

Guilford Safe Streets Mobility Plan

Overview

The Town of Guilford is initiating a new **Safe Streets Mobility Plan (SSMP)** This plan will build upon and update the Town's 2002 Transportation Plan, and will reflect the changes in development trends, transportation patterns and community preferences that have emerged over the past decade and a half. It will be prepared by a new Safe Streets Mobility Plan Committee through a year-long, "bottom up" process with extensive input from Town residents, with technical assistance from a transportation planning consultant.

The plan will propose policies, strategies and investments to address several trends that have emerged in recent years, including:

- Flat growth: Along with the rest of the State of Connecticut, Guilford is experiencing slow population growth, while its population is aging.
- Preserving Guilford's character: At the same time, there is widespread public support for strategies to protect Guilford rural character, and the beauty and history of our roads, homes and town center. Therefore, there is no public support for new roads or widening of existing roads.
- Growing demand for safe walking and cycling routes: There is growing public demand for safe places to walk and bicycle, while outside of the Town Green district most streets lack sidewalks or designated bicycle lanes. And proposals for wide new sidewalks and bicycle routes have run into strenuous community opposition.
- Growing traffic and safety concerns. Guilford has 22,000 people, mostly built on a street layout for a town of 2,000 people. Consequently, many town residents live on streets that began as rural byways, but have become busy suburban arterials. And many of the town's historic homes are located on these streets, often 25 feet or less from roadway edges.
- Excessive speed. While most roads are posted at 25 mph, there is little enforcement, and most traffic moves at 35 mph or more. Also, in recent years a growing proportion of vehicles in town have been heavier pick-up trucks and SUVs that create more noise and vibration and require longer distances to stop.
- Speed kills! A pedestrian has a 90% chance of surviving being hit by a car at 20 mph, falling to 50% chance at 30 mph and to 10% at 40 mph. Speeding traffic throughout the town undercut's our public safety, quality of life and property values
- Captives in our own homes. As a result of these trends, most Guilford residents can't step out of their own front door to take a walk, and kids and adults can't walk to school or ride a bike without endangering their lives. So finding ways of reconciling all of these trends through traffic calming measures will be a central focus of the plan.
- Adoption of town-wide traffic calming strategies. Since the adoption of the town's transportation plan 15 years ago, there has been growing use of traffic calming strategies in towns and cities across Connecticut and the country. The new SSMP will recommend traffic calming strategies throughout the town to make our roads safer and more attractive and to balance the needs of drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.
- Identifying safety and speeding hot spots. Special attention will be paid in the plan to safety and speeding "hot spots" —location where there are exceptional conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. These include the intersections where Church Street, Goose Lane and State Street cross I-95 and Route 1, and districts surrounding all of our schools.

- Sustaining and improving rail and bus service. Use of Shoreline East commuter rail service and bus service has increased in recent years, and Guilford’s aging population is expected to make greater use of these services in the years to come. At the same time, state budget concerns could cut financial support for these services.
- Automated vehicles electric vehicles and shared vehicle services. The plan will investigate the potential impacts and benefits that automated vehicles, electric vehicles and shared vehicle services (Uber, Lyft, etc) could have on Guilford’s roads and transportation system, including demand for parking, elder and handicapped mobility, etc.
- Special Consideration for Route 146. Route 146 is the only road in the state that is a national historic district, state scenic road and state designated bicycle route. Many of its historic homes and the state’s last remaining salt water farms lie less than 20 feet from the roadway edge. It is also subject to more frequent flooding as sea level rise accelerates And current state guidelines for guardrails, signage and other features would require destruction of much of its historic and scenic attributes. To reconcile these concerns, It requires a special management plan to protect its historic and scenic qualities, and make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists and residents of the historic homes and farms that line its route. Accordingly, Guilford is working with the Town of Branford and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) to prepare a special management plan for Route 146.

Components of the Safe Streets Mobility Plan:
The “3 E’s” of Education, Engineering and Enforcement

- **Education** - At the beginning of the planning process, the committee will convene a series of neighborhood meetings / charrettes to identify public concerns and proposals to address these concerns for each neighborhood and the whole town. At several points in the process the committee will return to these communities to gauge public support for emerging policy and investment recommendations. We will also hold town-wide forums with presentations from experts on traffic calming and other issues. Our goal will be to make this a “bottom-up” plan, and to build public understanding and support for the strategies and investments that will be at the heart of the plan’s recommendations.
- **Engineering** — Recommended investments could include a broad range of traffic calming, and pedestrian and cycling investments. They may also include recommendations for reduced speed limits, restrictions on heavy and through trucking, etc. . In some traffic / pedestrian safety “hotspots” the plan may call for state investments in upgraded intersections, pedestrian signals and other projects. Traffic calming improvements could include physical changes in roadway layouts, narrowed travel lanes, signage, reduced speed limits, speed bumps, tables, etc. (
- **Enforcement** - The committee will work with the Police Commission to explore options for increased speeding enforcement and consideration of traffic enforcement cameras.

Consultants

The Committee will require assistance from a transportation planning consultant to identify the appropriate role of alternative traffic calming techniques and enforcement strategies.

Planning Process.

Selectmen adopt resolution initiating Traffic Calming program, including following steps:

- January: Selectman appoint SSMP — members to include representation of police, community representatives, Prepare scope for consultant, sign on consultant.

- February - April: Neighborhood “listening sessions / charrettes” and town-wide public forums on successful municipal traffic calming programs: presentations by Emily Gallo, NYC Transportation Department (and GHS Graduate); Mike Piscitelli, City of New Haven, Tom Maziarz, ConnDOT Deputy Commissioner for Planning, others
- March - May: Survey of state of the art traffic calming, sidewalk improvement programs in similar communities in Fairfield County, Suburban Hartford, Boston Suburbs, summed up in Working Paper on these programs and implications for Guilford.
- June - October: Committee prepares draft town-wide traffic calming plan, presents to Board of Selectmen
- October - November: 2nd round of Neighborhood meetings to discuss local implementation programs
- November - December: Committee drafts final report, presents to Board of Selectmen, Police Commission, Board of Finance, etc.
- December: Final town-wide public forum to review final draft report
- January, 2019: Board of Selectman accepts Plan, adopts recommendations, proposes amendments to capital plan, bylaws
- Winter / Spring 2018: Demonstration projects designed and implemented (“early action” projects) in neighborhoods that request these improvements

Prepared by RDY, Dec 21, 2017