic volumes increase by 4.6% since 2005. Route 63 has the second highest traffic volumes at 18,600 vehicles per day just north of the junction with Route 73. Traffic volumes on Route 63 diminish substantially in the northern part of Watertown, with an ADT of just 2,600 at the Morris town line. Other major roads that have ADTs over 10,000 vehicles include Route 262, Route 73, and Route 6. Traffic volumes on state roads can be seen in Map 3-3.

Table 3-3. Traffic Volume Trends on State Roadways: 2005, 2010, and 2015

Location	Maximum Average Daily Traffic			Percent Change	
	2005	2010	2015	2005 to 2015	2010 to 2015
Route 8	41,100	41,400	43,000	4.6%	3.9%
Route 63	19,700	19,000	18,600	-5.6%	-2.1%
Route 262	14,500	13,700	14,100	-2.8%	2.9%
Route 73	14,300	14,100	13,600	-4.9%	-3.5%
Route 6	10,100	9,200	10,000	-1.0%	8.7%
Route 838 (Town Hall Hill)	5,600	5,500	6,300	12.5%	14.5%
Route 855 (Buckingham Street)	7,200	6,300	6,200	-13.9%	-1.6%
Total All State Roadways	112,500	109,200	111,800	-0.6%	2.4%

Source: CTDOT Traffic Volume Monitoring Reports: 2005, 2010, and 2015

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Functional Classification

Functional classification is a system whereby roads are categorized based on traffic volumes and levels of accessibility and mobility. It also determines which roads are eligible for federal-aid and state-funding programs such as the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) and the Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP). Only roadways classified as minor collectors or higher are eligible for STBG funds while roadways classified as urban collectors or higher are eligible for state LOTICIP funds. Watertown contains both urbanized and rural areas, which also impact eligible funding sources for transportation projects. Roadways within urbanized areas are eligible for STBG set-aside funds tied to each urbanized area (known as Surface Transportation Program [STP]-Urban funds) while rural areas can only use nonurbanized area funds. The CTDOT uses a hierarchical system that categorizes roads into six categories as shown on Map 3-4. However, it should be noted that the Watertown Department of Public Works classifies some roadways differently than CTDOT, including the following:

- Bunker Hill Road between Sperry Road and Quassapaug Road – Minor Collector
- Cherry Avenue – Minor Collector
- Colonial Road – Minor Collector
- Platt Road between Route 6 and Guernseytown Road – Minor Collector

Principal Arterial – Interstate is the highest functional roadway classification. Roads in this class have high mobility and low land-access characteristics. They provide limited-access, multilane, high-volume, high-capacity facilities intended for high-speed, long-distance travel. There are no interstates within the town of Watertown

Principal Arterial – Expressway is the second highest functional roadway classification. Roads in this class are very similar to interstate arterials but lack the federal "interstate" designation. Route 8 is the only Principal Arterial – Expressway in Watertown and connects to Torrington to the north and Waterbury and Bridgeport to the south.

