

TRANSPORTATION

The following section of the Master Plan is concerned with all elements of the transportation plan, as it relates to Sterling. While the report covers air, rail, bus and trucking facilities, major emphasis is on the circulation plan. It should be noted that the present street system in Sterling provides an excellent base for the highway system of tomorrow. It is upon this framework that such a plan was developed.

RAIL SERVICE.

Two railroads, the New York, New Haven and Hartford, and the Boston and Maine are located in Sterling. At one time the two railroads were connected by track that passed through the center of the town. On this section of the railroad, which lies between Sterling Junction and Pratts Junction, service has been discontinued. Between Sterling Junction and the town center track has been removed and the right of way abandoned.

As rail freight and passenger service declines and large sections of these rights of way are abandoned, some of the most direct and central lines of communication between urban and suburban centers are lost to the community. Decentralization, population growth and desirable location for many human activities contribute to the rapid urbanization of rural and semi rural land in Massachusetts. It is obvious that as the land becomes more intensely used, so the need for fast mass transportation service is increased.

Preservation of the right of way of our railroads is one method by which space needs for access to and from central locations can be met. It is recommended in this report, that the right of way of the railroads be acquired and held for future use by the town, if and when they are to be sold by the railroad.

BUS SERVICE

Mass transportation facilities in Sterling consist of the services of one inter urban bus line, which makes at least nineteen trips daily between Worcester and Fitchburg. There is no direct bus service to Clinton. Busses stop in the center of town regularly and on call along Route 12. The service is adequate considering the number of passenger cars registered in Sterling in 1962.

TABLE No. 3

Destination via Sterling	Number of Daily Trips		
	Morning	afternoon	evening
Worcester to Fitchburg	4	3	3
Fitchburg to Worcester	3	3	3
Total = 19 trips			

The recommendation of this report related to these facilities is that the present level of service be maintained in the future.

TRUCKING.

There are no trucking terminals in Sterling. Route 12 is a major highway in the central New England area, and as such carries large volume of over-land freight. The bulk of this truck traffic would be removed from the center of town by construction of a new section of highway bypassing it. Removal of this traffic will improve highway safety in Sterling, (see circulation plan).

AIR SERVICE.

Sterling Airport, privately operated on leased land, is a vital part of the community. The physical plant at the airport is adequate for the type of service the town receives. The field operates under private management with 2,800 feet of grassed runway. There are no lighting facilities, so operations are confined to daylight hours. Minor repairs and service for private planes is available weekdays from 4p.m. until darkness and during daylight hours on weekends.

It serves three elements of the general plan at present:

1. Economic Base. A primary function of the airport to Sterling and to towns in the region is that of a base from which crop and orchard dusting and spraying is done. Use of aircraft for this purpose is more effective, quicker and more economic than by other mechanized methods (farming and fruit growing are of major importance in the town's economy).

2. Private Aircraft. The airport serves as a base for private flying as a means of quick and efficient inter regional communication.
3. Recreation. Organization of a glider club, sport parachuting, and sightseeing air trips point to the recreational function of the airport. Lack of these facilities in other towns near by is indicative of the regional character of this service.

RECOMMENDATION.

Sterling's Airport is a necessary element of the Master Plan. Endorsement of this position is necessary by the town at a time when air service could remain, or close down in favor of some other land use on the site of the airport. An improved service developed over the next few years for Sterling and the region, a possibility that must be explored by all concerned.

Airport improvement means the following construction program:

- a. lengthen and pave the runways.
- b. lighting facilities for night operation.
- c. improved taxiways.
- d. major maintenance facilities.
- e. improved terminal facilities, including snackbar.

The improvement program, which will cost an estimated \$200,000 can be undertaken publicly or privately.

Public ownership implies Federal and State aid in developing an airfield that can offer an excellent flying service for private aircraft, a recreational program, air taxi service, feeder line service to major airports student instruction, charter work and air freight service for an industrial potential oriented to such service.

Such a program can also be financed under private ownership. Amortization of private investment would take time and development would be slower. However, private capital is willing if land can be purchased at a reasonable cost, or if long term leasing is possible.

It is apparent that such an investment of private capital would not be forthcoming unless an acceptable leasing arrangement can be made.

As much needed air service is available to Sterling now, the Board recommends that the Town encourage the continuation of this service, and that the Board of Selectmen appoint a committee including one member of the Planning Board to investigate and recommend the proper action for continued service.

CIRCULATION.

Sterling has approximately 115 miles of streets and highways in all classifications. Primary roads are Route 12, Route 140, Route 162 and Route 110.

