

3. Transportation

In accord with Irasburg’s planning principles of respect for the environment, sound economics and regard for community values, the Transportation Plan outlines a path to achieve safe, cost-effective and energy-efficient transportation for Irasburg residents to commute to work and to meet the needs of daily life. It prioritizes the improvement of safe options for walking and biking in the village center and along Irasburg’s roadways, and it minimizes the impact of road construction on natural resources.

Existing Transportation

Currently, most transportation in Irasburg is by single-person automobile. Census data indicate that 77 percent of Irasburg’s workforce commutes to work by automobile.

According to NVDA’s Energy Profile, Irasburg residents collectively drive almost 14 million miles annually, at a cost of \$1.4 million. Irasburg’s greatest single use of energy, 42.4 percent, is for transportation.

The main highways to and through Irasburg are Vermont State Highway Routes 14 and 58, U.S. Route 5, and Interstate 91. Interstate 91 links the town with Newport to the north and Lyndonville and St. Johnsbury to the south. Route 14 links the town with Albany and Montpelier to the south and Coventry

and Newport Center to the north. Route 58 provides access to Barton and Orleans to the east and Lowell to the west. State Highways are maintained by VTrans District 9 out of Derby.

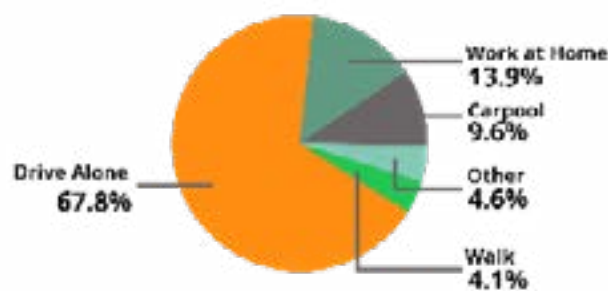


Figure 3.1 How Irasburg Residents Commute
Source: American Community Survey

The town of Irasburg maintains 8.09 miles of Class 2 Town Highways; 27.44 miles of Class 3 Town Highways; and has 8.48 miles of Class 4 Town Highways or ‘legal trails’. The town is in the process of completing a Road Erosion Inventory with NVDA. When complete, this plan will enable Irasburg to schedule improvements. Combined with their Bridge and Culvert Inventory, the information will enable simplified capital budgeting for

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highway expenditures. The town has signed Town Highway and Bridge Standards from the VTrans Orange Book. The town of Irasburg supports the VTrans initiative for hydrologically connected road segments.

Railroad tracks carrying freight trains run through Irasburg with the nearest freight facility located in the village of Orleans. The operator of the line is the Connecticut River Subdivision of the Washington County Railroad. The rail right-of-way is owned by the State of Vermont. There are currently no rail sidings located in Irasburg.

There are no fixed public transit routes in Irasburg. However, Rural Community Transportation (RCT) operates an on-demand transit service through its Elderly and Disabled Transportation Program, a volunteer driver service that is available to residents of Irasburg. There are informal Park and Ride lots in Orleans at the intersection of U.S. Route 5 and VT Route 58 and along the Irasburg Common that are used for carpooling.

The nearest airport is the Northeast Kingdom International Airport (formerly the Newport State Airport) in Coventry. There is currently no scheduled passenger air service at this facility.

Irasburg participates regularly in the regional road foreman meetings, facilitated by NVDA and VTrans District 9. These meetings provide training to assist the highway department in providing the town with cost-effective best-management practices.

Irasburg has limited sidewalks and multi-use paths. Residents use road shoulders and the path around the Common for jogging, biking, walking, and getting around town on foot.

Proposed Transportation

Irasburg's roads are upgraded and maintained to meet standards commensurate with the classification of highways by state statute (VSA Title 19, Chapter 3, subchapter 302).

In the 2016 Community Survey, residents indicated dissatisfaction with available transportation options and 29 percent indicated a need for improved bicycling and walking facilities.