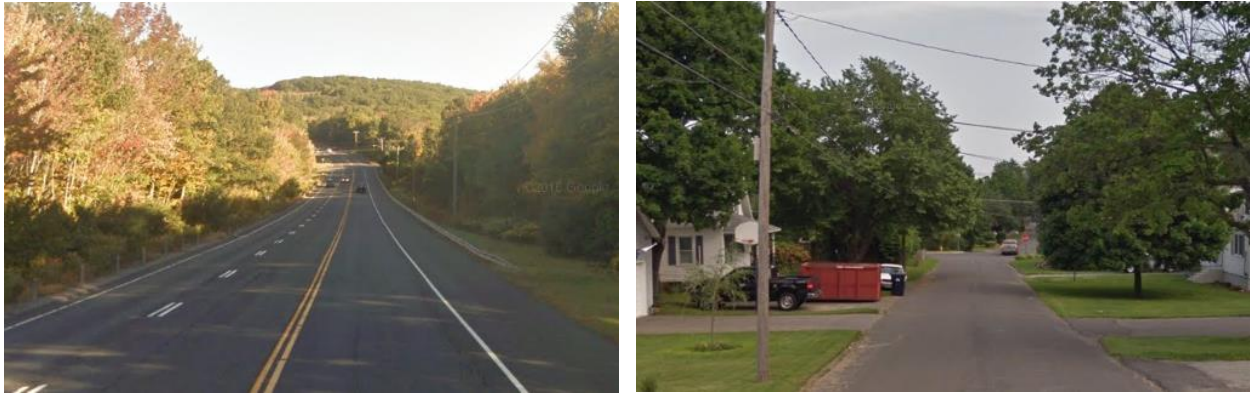
Principal Arterial – Other is the third highest functional roadway classification. Roads in this class connect interstates and expressways to activity and population centers. These roads are often multilane and medium speed and contain traffic signals. Examples in Watertown include Route 73, Route 63 south of West Road, and Route 6 between Platt Road and Buckingham Street.

Minor Arterial is the fourth highest functional roadway classification. Roads in this class are major thoroughfares that connect neighborhoods together. Minor arterials have lower mobility and higher land access than principal arterials. Minor arterials include Route 63 north of West Road and Route 6 north of Buckingham Street and west of Route 262, Buckingham Street, Echo Lake Road, Bunker Hill Avenue, Sylvan Lake Road, and Davis Street.

Collectors are the second lowest functional roadway classification. Collectors have a higher degree of access to surrounding land uses and often contain on-street parking. In rural areas, collectors are further broken down into major collectors and minor collectors. Examples of collector roads in Watertown are Bunker Hill Road, Guernseytown Road, Colonial Street, Fern Hill Road, French Street, Hamilton Avenue, Judd Farm Road, Lake Winnemauog Road, Middlebury Road, Platt Road, Sunnyside Avenue, West Road, and Woolson Street.

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Local Roads are the lowest functional roadway classification. Local roads have the highest degree of access to surrounding land uses. Local roads are single lane and low speed, resulting in the lowest mobility. Local roads have the lowest traffic volumes at less than 2,500 vehicles per day.