TABLE No. 4

Summary of Road Mileage

Primary Roads	(state highways)	20.30
Arterial streets	(major streets)	24.60
collector streets	(serving residential areas)	34.60
residential streets	(including those unpaved)	<u>35.50</u>
	Total	115 miles

Primary roads provide access to the entire region that comprises central Massachusetts and central New England.

Route 12 is the major north-south highway in this region connecting Connecticut and New Hampshire highways. Route 12 passes through the center of Sterling and in so doing creates a serious problem for local traffic. Much of the 6,000 car daily traffic passes the town center between 7a.m. and 7p.m. (3,600 cars). The larger portion of this volume is through traffic. The trucks, busses and passenger vehicles that comprise this traffic is constantly in conflict with local pedestrian and vehicular traffic. While local police regulate the traffic well, and no serious accidents have occurred recently, removal of the through traffic from the town center would enhance the town center and carry through traffic directly to urbanized areas with little interference and maximum safety. Route 12 is characterized by many roadside businesses catering to automobile traffic.

Route 62 is the main east west highway in the Sterling region. It connects towns in eastern Massachusetts with the Mount Wachusett Recreation area (6 miles west of Sterling Center). Route 62 serves Sterling Center's function as a shopping area and town government seat. Route 62 is vital to the town economy.

Route 140 is a major highway to Cape Cod. It passes through the western section of Sterling and serves as access to many farms and residences.

During the summer season tourist traffic makes up a large part of the 2,000 cars per day using Route 140.

Route 110 passes through Sterling for a short distance along the northern shore of the Wachusett reservoir (1.41 miles). It is a bypass for traffic from the Metropolitan Worcester area that has destinations in the northeastern part of Massachusetts. Route 110 serves to carry only a small amount of local traffic in Sterling.

Recommendations:

Long range forecasts for highway needs are necessary to the Master Plan for they provide the circulation system necessary for the functioning of the future land use plan. At present, there is adequate highway access in Sterling because every section of the town is served by means of a paved road. These roads are maintained by the town summer and winter. Deficiencies in present system exist in the form of inadequate width, poor shoulder treatment, poor alignment and grade.

The following recommendations are made to bring the town road system to a degree of efficiency necessary to meet the predicted changes in the land use patterns in the next twenty years.

1. North-South Thruway. Plans are being formulated and surveys are being made to determine the exact location of a major New England thruway to connect the Connecticut Turnpike with the White Mountain Region in New Hampshire. This highway is proposed to pass through the industrial region of Central Massachusetts. As the thruway is vital to the economy of this region, the location of this facility is to follow more intense study by the State Department of Public Works, and it is the recommendation of the Board that Town Officers appoint a committee composed of three members, one of which is a member of the Planning Board, to sit with the New England Thruway Committee and keep abreast of the progress made by the Agency planning the highway particularly as it applies to Sterling.
2. Route 12 is a three lane highway. While there are no R.R. Grade crossings on Route 12, all intersections and other streets are unimproved grade intersections. The present volume of through traffic constitutes a hazard and a nuisance to local pedestrians and to center oriented vehicular traffic. This report recommends the construction of a bypass some 3,500 feet long from a point opposite the Sterling Inn to the intersection of Route 12 and 62

north of the center of town. Along with the bypass, Route 12 should be reconstructed as a divided highway, and intersections with state highways and local arterial streets should be channalized and signalized.

Until such time as Route 12 is relocated or rebuilt in the town of Sterling a new and safer black top finish should be applied to the present surface.

3. Route 140. Presently Route 140 is carrying approximately 2,000 cars each 24 hour period. It is narrow (2 lanes) and has little safety margin or storage space for disabled cars particularly that section south of Route 62. The road surface is generally poor. Because of the large enclaves of empty land (woods and farms) on either side of route 140 at the present time it is possible to maintain an even rate of speed throughout most of its length in Sterling. However, there are scattered settlements and roadside commercial land uses along the highway. At these points, there is little margin for safety when there is parking on the roadway. Recommendations are that a widening and resurfacing be carried out from the West Boylston line to Route 62 - a distance of 2.5 miles. Clearing trees and removal of hummocks will improve the sight distances and consequently the safety of highway users. The provision of adequate stable shoulders for emergency parking should be provided where necessary.

4. Route 62 - 6.5 miles of Route 62 lie in Sterling. At present it is carrying approximately 2,900 cars every 24 hours. The bulk of this travel takes place between the Lancaster line and the town center. Route 62 carries over 1,900 cars per 12 hour day (7a.m.-7p.m.) through the center of town adding to an already overburdened Route 12 in this same area. The difference to Sterling is economic in that the Route 62 traffic is local traffic and it is to these highway users that Sterling center caters. In 1962, the State Highway Department will rebuild the eastern half of Route 62 - replacing the bridge over the railroad and widening the roadway to the Lancaster line. To the west of the town center, Route 62 has adequate width and a good surface. Wide shoulders give added safety to this section of the highway. Recommendations are to limit business frontage and keep new road openings onto this section of highway at a minimum.