The Vermont Legislature passed a "Complete Streets" bill in 2011 as part of its transportation policy. Complete Streets is the concept that all users are considered in transportation projects, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, public transportation users, and those of any age and ability. Implementing Complete Streets in rural

communities can be challenging but not impossible. When State Highways are repaved or widened, shoulders should be added to accommodate pedestrians. Crosswalks, signage, and additional opportunities for footpaths or trails are encouraged with other state road improvements. Irasburg intends to pursue Village Center designation. One goal of such

a designation will be to improve options for pedestrians and bicyclists within the village center.

Two of the biggest transportation problems in Irasburg are the heavy truck use of Routes 14 and 58 through town and lack of a safe pedestrian/bicycle route to the elementary school from the Common. The heavy flow of traffic, especially at peak morning and afternoon times, makes it difficult for pedestrians to cross the state highway. There are no designated pedestrian crossings. A sidewalk ends in front of Leach Public Library, and there is no formal path from the town Common to the Irasburg Village School. A 2003 sidewalk study assessed current conditions and

*Transportation
consumes 47
percent of
Irasburg's energy
use.*

challenges to building a five-foot-wide sidewalk to the school. The sidewalk would require storm drainage infrastructure, but grants could help the town defray costs of construction. The town is considering exploring options for a multi-use trail to connect the school to the library and the village center, including pedestrian-level lighting.

Providing adequate Park & Ride spaces for carpoolers is key to reducing the energy impacts of commuting. With more than 75 percent of Irasburg’s population working out of town, this plan encourages the development of new and creative options to share driving. Over the past few years, many commuters have begun using areas around the

Common as an informal Park & Ride, principally opposite Ray’s Market and the Post Office, but increasingly along the south side of the Common. While carpooling is encouraged, this use of spaces around the Common creates a number of challenges. At peak hours, commuters’ parked cars leave limited spaces for daytime use by people who need to park around the Common; parked cars interfere with snowplowing and create an increased need for maintenance. The town should pursue development of an official Park & Ride location supported by the Vermont Agency of Transportation. Any proposed Park & Ride location should be safe, central, easily accessible, well lit, visually appealing and able to accommodate enough cars to meet

demand. A goal of Village Center Designation will be to develop a dedicated Park & Ride facility.

Irasburg can achieve further reductions in transportation energy use by fuel switching during the coming decades by the increased use of plug-in electric vehicles. As in all other areas, the cost of fuel switching will be an important factor in achieving these efficiencies. State- and utility-sponsored incentives, as well as technological advances that help to lower costs, will help to make these targets achievable.