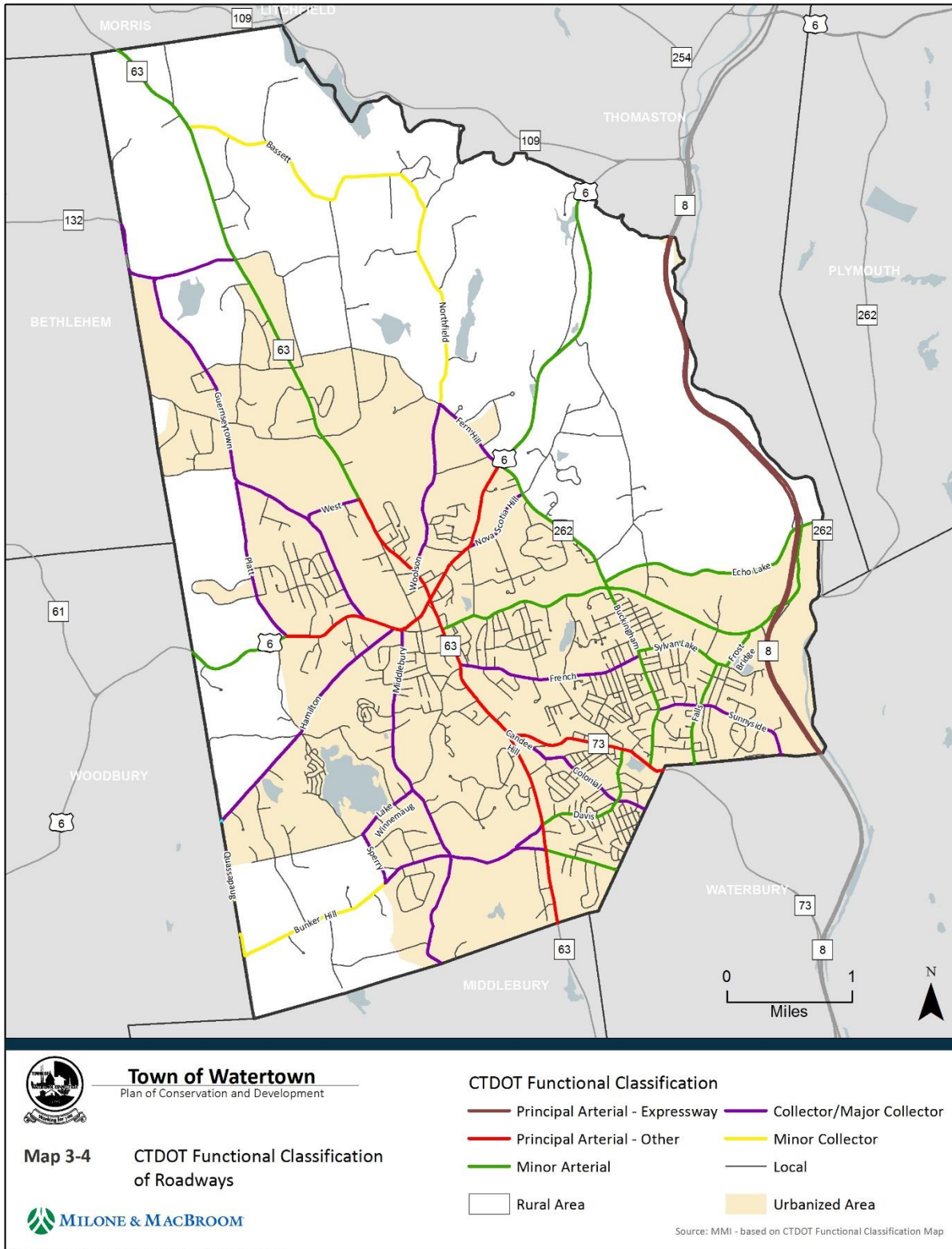


Route 262 (left) is classified as a principal arterial and is characterized by high traffic volumes, faster traffic speeds, and limited access to surrounding land uses. On the contrary, local roads such as Dalton Street (right) have low traffic volumes, slower traffic speeds, and excellent access to surrounding land uses. © Google Maps

Bridges

Bridges on town roads are the responsibility of the Town of Watertown while bridges on federal and state roadways are under the jurisdiction of the CTDOT. Over the next decade, the town will need to replace the Woolson Street bridge over Steele Brook. The bridge was built in 1929 and is classified as functionally obsolete and structurally deficient. Structurally deficient means that there are elements of the bridge that need to be monitored or repaired. However, this does not mean that the bridge is likely to collapse or is unsafe but just that the bridge must be monitored, inspected, and maintained regularly. These characteristics make it eligible for CTDOT's Local Bridge Program. Given the bridge's location along the proposed Steele Brook Greenway route, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations should be considered when the new bridge is designed.

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Parking

Parking is an important element of Watertown's transportation system, particularly for businesses. Residents, workers, and visitors rely on parking when they shop, go to work, or run errands. When not enough parking is supplied or parking is expensive, those traveling by car may find it too inconvenient to travel to a particular location to do business, shop, or visit. However, when supply is too high or inexpensive, it leads to an overreliance on cars, discourages street life, and increases stormwater runoff.

The village centers in Watertown and Oakville have unique parking challenges since much of the development occurred before the prevalence of the automobile. As a result, many businesses lack dedicated off-street parking and rely on on-street parking and shared parking areas. In downtown Watertown, free on-street parking is permitted on Depot Street and Main Street between Heminway Park Road and Woodruff Avenue. The town owns a shared parking area on Depot Street. In downtown Oakville, on-street parking is permitted on Main Street south of Davis Street. Outside of the village centers, most businesses and homes have adequate off-street parking.



