

1. Agenda Packet

Documents:

[FEB 13 2024 RECREATION TRANSPORTATION MEETING \(PDF\).PDF](#)



## **Recreation & Transportation Subcommittee**

### **Meeting Agenda**

**Tuesday, February 13, 2024 – 5:30PM**

**Location: Town Office Meeting Room**

1. Call to Order
  
2. Review and discuss recommendations for Goals, Policies, & Strategies
  - a. Recreation
  - b. Transportation
  
3. Committee/Public Comment
  
4. Adjournment

This document includes notes on **potential** Goals, Policies, and Strategies captured from conversations that occurred during Comprehensive Plan Committee and subcommittee meetings from July 2022 through January 16, 2024.

Goals, Policies and Strategies within this document are organized by Topic Area. Those expressly identified by the State through Chapter 208: Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule are highlighted in **green**. Information considered by the Committee as something from the 2014 Comprehensive Plan that should be retained (or slightly revised) is highlighted in **blue**. All other information is from the current process and has been suggested by members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee (and the subcommittees of the same) or are my own notes and recommendations based on my understanding of the Committee's goals.

#### DEFINITIONS (per Chapter 208)

**Goals:** The plan must indicate the state goal or goals relevant to each topic area as identified in Section 3. Local goals may be added but are not required. (Note: These are essentially broad, overarching ideas.)

**Policies:** The minimum required policies for each topic area in Section 3 must be incorporated into a plan for it to be found consistent with the Growth Management Act. The language may be altered to better suit a community, but the specific intent of the minimum policy must remain. Altered policies must reflect the desired future direction of the community as stated in the community's vision statement.

**Strategies:** The strategies describe what actions the community will take to carry out its policies. Minimum required strategies identified in Section 3 for each topic area must be included unless sufficient alternative strategies are included. Alternative strategies will be considered by the Office to determine if they, in combination with the other strategies in the plan, address the goals of the Act. Strategies must identify the responsible party, anticipated timeline, and be developed pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4326(3). (Note: These are essentially more specific recommendations in order to carry out the broad goals and policies described above. For the purposes of Damariscotta's plan, they will be SMART-ER strategies, an acronym for specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based, with ways to be evaluated and the specific resources provided for each, where appropriate.)

## **Recreation**

### Goals:

1. To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters.
2. To provide opportunity for both active and passive recreation in Damariscotta.

### Policies:

1. To maintain/upgrade existing recreational facilities as necessary to meet current and future needs as identified in this section.
2. To preserve open space for recreational use as appropriate.
3. To seek to achieve or continue to maintain at least one major point of public access to major water bodies for boating, fishing, and swimming, and work with nearby property owners to address concerns.
4. To ensure that all Damariscotta citizens, regardless of age or ability, have access to both active and passive recreational amenities (including water access).

### Strategies:

1. Within 1-3 years, establish a town committee to address identified recreation needs and implement the policies and strategies outlined in this Plan.
2. Within 3-5 years, this committee should work to create an Open Space Plan (created alongside, at minimum, representatives from Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust) that identifies: (1) Certain, priority private sites that may be appropriate for recreation/conservation uses or trail network connectivity (through a clearly defined evaluation process); (2) Strategies to acquire land, including funding sources as applicable; and (3) How the land will be managed in the future (e.g. how it will be used or developed for either conservation or recreation purposes).
3. Within 3-5 years (as part of a strategy to acquire land, as noted above), provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property. At a minimum this will include information on Maine's landowner liability law regarding recreational or harvesting use, Title 14, M.R.S.A. §159-A.
4. Within 3-5 years, this committee should create a formalized water access plan to ponds where not currently available.
  - a. Within 3-5 years, the Town should pursue an application for an AARP Community Challenge grant to create an accessible water access point for individuals with disabilities.
5. Within 3-5 years, provide educational materials to private property owners about the Land for Maine's Future Program in order to encourage continued public access to our woods and waters.
6. Within 1-3 years, begin putting money in reserve for (1) the acquisition of land within the identified Growth Area for the creation of an outdoor multi-use park (including a skate park, basketball court, and outdoor gathering area for performances), and (2) funds to develop the park.
  - a. Within 7-10 years, the Selectboard should aim to create a park within the Growth Area identified in this Plan in order to create an open and attractive space for

residents to gather. Public engagement should be held as part of this effort to understand the desires of the community for this space. Considerations may include performance space, a skate park, and other desires driven by the community and budgetary constraints.

7. As an ongoing policy, comply with the US Access Board's minimum accessibility guidelines in all new construction. Within 1-3 years, require the same of applicants for Planning Board projects where recreational amenities intended for use by the general public (e.g. commercial marinas and docks) are proposed.

