

D-1 TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

D-1.1 Street Systems

- Two patterns of street systems result from an interaction between the pattern of topography and historical forces.
- Steep landform and sea access concentrated development in the lower part of town. The Charman creek ravine further influenced development patterns. Infrastructure has in turn reinforced the inaccessibility (and preservation) of the creek.
- Upper Gibson grew with and along the traffic flow entering –and paradoxically bypassing– the Gateway to the Sunshine Coast as Gibson has come to be known.
- Lower Gibson streets characterized by: pedestrian scale, integration/connection of roads, easy orientation, public appropriation and local small town character but also traffic congestion and parking issues.
- Upper Gibson streets: car dominated, suburban placeless homogenized character, ample parking yet confusing and disorientating because of the lack of network continuity (dead-ends, offset intersections, lack of collector roads)—a system disregarding the cultural and ecological character of the place in favor of automobile access.
- The configuration of Highway 101 that connects the city to the Ferry and the rest of the Sunshine Coast is being modified with a bypass that will allow the current highway on upper Gibsons to function as a service road for retail and commercial developments. (OCP Nov 1996)
- Some of the odd street patterns in the upper part of town results from jurisdictional issues and in particular a lack of coordination between the Regional District, the Ministry of Transportation and Highways and the town of Gibsons. A critical need that has been identified is another North-South connection. This proposal raises issues where the environmental sensitivity of Charman Creek is considered, coupled with the difficulty to plan across jurisdictional boundaries.

D-1.2 Car Dependency

There are 4,110 unique (independent) licenses and 4,540 insurance policies issued in Gibsons (ICBC). Statistics reveal 1.5 cars per person over 16 yrs of age (# Licenses/ total population over 16yrs; ICBC and BC Stats), and 2.7 cars per household (# licenses/# occupied private dwellings; ICBC and BC Stats). In Lower Gibsons where density is higher and roads are integrated, the need for cars is reduced. In comparison, in Upper Gibsons major destinations are not within convenient walking distance (refer to above diagram depicting a 500m radius or 5 minute walking distance from Molly's Reach, Sunny Crest Mall and IGA Plaza). Discontinuous roads, large lot development and many more attributes lead Upper Gibsons to be increasingly car dependent, and thereby facilitating the evolving road pattern to look and function more like Vancouver than Lower Gibsons. Upper Gibsons is developing more similar to the other electoral district than to Gibsons patterns in terms of its density and spreading nature where cars are necessary for daily activities. The focus of the transportation section of the OCP(Nov 96) is on facilitating vehicular access, in particular to commercial areas. While it tries to reduce it, some of the measures recommended could actually do nothing but reinforce more or less directly car dependence: i.e. provision for more parking in lower Gibsons, avoiding direct access from residential lots to arterials... On the other end, this dependency can only be reduced if realistic alternatives are available.



Arterials and street systems with 500m (5-minute walking distance) radius around major destinations.

Lower Gibsons density and connections facilitate walking; most residents feel they do not need cars as their needs are met, "Many Lower Gibsons residents don't even have cars as they find all they need in the shops here and perhaps can not afford a car," Village Store Operator. Therefore, it seems financial constraints also facilitate the reduction of car dependency and promotion of alternate modes of transportation.

D-1.3 Engineering Standards

Current engineering standards for major arterials require road widths ranging from 24-30m, curbed edges, curb to curb paving, a bike lane and two sidewalks. Minor arterials require widths of 20m, curbs, curb to curb paving, at least one sidewalk and occasionally a bike lane (Gibsons OCP Engineering Standards). Engineering standards are based on physical and dynamic mechanics for optimum car flow and are therefore created for worst case scenarios and ultimate car efficiency. Visual, experiential, social and ecological relationships with roads are typically not considered. Gibsons' current engineering standards are the same standards applied in major development in the Lower Mainland, despite Gibsons unique character, historic settlement pattern and special feel. Given this, a major question arises: are current engineering standards appropriate in light of what Gibsons residents want? Application of current standards are demonstrated in the recently reconstructed Celestial Place, Aurora Way and South Fletcher. In these areas, street character, feel and appearance are greatly influenced by road standards. This is demonstrated in the sections of a typical standardized road and a typical non-standardized road (shown at right).