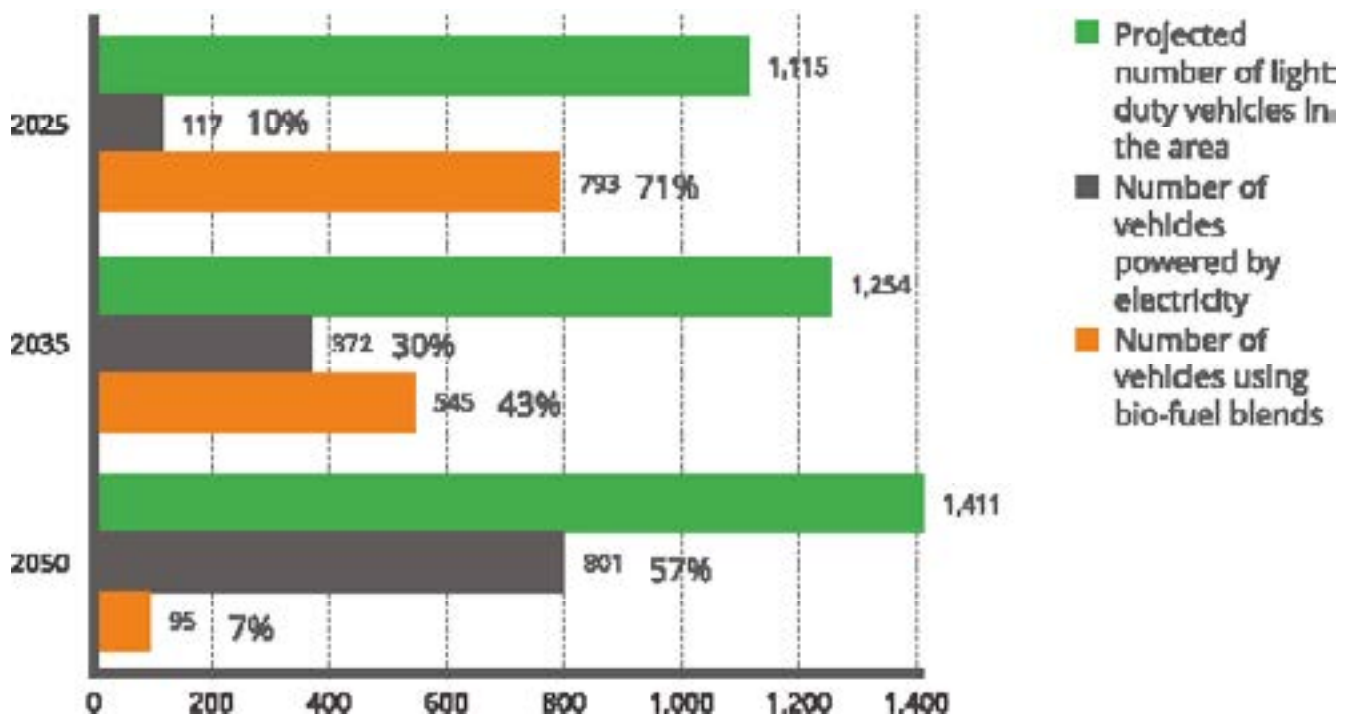


Fig 3.2 Fuel Switching Targets for Transportation
 Source: Irasburg Energy Profile from NVDA

The projected number of electric vehicles in the area is estimated to be roughly commensurate with projections of population and households. Estimates assume a gradual increase in EV fuel economy from 3 miles per kWh to 4 miles per kWh by 2050. The switch to EVs in Irasburg will be challenging, requiring performance improvements in cold temperatures and on steep and often wintry terrain and improved battery storage for long distances between charging stations. Currently, the paucity of plug-in charging stations in the Northeast Kingdom is one deterrent to the spread of EVs. The confluence of heavily traveled state and local routes in Irasburg's village center makes it a promising potential location for a charging station.

Goals

- Irasburg residents have safe, affordable and energy-efficient transportation for commuting to work and to meet the needs of daily life. Irasburg has safe and accessible routes for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Any new roads are built according to most recently adopted town standards and have minimal adverse impacts on forests, wildlife habitat, water sources and other natural resources identified throughout this plan. Logging roads use Best Management Practices to minimize erosion and effects on wildlife habitat.

Actions

- Pursue Village Center Designation and Vermont Agency of Transportation grants as a means to facilitate improved pedestrian and bicycle access including a walking/ bike path from the village center to the Irasburg Village School; develop a designated Park & Ride facility; and investigate a vehicle charging station.
- Maintain all roads to their current classification as represented in the most recent Town Highway Mileage Certificate submitted to VTrans and shown in the most recent Town Highway map provided by VTrans Mapping unit.

- Build any new roads to meet all town standards and specifications and minimize impact on natural and scenic resources identified throughout this plan.
- The Road Commissioner and the Selectboard continue to maintain the priority list and repair schedule for roads most in need of repair or upgrade.
- Continue to participate in Road Foreman Meetings. The town should also monitor via email and participate in person when appropriate in the regional Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). All towns are members and representatives are appointed by the Selectboard to represent the interests of the town as well as provide regional feedback from the town's perspective.
- Continue town budget support for Rural Community Transportation.
- With the Selectboard, pursue methods to slow down traffic through the Village Center, including school zone signage, designated crosswalks, or other engineering solutions including the use of deterrence technology such as stand-alone speed monitors.

