

## **G. CIRCULATION**

### **1. History**

Jamestown began as a colony whose roads were built to serve the resident farmers and various ferryboat landings on the Island. The ferry services had an important and significant impact on the community's economy and growth. Spanning over 300 years, from the 1600s to the opening of the Newport Bridge in 1969, Jamestown residents and travelers relied on ferry service for personal transport as well as delivery of goods and services from the mainland and Aquidneck Island.



Newport Bridge

Narragansett Avenue, originally known as Ferry Road, is the Town's main commercial street. It served as a connection between the ferries that ran from West Passage and East Passage. The development of business and services along this road was in response to its use by residents and travelers.

Since the Island's colonization in the late 1600s, sail ferry service provided the resident farmers with access to and from the mainland. In the late 1800s, steamboats replaced access to the Island, with ferry service from North Kingstown and Newport. Due to the Island's isolation, no turnpikes or interstate highways were developed.

The Island's development as a summer resort began with this introduction of steam ferryboat service in 1873. Until this time, residents were primarily farmers and mariners. The steamboats brought wealthy vacationers from New York, Philadelphia and St. Louis, who stayed at the numerous island hotels. Grand hotels sprang up along the East Ferry landing which provided ferry connections to the Fall River line that traveled to New York. The streamliners, such as the Fall River line, ran from 1847 to 1937 between New York and Fall River, Massachusetts. Ferry service continued in the West Passage until the Jamestown Bridge was constructed in 1940 and in the East Passage until the Newport Bridge was opened in 1969.

The military buildup in Jamestown during the First and Second World Wars also impacted the Island's transportation system. Fort Dumplings, Fort Getty, Fort Greble and Fort Wetherill were military stations active in Jamestown from the Revolutionary War to World War II. During the Civil War, military personnel trained at these locations. Rhode Island's National Guard trained in Jamestown during World War I. Beavertail Road, Hamilton Avenue, Fort Wetherill Road and Fort Getty

Road were constructed to provide access and connections to the various military bases.

The opening of the Jamestown Bridge in 1940 and termination of the West Passage ferry service sparked an increase in population and housing construction on the Island. Many new residents relied upon defense-based industry for employment. In 1992, the re-construction of the Jamestown-Verrazanno Bridge and the subsequent expansion of Route 138 (John Eldred Parkway) to encompass Eldred Avenue and the Jamestown and Newport Bridges facilitated road travel from Newport County to Washington County.



Jamestown Bridge

## **2. Vehicular Transportation Patterns**

Jamestown residents depend heavily upon private automobiles for off island travel due to the limited amount of commercial, employment, and public transportation opportunities on the Island.

The Town of Jamestown contains 70.3 acres of road. The major local and commuter circulation roadway is the John Eldred Highway. Access from the contiguous portion of southern Rhode Island is achieved via the Jamestown-Verrazanno Bridge, which is maintained by the State Department of Transportation (DOT). Jamestown is connected to Aquidneck Island and the east bay area via the Newport Toll Bridge that is owned and operated by the RI Turnpike and Bridge Authority.

With a population of 5,622 (2000 Census), over 6,500 vehicles are registered in the Town of Jamestown. According to the 1998 Community Survey, 24 percent of the survey's respondents work in Jamestown. Another 22 percent work on Aquidneck Island, 14 percent travel to the city of Providence, with 40 percent traveling elsewhere in the state for employment. Commuter parking lots are available to Jamestown residents in North Kingstown in close proximity to the Jamestown Bridge and in East Greenwich at the intersection of Routes 2 and 4.

### **a. The Effects of the Route 138 Upgrade, John Eldred Parkway**

Prior to the completion in 1992 of the Jamestown-Verrazanno Bridge and the John Eldred Highway, traffic to and from the Island was extremely congested in Jamestown. Residents had a very difficult time traveling, especially during weeknights. During the summer, both traveling north to south and traveling off the

Island at night was unreasonably difficult. With the new roadways and connectors in place, traffic now flows at a reasonable rate to and from the Island. Most residents on the Island do appreciate the benefits the bridge and the Rt. 138 (John Eldred Parkway) connector have provided.