## Transportation

### Goals:

1. To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.
2. To prioritize community and regional needs associated with safe, efficient, and optimal use of transportation systems.

### Policies:

1. To safely and efficiently preserve or improve the transportation system.
2. To promote fiscal prudence by maximizing the efficiency of the state or state-aid highway network.
3. To continue to support efforts to bring rail travel to the region.
4. To promote public health, protect natural and cultural resources, and enhance livability by managing land use in ways that maximize the efficiency of the transportation system and minimize increases in vehicle miles traveled.
5. To meet the diverse transportation needs of residents (including children, the elderly and disabled) and through travelers by providing a safe, efficient, and adequate transportation network for all types of users (motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists).
6. To work to become a designated [Bicycle Friendly Community](#) by the League of American Bicyclists.
7. To work to become a designated [Age-Friendly Community](#) by AARP.
8. To encourage and facilitate active transportation (namely biking and walking) as a way to become a more sustainable community.

### Strategies:

1. Within 1-3 years, the Public Works Committee (along with the Town's Road Commissioner) should finalize the development of a prioritized improvement, maintenance, and repair plan for the community's transportation network.
  - a. As part of this process, the Town should refine the assessment criteria for rating roads and prioritizing improvements utilized by the Public Works Committee to include shoulders.
  - b. As part of this process, the Public Works Committee (along with PSAC volunteers) should perform a [walking audit](#) of: (1) existing sidewalk locations; and (2) all streets and intersections with the Growth Area identified as part of this Plan, in order to understand where pedestrian improvements may be necessary.
  - c. Prioritized improvements to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure should be annually funded through reserve accounts and/or the Town's Capital Improvement Plan. Improvements prioritized through this planning process (in order of importance as ranked by community members present at the 11/9 Active Transportation Workshop) are:
    - i. Create paved shoulders on Bristol Road
    - ii. Create a Route 1B alternative path from Mobius to School Street
    - iii. Create sidewalks/pedestrian connections from School Street to Biscay Road

- iv. Create sidewalks on High Street
  - v. Create a Bristol Road, School Street, Main Street sidewalk loop
2. As an ongoing policy, the Town should actively participate in regional and state transportation efforts, including continuing to advocate for funding for MDOT roadway improvement projects identified as priorities throughout this Plan, including the active transportation improvements identified above as well as improving the safety for all users of the School Street/Route 1B intersection.
  3. Within 1-3 years, amend local ordinances as appropriate to address or avoid conflicts with:
    - a. Policy objectives of the Sensible Transportation Policy Act (23 M.R.S.A. §73);
    - b. State access management regulations pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A. §704; and
    - c. State traffic permitting regulations for large developments pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A. §704-A.
  4. Amend the Town's Subdivision Ordinance standards to foster transportation-efficient growth patterns and provide for future street and transit connections. This should include a requirement to either propose connectivity to an adjacent street or hold an easement connection to allow for future connectivity unless waived by the Planning Board due to unique site constraints.
  5. Amend the Town's Site Plan Review Ordinance to require sidewalks along the frontage of new development located within the Growth Area as defined by this Plan.
  6. Within 1-3 years, adopt a sidewalk design policy to include, at minimum, a 5ft minimum width for new sidewalks, granite curbing on new sidewalks or sidewalk extensions, and a requirement for street trees adjacent to sidewalks.
    - a. Amend the Town's Subdivision and Site Plan Ordinances to require the same of privately funded sidewalks when required by the Planning Board.
  7. Within 1-3 years, revise the Town's policy related to the maintenance of bicycle and pedestrian areas, including:
    - a. Road surface markings (namely crosswalks) to require that they are repainted at least twice per year or research a more resilient paint option to ensure winter availability of crosswalks.
    - b. Require that sidewalks are maintained in winter weather at or about at the same rate as roadways.
    - c. Ensuring that plowing goes to the edge of road shoulders to allow for use by bicycles in all weather, given that this is a primary mode of transportation for people without cars.
  8. As an ongoing policy, advocate at the state-level for MDOT's customer service ratings to include criteria for bicycles allowing for an assessment of shoulders and any existing bike lanes.
  9. Within 3-5 years, pursue the creation of a Climate Action Plan for Damariscotta, to include a comprehensive emissions study and strategies related to reducing transportation-related emissions in the community.
  10. Within 3-5 years, work with the Town of Newcastle to promote connections to the East Coast Greenway through signage or otherwise.
  11. Within 1-3 years, begin ear-marking funds for a parking study of the community, including the identification of public parking areas, the demand for parking during both

peak season (summer) and off-season (winter) and recommendations for efficient use of parking in the community and the identification of any known issues. Plan to complete this study within 3-5 years.