Many businesses in downtown Watertown and Oakville lack dedicated off-street parking and therefore rely on municipal parking areas (left) and on-street parking (right). © Google Maps

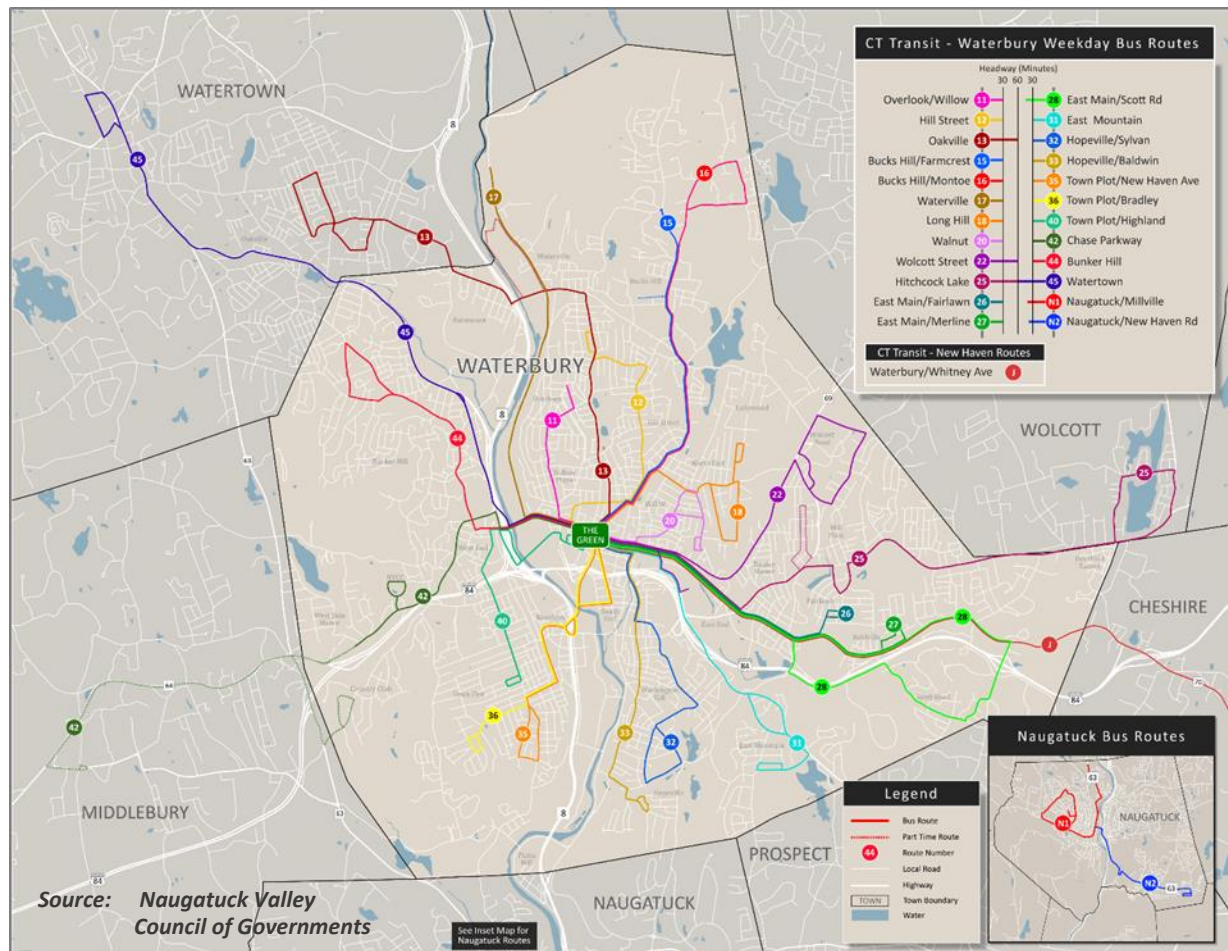
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Fixed-Route Bus