TABLE NO. 5

DESIGN ELEMENT	PRIMARY ROADS	LOCAL ARTERIAL STREETS	COLLECTOR STREETS	RESIDENTIAL STREETS
Number of traffic lanes	4	2	2	2
Width of traffic lanes	12	12	12	10
Width of shoulders	10	10	10	7
Median strip width	20	-	-	-
Width of side- walk area	16	11	8	8
Width of Right of Way	120	60	60	50

5. Route 110 A short stretch of Route 110 lies in Sterling. This highway serves as a connection to Clinton bypassing Sterling Center. Much of the land either side of this road is M.D.C. Reservation and there is little marginal interference with this traffic as a result. The surface is poor, although the road is adequate in width to handle present traffic volumes. Recommendations are to resurface and widen the highway for future traffic volumes.

6. Further Recommendations.

- a) A northern artery between Route 12 and Route 62. It is recommended that Justice Hill Cutoff, Justice Hill Road, Upper North Row, North Row Road and Pratts' Junction Road be considered a northern artery, and a program be undertaken to construct the entire length of this proposed artery according to standards for local arterial streets.
- b) A West Central Artery from Route 12 to North Row Road. It is recommended that Boutell Road, Greenland Road, a new connection to Wilder Road, South Nelson Road, a new connection to Heywood Road and Heywood Road be considered a West central artery designed to standards for local arterial streets as recommended in this plan. This artery would require 3,000 feet of new construction on Greenland Road and 3,600 feet of new construction between South Nelson Road and Heywood Road. It would also require approximately 3,600 feet of realignment on South Nelson Road.
- c) A Southern Arterial connection. It is recommended that a southern arterial connection be constructed from Boutell Road to Camp Ground Road and Spring Hill Road with a new connection totalling 3,500 feet and that the entire connection be built according to arterial standards for local streets recommended in this report.
- d) An Eastern Arterial connection from Route 110 to Route 62. Included are Spring Hill Road, Fitch Pond Road and Chase Hill Road. The arterial connection to be built according to arterial standards for local streets as recommended in this report.
7. It is further recommended that a clarification and simplification of street names be adopted and included in the arterial plan. The recommendations are as follows:

- a) Streets Boutelle Road - Greenland Road
named: Boutelle Road entire length

- b) Streets ~~Wilder Road~~ ~~South Nelson Road~~
named: Wilder Road - entire length
- c) Streets Meeting House Hill Road, Rowley Hill Road
Justice Hill Road
named: Rowley Hill Road - entire length
- d) Streets North Row Road, Upper North Row, Justice
Hill Road, and Justice Hill Cutoff
named: North Row Road - entire length
- e) Streets Kendall Hill Road, Swett Hill Road, Spring
Hill Road
named: Kendall Hill Road
- f) Streets Fitch Pond Road and Hawkins Lane
named: Hawkins Lane - entire length

COLLECTOR STREETS.

The collector street serves internal traffic movement within certain segments of the community such as a major subdivision area. Subdivision development in Sterling will occur in areas just off many of the town's paved roads. These paved roads will become collector streets in the future. It is recommended that those streets so indicated on the circulation plan be improved in accordance with standards for collector streets outlined in this report.

RESIDENTIAL STREETS.

The function of the residential street is to provide access to residential property. Residential streets should not carry through traffic nor high speed traffic. Residential streets must be built in accordance with subdivision regulations now in force.

RESERVATION OF RIGHT-OF-WAY.

A major problem faced by most communities is one of reserving needs highway right-of-way while trying to meet current fiscal obligations. If required land is not immediately acquired by direct purchase and building occurs, acquisition damage in the future may be substantial. It is therefore recommended that the town consider application of Chapter 41, Section 81-J of the General Laws to establish or alter the exterior lines

of public ways. Damages may be recovered by persons injured by the establishment of the exterior lines, but no recompense for damages sustained to structures built within the exterior lines after their establishment is possible.

Reservation of land under the above law is a means of preventing future hardship since ample notice of intended action is assured in the process of obtaining a favorable vote of the Town Meeting; following which a recording in the local Registry of Deeds is required.

