

## Chapter 13

### Access - Connectivity Traffic Studies

This chapter implements policies 6.2 and 6.3 of the *Town Plan*. These standards are intended to maximize the capacity of existing highways; improve traffic safety; limit the potential for conflict between vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists; and reduce congestion, while providing safe access to private properties. These standards also promote connectivity for vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians, and to provide emergency access, facilitate movement, and foster a sense of community.

#### 13.1 Basic Requirement - Applicability

**13.1.1 What is the basic requirement of this chapter?** That all developments and all lots, uses, and structures within developments have safe, adequate, legal access to a public or private road. The standards adopted in this chapter define ‘safe’ and ‘adequate.’

**13.1.2 Do these standards apply to points of access to state highways?** Yes. Access to state highways is regulated by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT), but 19 V.S.A § 1111 and 24 V.S.A. § 4302 provide a basis for this bylaw to apply to points of access to state highways.

**Need to Obtain Access to a State Road?** Contact District 5 of the Vermont Agency of Transportation at (802) 655-1580.

**13.1.3 Do these standards apply to points of access to private roads?** Yes. Points of access to private roads are ‘required improvements,’ regulated by this bylaw.

**13.2 Access Management.** The plans submitted with applications for permits must clearly demonstrate compliance with these standards.

**13.2.1 How may access be provided?** The type and number of points of access permitted will depend on the functional classification of the road being accessed.

13.2.1.1 Arterials and Collectors. Access to arterial and collector roads must be from local roads, not directly from adjoining properties. The DRB may permit an exception to this standard where physical barriers, including property ownership or difficult terrain, make compliance infeasible. Where an exception is permitted, the applicant is responsible for all improvements needed to ensure that permitting direct access does not result in undue congestion or safety hazards.

13.2.1.2 Local Roads. Adjoining properties may have direct access to local roads in compliance with the standards adopted in this chapter and the other requirements of this bylaw. The DRB may require that shared driveways be used for access to local roads in order to reduce the number of points of access.

13.2.1.3 Parking Areas. Parking areas must not rely on adjoining public roads as part of their internal circulation pattern. Specifically, parking areas on private property (this chapter does not apply to on-street parking) must be designed so that vehicles do not back directly onto a

public road. Standards for the location, size, and design of parking lots are adopted in Chapter 14 of this bylaw.

**13.2.2 Can I keep all of my existing points of access?** No. Multiple points of access to arterials or collectors and continuous curb cuts along any road must be consolidated to the minimum number needed to serve the existing and proposed uses on the property as a condition of approval for a permit. The required consolidation shall include:

13.2.2.1 ... eliminating access to arterials and shifting it to a local roads or collectors, and/or

13.2.2.2 ... eliminating points of access that do not have adequate corner clearances, as required by WDB 13.2.4.

13.2.2.3 Exceptions. The DRB may permit an exception to this standard where physical barriers, including property ownership or difficult terrain, make the consolidation of points of access infeasible.

**13.2.3 Are there design standards for points of access?** Yes.

13.2.3.1 Alignment. Proposed points of access shall be aligned at a 90° angle ( $\pm 5^\circ$ ). The DRB may permit an exception to this standard where physical barriers, including property ownership or difficult terrain, make compliance infeasible. Where an exception is permitted, the applicant is responsible for all improvements needed to ensure that the proposed point of access does not result in safety hazards.

13.2.3.2 Grade. The grade approaching a proposed point of access to a local road shall be less than three percent (3%) for at least 50 feet before the intersection. The grade of proposed approaches to collector and arterial roads shall be as determined by the DRB, with the advice of the DPW. The DRB may permit an exception to this standard where physical barriers, including property ownership or difficult terrain, make compliance infeasible. Where an exception is permitted, the applicant is responsible for all improvements needed to ensure that the proposed approach does not result in a safety hazard.

13.2.3.3 Sight Distance. Sight lines and sight distance calculations for all proposed access drives shall be shown on the plans submitted with applications for discretionary permits. The sight distance required for a point of access varies with conditions. The minimum necessary shall be as provided by the Vermont AOT's *Access Management Program Guidelines*. There will be no exceptions to this standard. The applicant must provide the level of traffic control needed to attain compliance.