Watertown is served by the Waterbury division of Connecticut Transit (CTtransit), a state-owned bus system operated by North East Transportation Company. The system consists of 24 fixed routes and six tripper routes radiating from downtown Waterbury. Watertown is served by two fixed routes. Route 13 provides service to Oakville and operates on Sunnyside Avenue, Falls Avenue, Buckingham Street, and Falls Terrace. Route 45 operates along Main Street in Oakville and Watertown ending at Echo Lake Road. Both Route 13 and Route 45 provide hourly service between Watertown and downtown Waterbury. In addition to fixed routes, two tripper routes operate in Watertown. Tripper routes provide bus service to industrial areas on Straits Turnpike and the Watertown Industrial Park and only operate a few times per day corresponding with shift changes at area businesses.

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Figure 3-4. CT Transit – Waterbury Division Weekday Fixed Bus Routes



Paratransit

Special transportation services are available for Watertown's elderly and disabled residents. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit service is available to any individual with a disability who is unable to ride on the fixed-route bus system. ADA Paratransit is provided by CTtransit and supports trips within three-quarters of a mile of a fixed-bus route. Trips that begin or end outside of the ADA service area are covered by Non-ADA paratransit service. Fares for ADA and non-ADA paratransit are twice the fixed-route bus fare, or \$3.50 per one-way trip.

Watertown is a member of the Greater Waterbury Transit District (GWTD), which operates a regional Dial-A-Ride that is open to the disabled and residents age 60 years and over. Regional Dial-A-Ride service is free and covers trips within the nine-town GWTD service area. Currently, the service rotates between participating towns, with Watertown receiving service on Tuesdays.

The Falls Avenue Senior Center operates a senior minibus service 4 days a week. The service is open to residents aged 60 years and over and provides transportation for a variety of activities including doctor appointments, shopping, and social activities.

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Rail and Freight

Rail

Watertown contains one active railroad line – the Torrington Secondary, a single-track rail line that runs from Torrington to Waterbury. The railroad is currently owned by CT DOT and operates as a freight-only service. The Torrington Secondary connects to the Terryville line in Waterbury (with connecting service to the New Haven-Springfield line) and the Waterbury Branch line to the south. Currently, there is only one freight rail customer in Watertown – a solid waste volume reduction and recycling facility located at 753 Frost Bridge Road. CT DOT leases the section of railroad north of Watertown to the Railroad Museum of New England, which operates seasonal heritage train service. A railroad spur formerly connected downtown Watertown to Waterbury, roughly paralleling Steele Brook. Railroad service was discontinued in the 1970s at which time the tracks were removed.

Airports

The Waterbury-Oxford Airport (OXC) is a state-owned and operated general aviation airport located in the towns of Oxford and Middlebury about 10 miles south of Watertown. Connections to the airport can be made via Interstate 84 and Route 188. There are no existing public transportation connections. The airport offers commercial charters, freight, and recreational flights. In 2012, the airport averaged 131 flights per day.

Bradley Airport, located about 45 miles to the northeast in Windsor Locks, is the closest international airport to Watertown. Bradley Airport averages 280 flights per day and offers nonstop service to 29 cities across North America.

Nonmotorized Transportation

Pedestrian Facilities

Connectivity and safety are the two most important components of the pedestrian network. In order to be most effective, the pedestrian network should connect residential areas to major activity centers such as business districts, senior housing areas, schools, parks, greenways, and bus stops. Gaps in the network should be filled in to the greatest extent practicable.