OFFICIAL MAP

Adoption of an Official Map under GL Chapter 41 Section 81E, showing all public ways and parks and all private ways then existing and used in common by more than two abutters, is recommended in this report. Also, such a map should show all public lands, public buildings, railroads, water bodies and streams. It is necessary that an Official Map be adopted by favorable vote of Town Meeting. Upon adoption, new or widened public ways may be shown as well as enlarged or proposed new parks. Land takings made for highway improvement under Chapter 41 section 81-J would be placed on an Official Map adopted under Section 81E as a public record of such action.

CIRCULATION PLAN

- PRIMARY ROADS
- LOCAL ARTERIAL STREETS
- EXISTING LOCATIONS
- PROPOSED LOCATIONS
- COLLECTOR STREETS

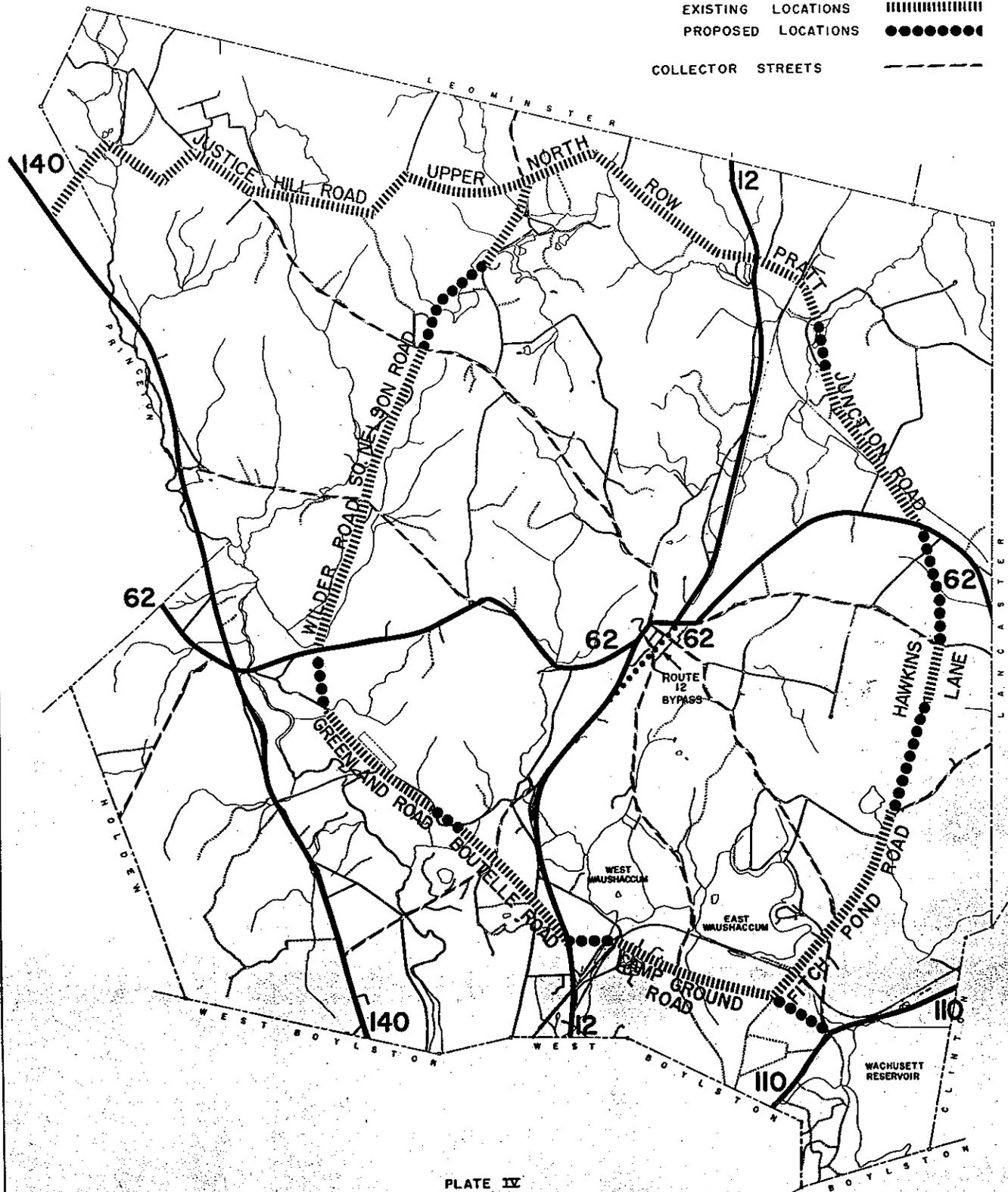
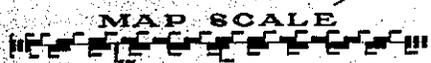


PLATE IV



STERLING PLANNING BOARD