13.2.3.4 Clearance. Proposed access drives must be placed far enough from existing driveways and intersections to minimize congestion and safety hazards. The minimum separation shall be as provided by the Vermont AOT's *Access Management Program Guidelines*. The DRB may permit an exception to this standard to provide access to properties that have no reasonable alternative point-of-access. Where an exception is permitted, the applicant is responsible for any improvements needed to mitigate the congestion and safety impacts of the proposed point of access.

13.2.3.5 Additional Standards. Additional standards for the design and construction of residential driveways that serve more than one dwelling are established by WDB 13.2.6. All

other proposed points of access must be designed by a licensed professional engineer in compliance with the Vermont AOT's *Access Management Program Guidelines*, the *Uniform Manual of Traffic Control Devices*, and Williston's *Public Works Standards*.

**13.2.4 Do the sight distance standards adopted in 13.2.3.3 affect land use?** Yes. The areas needed to provide the sight distances required by WDB 13.2.3.3 must be kept open and free of visual obstructions. There shall be no structures that rise above grade in these areas except for required regulatory signs and landscaping will be limited to turf or another ground cover and ornamental plantings that attain a height of no more than 32". Existing trees may be permitted to remain if they are pruned to a single stem up to eight (8) feet above grade.

**13.2.5 Who must provide turning lanes, medians, and other access management improvements?** Applicants must provide acceleration, deceleration, and turning lanes; medians, and all other improvements, including signs, signals, and lighting, that are required to provide safe access to their development. The need for these improvements may be established by the *Town Plan*; corridor plans; or traffic studies prepared by the town, the CCMPO, or the Vermont AOT; or by a traffic study required by WDB 13.8. Chapter 7 establishes procedures that guarantee the completion of required improvements, including points of access.

**13.2.6 What are the additional standards for the construction of residential driveways?** These standards apply to driveways that serve more than one dwelling.

13.2.6.1 Grade. The grade of a residential drive shall not exceed 10%.

13.2.6.2 Width. Residential drives shall be no less than 12 feet in width, and no more than 16. Where the drive travels through brush, woods, or forest, there shall be a cleared area of four feet on either side of the drive.

13.2.6.3 Length. No private driveway shall be longer than 1,320 feet. The DRB may permit an exception to this standard where physical barriers, including property ownership or difficult terrain, make provision of another point of access infeasible. Where an exception is permitted, the density of development served by the private driveway shall average 1 dwelling per 10 ten acres or less.

13.2.6.4 Construction. Residential drives shall consist of a minimum four-inch finish course of gravel or, alternatively of asphalt or concrete paving, a minimum eight (8) inch base course, and a geotextile layer. The first 30 feet back from a paved public road shall be paved. Specifications for these materials are found in the *Public Works Standards*. Drainage shall be provided in the form of a swale, or swale, and culverts. Runoff and erosion control shall be provided as required by Chapter 29 of this bylaw.

13.2.6.5 Pull-Outs. A pull-out permitting vehicles to pass shall be provided for every 400 feet of residential drive.

13.2.6.6 Natural Hazards. Residential drives shall not be permitted where they would be subject to regular seasonal flooding, slope failure, or other natural hazards.

13.2.6.7 Addresses. Where the building and required building numbers are not visible from the road, dwellings served by a residential driveway must be identified with a freestanding

sign displaying the address number or numbers as required by Williston's *Road Name and Road Location Addressing Ordinance*, which is attached as Appendix D.

**13.3 Bicycle and Pedestrian Access.** WDB 13.2 sets standards for vehicular access. Developments must also be safely accessible to bicyclists and pedestrians.

**13.3.1 *Must all development have bicycle and pedestrian access?*** Yes. The plans submitted with applications for discretionary permits must show how bicyclists and pedestrians can safely reach at least one employee or customer entrance. See also Chapter 14 of this bylaw's requirements for bicycle parking. More specific standards for bicycle and pedestrian access may apply in some zoning districts.

**13.3.2 *What constitutes "safe" bicycle and pedestrian access?*** Potential conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles must be minimized by the use of sidewalks or paths, pavement markings and textures; signs; and similar techniques approved by the DRB. Certain uses must also provide safe pedestrian drop-offs, as required by WDB 13.3.3.

**13.3.3 *Where must a safe pedestrian drop-off be provided?***

13.3.3.1 Required. Safe off-street pedestrian drop-offs must be provided for all child care uses, with the exception of family day care homes in residential zoning districts; for all places of public assembly; and for all schools. The DRB may permit an exception to this standard, but only where it finds that safe on-street pedestrian drop-off is possible.