12. Within 5-7 years, create a pull-off area for the Concord Coachlines bus that will minimize vehicular traffic backup and unsafe conditions on Main Street. This pull-off area should be located within the Growth Area designated as part of this Plan, should be connected by sidewalks and bicycle connections, and should include a proper bus shelter for those waiting to be picked up.
13. Within 3-5 years, set aside funding to conduct research into the location of potentially public rights-of-way in the community that could be upgraded to expand bicycle and pedestrian interconnectivity. Note: many Maine communities are utilizing interns from the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center to do this work.
14. As an ongoing policy, continue to refer to and enforce the PSAC Resolution for Bicycle Safety and Accessibility, including providing support for the installation of bicycle racks in strategic locations throughout the community; consider bicycle safety and accessibility in roadway, transportation, and recreation planning; and setting aside funds for bicycle-related improvements, especially when MDOT is planning for roadway improvements to priority corridors (as identified in the resolution).
15. Within 3-5 years, apply for a [Planning Partnership Initiative grant](#) through MaineDOT to explore the feasibility of “context-sensitive” traffic calming measures and the installation of bicycle lanes along Route 1B from School Street to Biscay Road. This grant will allow for conceptual renderings of transportation alternatives and cost estimating for potential future transportation improvements.
  - a. Within 1-3 years, begin appropriating to a reserve account a 40% match for this grant program (approximately \$50,000).
  - b. Within 5-7 years, begin funding a reserve account with a match for the installation of the improvements identified through the PPI grant.
16. Within 5-7 years or as it becomes necessary, develop regulations around the use of e-bicycles in the community in order to encourage the use of these unique vehicles while allowing for efficient and safe use of the Town’s transportation network.
17. As an ongoing policy, continue to advocate to the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA), along with the Town of Newcastle, to bring rail travel to the region.

# Recreation

## Overview

Communities with a strong culture of sport and recreation are generally happier and healthier. Recreation and physical activity are associated with a reduced risk of chronic diseases, and studies have shown that recreation has positive impacts on mental health (due to both physical reasons but also because recreation promotes connection with others).<sup>1</sup> In addition, recreational amenities within a community can be a driver of tourism and economic development. The Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation, a division of the Maine Department of Economic & Community Development, “leverages Maine’s assets and outdoor recreation heritage to grow the outdoor recreation economy and build Maine’s outdoor recreation brand.”<sup>2</sup>

In Damariscotta, easy access to local outdoor recreation opportunities is cherished by residents. Traditionally, residents have hunted deer and other game on private lands and canoed and fished in the river and lakes. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife stocks Little, Biscay and Pemaquid Ponds to support recreational fisheries. Residents boat and kayak on the river and fish for stripers and other marine fish. The Salt Bay supports a winter ice smelt fishery and tidal streams are fished for smelt in the spring.

In general, Damariscotta relies on schools and local nonprofit organizations to provide indoor and outdoor recreation amenities:

- The Central Lincoln County YMCA has indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, including indoor basketball, pickleball and tennis courts, outdoor baseball and soccer fields, the Lorna Bunting playground, fitness classes and other programs for its members. Youth soccer, softball, baseball and basketball programs are offered seasonally. The YMCA offers reduced-rate memberships and scholarships for those who cannot afford the price of a monthly membership. As of December 2023, 743 individuals in 353 households in Damariscotta had CLC YMCA memberships.
- Great Salt Bay Community School has two outdoor playing fields, a playground, and a well-developed trail system behind the school, all of which are available for public use when not in use by the school. The fields are used year-round by DamFast, a local Ultimate Frisbee group.
- Lincoln Academy, located in Newcastle, less than ½ mile from downtown Damariscotta, has outdoor tennis courts, a track field and a baseball field available for public use when not in student use. The Academy maintains an extensive network of trails used for running and cross country skiing that are accessible to the public.
- Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust (CRCT) maintains five trails and conserves more than 300 acres of publicly accessible open space in Damariscotta as well as trails and properties in surrounding towns. When the weather allows, CRCT volunteers install and keep up an outdoor ice skating rink in the farmers market field in front of

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<sup>1</sup> *The Health and Social Benefits of Outdoor Recreation*, California State Parks: Planning Division (March 2005).

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see <https://www.maine.gov/decd/programs/maine-office-of-outdoor-recreation>

Round Top Farm. The Salt Bay Farm trails are used by cross country skiers and snowshoers in winter. A popular sledding hill is also located at Round Top Farm.