Section depicting current road engineering standards.

Although clearly spelled out as objectives in the OCP (12.10 'consider streetscape improvements', and 12.16 'support construction of sidewalks in existing developed areas if they fit the character of the area'), attention to character and "fitting" quality of the street is not necessarily adhered to. For example, recent application of road engineering standards has created either a typical suburban neighbourhood (Celestial Place and Aurora Way) or an Institutional-look (South Fletcher), neither reflecting the much admired character of Lower Gibsons. The description of the characteristics of arterials, collector roads and local roads in the OCP (12.2) apply regardless of the location in town. This contradiction between what the standards deemed appropriate by convention/by the Town, and what the residents of Gibsons want has been recently demonstrated and remains unresolved. Example: Franklin Road construction proposal and residents' dissatisfaction with universal standards applied to their neighbourhood.



Section depicting existing road.

D-1.4 Alternatives/Challenging the Status Quo

Transit System

The Sunshine Coast Transit System provides bus service to the Sunshine Coast Regional District from Langdale Ferry terminal to Sechelt, offering passengers routes to major destination points such as Gibsons and Roberts Creek. Buses run every hour with two official transit routes connecting the main commercial areas of the town, Upper and Lower Gibsons. Each route hence operates once every two hours and buses run for 10 hours of the day. There are an additional two buses running during am and pm peak hours. Users generally express positive support and satisfaction for the transit system, maintaining that it meets their transportation needs when commuting to and from Gibsons and their respective communities. However, one point of trepidation for passengers arises in regards to connections between the ferry and bus systems. Potential difficulties occur during extreme ferry delay, in which case SCTS does not wait for connecting passengers, who consequently must find alternative means of reaching their destination.



Cyclists and Pedestrians

There are currently few existing bike lanes and mixed uses of roads are conflicting. The town of Gibsons is in the process of developing a Trails Master Plan to be completed in the Year 2000. According to the *Request for Proposal for the Trail Master Plan*, the main objectives of the proposed trails are "to provide a community wide pedestrian and bicycle trail network which links neighbourhoods, parks, schools, shopping areas, and open spaces, and where appropriate, preserves wildlife corridors". The Pedestrian Trail Network would create recreational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities in a safe environment. Pedestrians would therefore be presented with green link options to other trails and parks in the surrounding area. With the implementation of such a trail system comes the opportunity for potential development within the community and encourage growth in business. On the same level, the proposed Cycling Trail Network would offer residents an alternative to automobile usage for work, school and recreational activity. These proposed bicycle routes would connect to existing pathways in the neighbouring Regional Districts.

Gibsons Harbour

As the "gateway to the Sunshine Coast", Gibsons Harbour is a busy area for local boats, visiting vessels and transportation vehicles. Float planes, marine tours and water taxis are some of the services offered to residents of Gibsons and its environs. In response to a rising number of commercial vessels, plans to expand the commercial harbour front to accommodate these numbers are being considered. An example of this is the addition of a float terminal for day-trippers.

High Speed Ferry Link

A passenger ferry linking the Sunshine Coast to downtown Vancouver is under consideration by private operation and clearly awaited by the Gibsons ferry-dependant commuting population.

Land Use

"People to places or places to people?". Transportation issues are directly related to land use planning. In turn planning, can greatly influence modes and routes of transportation. While Gibsons OCP (12.14) aims to encourage initiatives that reduce car dependence, alternative transportation and land use strategies are only addressed in the last two pages of the transportation section of the OCP. The residents of Lower Gibsons lack the essential amenities (i.e. groceries at IGA) that can only be attained in Upper Gibsons and vice versa. Yet, applying the 500-metre walking radius theory to a community with such a strong physical boundary between their two main commercial centres and unique demographics could prove to be impractical and unrealistic.