13.3.3.2 At the DRB's Discretion. The DRB may also require safe pedestrian drop-offs for hotels and other lodging places, multi-family residences, neighborhood parks, and in shopping areas where considerable pedestrian traffic is anticipated.

**13.4 Access for the Disabled.** All development in Williston must be fully accessible, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Parking for people with disabilities is addressed in Chapter 14 of this bylaw.

**Accessibility?** Because the town does not administer a building code its role in ensuring access for people with disabilities is quite limited. The principal responsibility for this function lies with the Vermont Division of Fire Safety, which enforces a state building code. The Division's web site is at: <http://www.dps.state.vt.us/fire/>

**13.5 Multiple Points of Access.** These standards limit the number of homes that may be served by a single point of road access.

**13.5.1 *How many dwellings may be served by a private driveway?*** Where a new private driveway is being established in compliance with WDB 13.2, the maximum number of dwellings it may serve is limited to five (5). There are two exceptions to this standard.

13.5.1.1 Existing Driveways. Where an existing private driveway serves more than five (5) parcels, and offers the only access to one or more undeveloped parcels, it may serve one dwelling per parcel, but must be upgraded to meet the standards of WDB 13.2.6 before a sixth dwelling is permitted.

13.5.1.2 Lower Density. The DRB may permit an exception to this standard where doing so will preserve landscape features and neighborhood character that would be adversely

impacted by requiring construction of a private or public road, where the existing driveway meets or will be improved to meet the standards of WDB 13.2.6, and where the average density of the development served will be one unit per 10 acres or less.

**13.5.2 How many dwellings may be served by a road that ends in a loop or cul-de-sac?** No more than 40 dwellings may be served by a single point of access. Where an existing dead-end road already serves 40 dwellings, further development served by that road will be limited to one dwelling for each lot or parcel that is currently vacant.

**13.5.3 Is there a limit on the length of access drives or roads that end in a loop or cul-de-sac?** Yes. See WDB 13.2.6.3 for the length of private driveways. The length of a dead-end road, private or public, is limited to 2,640 feet. The DRB may permit an exception to this standard, but only where physical barriers, including property ownership or difficult terrain, make provision of a second point of access infeasible. Where such an exception is permitted, the density of the development served shall be limited to one dwelling per 10 acres.

**13.5.4 Can access be provided by an emergency access road that does not meet the standards for a private or public road?** Where two points of access are required, both must meet Williston's standards for a private or public road, whichever applies. The DRB may permit an exception to this standard for an emergency access for a nonresidential development, like an industrial plant, where control of public access is an operational necessity. Any emergency access permitted by the DRB must be kept passable to ambulances and fire engines at all times. Failure to maintain an emergency access, including failure to promptly remove snow, will be a violation of this bylaw, subject to enforcement as provided in WDB 7.4-7.6.

**13.6 Drive-Throughs.** Consistent with the Town Plan vision of pedestrian-friendly development, Williston permits drive-through service only for bulky, heavy objects (feed, lumber) and financial institutions, where drive-through service preserves privacy and where a prohibition would result in several nonconforming uses.

**13.7 Connectivity.** Consistent with Policy 6.3 of the *Town Plan*, developments should have safe, functional connections with adjoining developments for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Interconnected street and trail systems, shared points of access, and shared parking will be required wherever they are not precluded by physical barriers, including property ownership, historic land use patterns, and difficult terrain.

**13.8 Traffic Studies.** The town's review of proposed developments, including determinations about compliance with this and other chapters of this bylaw, will be based in part on traffic and transportation studies.

**13.8.1 Is it possible to use existing information to evaluate transportation impacts?** In many cases, yes. All proposed developments for which a discretionary permit is required must submit estimated traffic generation data based on the most current edition of the Institute of Transportation Engineers *Trip Generation*. Beyond that, a traffic study will be required only where the DRB, with the advice of the DPW, determines that existing studies do not provide sufficient information on which to base a decision. This determination will be made during pre-application review so that the traffic study can accompany the application for a discretionary permit.

**13.8.2 Are there standards for traffic studies when they are required?** Yes. Where a traffic study is required it must be conducted in accord with the most current edition of the Institute of Transportation Engineers' *Transportation Impact Analyses for Site Development: an ITE Recommended Practice*. Further, all traffic studies must be consistent with the assumptions and modeling used for the *Grid Street Evaluation Final Report* prepared for the Town of Williston, October 10, 2006 by RSG, Inc.