Similarly, safety is paramount to the pedestrian experience, and features such as traffic buffers (parking areas or vegetation), signalized crossings, and crosswalks encourage walking for all users. Like roadway improvements, pedestrian safety enhancements should be "context sensitive." For example, the installation of flashers and other public safety features should be considered for crosswalks on Route 63 and Route 73, Watertown's two busiest roadways. However, these same features are likely to have minimal impacts on safety if installed on a local roadway. The town incorporates ADA-compliant design into sidewalk projects to the greatest extent possible.

Watertown's sidewalk network is concentrated in downtown Watertown and Oakville along major roads. However, most local roads lack sidewalks. There are several gaps in the sidewalk network along major roads, including Route 73 between Rockdale Avenue and Riverside Street and along Route 63 between Davis Street and Pond View Drive.

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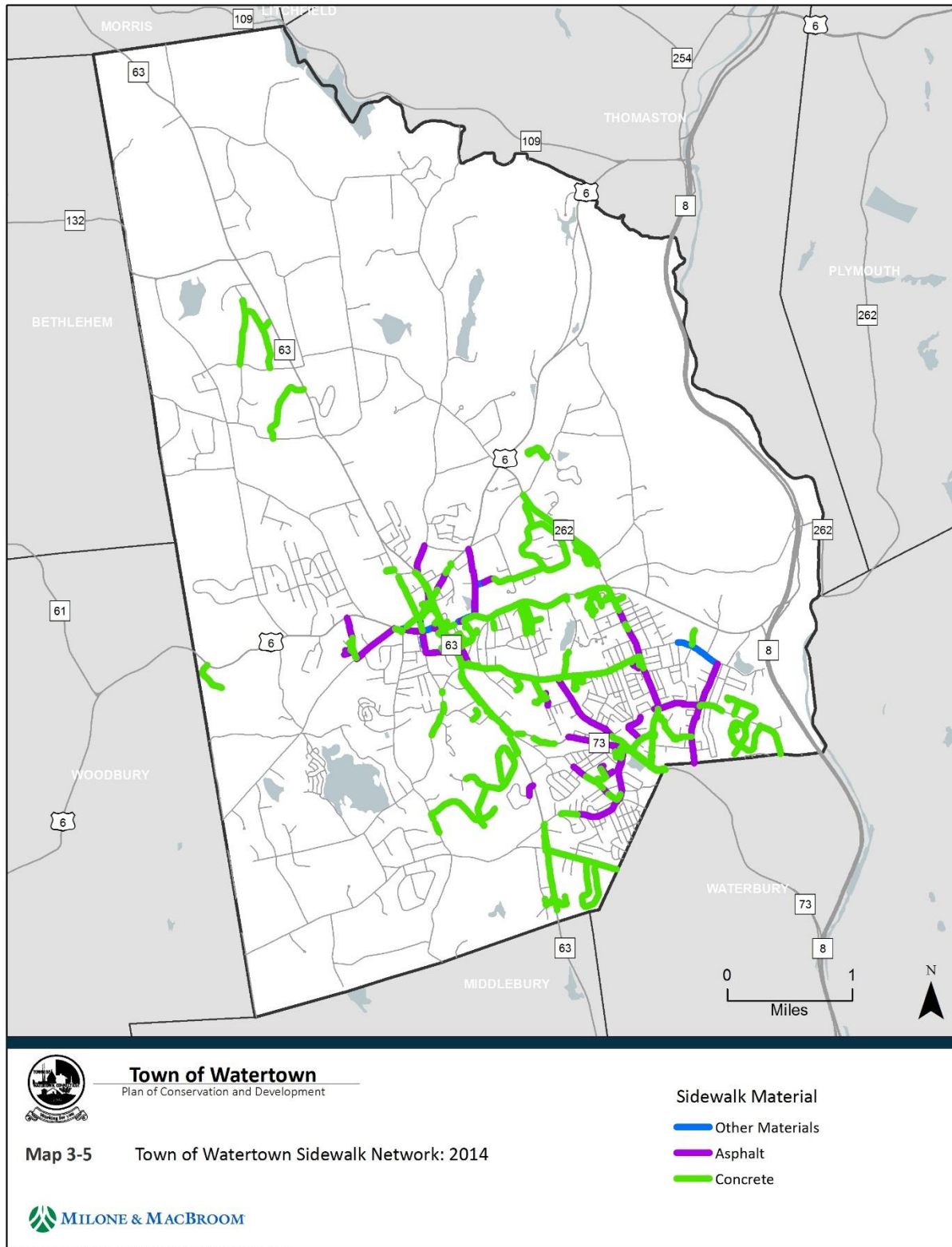
While there is a great need for new or improved pedestrian facilities, municipalities have limited financial resources for sidewalk enhancements. In order to ensure that limited funds are directed toward the locations where they are most needed, the town should prioritize pedestrian projects using a ranking system that takes into consideration the following criteria:

- Location of crashes resulting in fatalities or serious injuries to pedestrians
- Functional classification of roadways. Higher functional classification roadways such as arterials should be prioritized over lower functional classification roadways since they have higher traffic volumes and faster traffic speeds and necessitate grade-separated sidewalks for safety purposes.
- Proximity to activity generators such as Main Street business districts, senior housing areas, schools, parks, greenways, multifamily housing, and bus stops
- Missing links – sidewalk segments that fill in a missing link between two existing sidewalks or connect two activity generators
- Extensions – sidewalk segment serves as an extension (same side of street) of an existing sidewalk



Safety enhancements should be targeted toward areas where they are most needed such as the unsignalized crosswalks on Main Street. Curb extensions, flashing beacons, and parking bans within 20 feet of the crosswalk could improve pedestrian safety. Filling in gaps in the sidewalk network, such as Route 63 near the Route 73 intersection (right) should be prioritized over the next decade. © Google Maps

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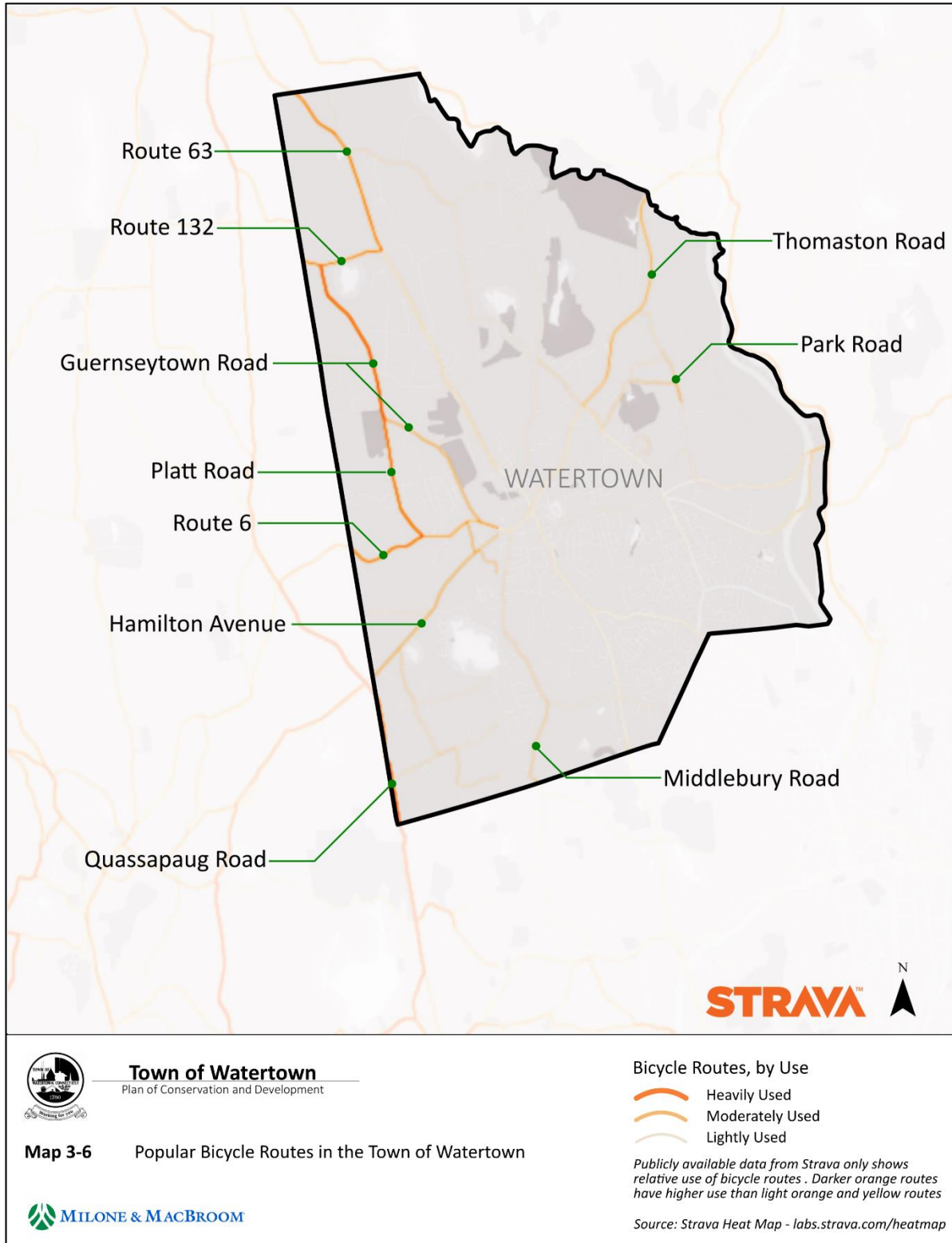
Bicycle Facilities