With limited access, certain streets on the Island have experienced changes in roadway function as a result of the Rt. 138 (John Eldred Parkway) upgrade. These include: Hull Street, Helm St, Beacon Avenue, Spirketing Street and Seaside Drive in the Jamestown Shores area. In addition, Carr Lane and America Way, serving as cross-island connections between East Shore Road and North Road, have both experienced increased volumes in traffic as a result of the upgrade.

The Chamber of Commerce has indicated that the upgraded roadway and the bridge have not had any detrimental effects on businesses in Jamestown. No studies have been done to measure effects of the new bridge and connector on the local economy, though outside services traveling to the Island have become quicker. One negative effect of the new roadway is the highway noise it has created in the area.

Another effect of the new roadway has been the increased pressure on local real estate. The upgrade of the John Eldred Highway, combined with the Route 4 upgrade in North Kingstown during the 1980s, has significantly reduced commute times to the west and north. This has made Jamestown an even more desirable place to live. The 1998 Community Survey indicated that 52 percent of the respondents felt that the commute to work made Jamestown a “desirable” (22 percent) to “somewhat desirable” (30 percent) place to live.

### **3. Road Classification Systems**

#### **a. Local Classification System**

The Town of Jamestown’s Subdivision Regulations set the standards for construction of roads in new subdivisions, defining roads as either minor arterial, collector, local or minor streets. Minor arterial streets serve as circulation of traffic into, out of or around the Town, and carry relatively high volumes of traffic. Collector streets serve as interior residential streets that connect traffic from local or minor streets to arterial streets. Collector streets also service areas of commercial development. Local streets serve as public or private access to residential lots and feed into collector streets. Minor streets provide public or private access solely to residential lots. In addition, all local street classifications serve to provide access to abutting properties.

Subdivision regulation standards for right-of-way width varies, according to the road classification and project classification. The Planning Commission on a case-by-case basis determines design criteria. Presently, a 30-50-foot right-of-way is required for all streets. Cul-de-sacs are required to have an outside curb minimum radius of 40 feet and a minimum right-of-way radius of 50 feet.

Sidewalks, although limited throughout the Island, are a requirement for development in the R-8 residential zoning districts. The need for pedestrian walkways is determined individually for subdivisions.

**b. Major Roads**

Major local north/south roads in Jamestown include: North Road from The John Eldred Highway south to Southwest Avenue, Southwest Avenue south to Beavertail Road, and Beavertail Road from Southwest Avenue south to the end. Conanicus Avenue becomes Walcott Avenue at its intersection with High Street and serves as a major local road. East Shore Road is also a major local road and provides north/south access along the East Passage from the Newport Bridge Toll Plaza to the north end of the Island.



As mentioned, Beavertail Road runs north/south from Mackerel Cove along the remaining southern portion of the Island and serves as the only collector road for the Beavertail peninsula. The Island is traversed east/west by State Route 138 (John Eldred Parkway), Narragansett Avenue, Hamilton Avenue, Carr Lane and America Way. These roads provide access through, on and off the Island.

**c. State Classification System**

The State of RI defines state and local roads as arterial, collector or local. The Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Planning 1995-2005 Highway Functional Classification System Table and Map can be seen on the following pages.

The greatest percentages of roads in Jamestown are classified as arterial. Eldred Avenue, or The John Eldred Highway, and East Shore Road are urban principal arterial roads. The Island's urban minor arterial roads include Narragansett Avenue (Southwest Avenue to East Ferry), North Main Road (north to Capstan Street), East Shore Road (Eldred Avenue to Carr Lane) and Conanicus Avenue (north from Narragansett Avenue to the intersection with the Newport Bridge Toll Plaza). Walcott Avenue (south to Blueberry Lane), Hamilton Avenue, and Narragansett Avenue (west to West Ferry) are urban collector streets.

The residential side streets located off Narragansett Avenue and Conanicus Avenue in the downtown area are classified urban local streets. Jamestown's rural major collectors include Beavertail Road, North Main Road (Capstan Street north to

Conanicut Point) and East Shore Road (Carr Lane north to Conanicut Point). The remainder of the Island consists of rural minor collectors and rural local roads.

While a majority of the Town's roads may be classified as a distinctive type, most serve mixed or borderline functions. For example, a rural major collector road such as Beavertail Road serves both as a collector road and residential road because residential development is accessed directly off the road.