Watertown is currently designing and building an interconnected system of multiuse trails that will eventually connect to communities all along the Naugatuck River. The two main projects within town are the Naugatuck River Greenway and Steele Brook Greenway.

The Naugatuck River Greenway is a planned 45-mile multiuse trail extending from Derby to Torrington, including a 2.4-mile stretch in Watertown. To date, segments have been completed in Derby, Ansonia, Seymour, Beacon Falls, and Naugatuck. In 2010, the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments completed a *Regional Naugatuck River Greenway Routing Study*, which identified a preferred alignment through the town of Watertown. The preferred alignment runs along the Naugatuck River between Frost Bridge Road and the Thomaston town line and follows an existing access road located between Route 8 and the Naugatuck River. This segment is currently under design. In addition, a trailhead is being incorporated into the CTtransit Bus Maintenance facility and will provide parking opportunities for residents wishing to access the greenway trail.

The Steele Brook Greenway is a project that will connect Watertown's Main Street with major employers, the high school, and ultimately the Naugatuck River Greenway. As of 2017, the first segment of trail has been built from French Street to Siemon Company Drive. The town recently approved funds to build a bridge crossing Steele Brook that will ultimately connect to Watertown High School.

On-street routes are also popular with cyclists. Map 3-6 shows the most popular bicycle routes in Watertown based on data published by Strava. It should be noted that Strava data is primarily from recreational bicyclists as opposed to persons who use bicycles as their primary mode of transportation. The most popular routes for cycling are Guernseytown Road, Platt Road, Route 132, Route 63 north of Route 132, Quassapaug Road, and Hamilton Avenue. These routes are all located in the rural areas of Watertown. Watertown is home to one designated state bicycle route. Connecticut State Bicycle Route 5 extends along Route 63 from the Middlebury to Morris. However, this route lacks adequate signage, and Route 63 has inadequate shoulder widths for much of its length. Any town roadway construction projects on popular bicycle routes should consider improvements such as wider shoulders and better horizontal alignment. The Connecticut statewide bicycle design guidelines recommend a minimum unobstructed shoulder width of 4 feet to safely accommodate bicyclists.



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