- Snowmobile clubs in Lincoln County maintain interconnecting seasonal trails through private woodlands in Damariscotta and surrounding towns for use by snowmobilers. The groomed trail network is accessible to cross country skiers. One trail, dubbed Route 66, stretches from the woods at Business Route 1 south of Hannaford, through woodlands, follows powerline easements and crosses frozen wetlands and waters down into the Pemaquid peninsula.
- The Lincoln County Rifle Club, off upper Main Street (Business Route 1), has outdoor rifle and pistol ranges and an indoor heated range.
- Other private organizations provide important spaces for recreation and spaces to build community. Damariscotta is also home to a plethora of artistic and cultural amenities, discussed in greater detail in the Arts & Culture area of this plan.

The Town maintains few of its own recreation facilities. The Damariscotta Measured Mile, a one-mile loop along sidewalks and streets in the village area of town, was designated in 2020 after advocacy by the Public Safety and Accessibility Collaborative. The Measured Mile includes signage to identify this popular walking route and is heavily used by residents (though it should be noted that sidewalks are not available on this route).

The Town also owns and maintains boat dock floats and one canoe/kayak rack at the Damariscotta River boat launch in the municipal parking lot. Several parking places are reserved for boaters. A boat launch, picnic, and swimming area at Biscay Pond is owned and maintained by the Town. The Town also owns open space at the old town dump (now a capped landfill). The Town, in cooperation with the Maine Department of Transportation, builds and maintains a network of sidewalks throughout the community, discussed in detail in the Transportation section of this plan.

In general, important tracts of open space commonly used for passive recreation are owned or otherwise conserved thanks to the stewardship of Coastal Rivers. There has been some active recreation infrastructure identified as missing within the community. Demographic shifts could make the lack of this infrastructure feel more pronounced in the future.

## **Projected Demographic Changes & Potential Recreation Impacts**

As noted in the Population & Demographics section of this plan, approximately 26% of Damariscotta's population is between the ages of 25 and 44 (American Community Survey data from 2020). Additionally, about 14% of Damariscotta's population is school-aged children between the ages of 5 and 14 years old. The average age of Damariscotta residents is 41.6, meaning that residents of the town are almost 10 years younger on average than the whole of Lincoln County, where the median age is 51.2. These demographic shifts are expected to continue according to population projections. As the demographics of the community change, the increase in adults of child-bearing age and the increase in school-aged children will result in increased demands for family-friendly planning.

Some critical components of family-friendly planning relevant to this section are the provision of accessible green spaces and recreation areas. Additionally, as children age, it is important to provide active recreational opportunities. Active (developed) recreation areas in the community are severely lacking in Damariscotta. Currently, the YMCA has a playground appropriate for school-aged children and there are basketball courts at Great Salt Bay School, but the Town does not have a Parks & Recreation Department nor its own public playgrounds, ball fields, basketball courts, or other sporting facilities. In addition, there are no public play areas for toddlers or preschoolers.

For the purposes of this plan, **"active recreation"** means recreational activities that require specialized fields, courts or other developed areas. Examples include but are not limited to pickleball or tennis, baseball or softball, football or soccer, playing at a playground, skateboarding, and other similar activities.

Near the outset of this planning process, 8th grade students at the Great Salt Bay Community School participated in the sixth annual "GSB Students Investigate" by writing news stories, some of which were published in the January 5, 2023 edition of the *Lincoln County News*. Two students focused their articles on the benefits of active recreation areas to Damariscotta and its citizens. As student James Hanley noted, "There are basketball

courts at the YMCA, but people who want to go play need a YMCA membership. Some people may not want to pay each month, but still want to play sports and be active. There is no alternative to the YMCA that doesn't cost money, and everyone wants a place to play and hang out, especially if they love being active."

### Selected Quotes from Community Engagement Events

- Add playground/park for toddlers and preschoolers
- Add a public park, add a dog park
- Skate park
- More bike trails
- Need parking at Biscay Pond
- More public docking and better parking spaces
- Movies in the Town parking lot! More activities for seniors and children in town!
- Pool in local YMCA
- More "Third" places for community gatherings - art, music, cultural opportunities

Forty-nine percent of responses to the online survey put out as part of the Comprehensive Plan effort indicated that Damariscotta's recreational amenities are only somewhat adequate for respondent's family's needs; 18% said that existing recreational amenities are not at all adequate. In terms of outdoor recreational amenities, survey respondents indicated that walking or hiking trails (52

respondents) and swimming areas (44 respondents) were the most important to them. These were followed closely by open grassy space (26 respondents), benches or places to sit and rest (26 respondents), and playgrounds (24 respondents). Informal polls conducted by GSB student George Siegel for his article in the *Lincoln County News* found that, of 41 eighth-graders polled, about 75% of them would like to have an outdoor recreation area (namely a basketball court or other outdoor sporting facility) in Damariscotta.

### Open Space Conservation & Accessibility

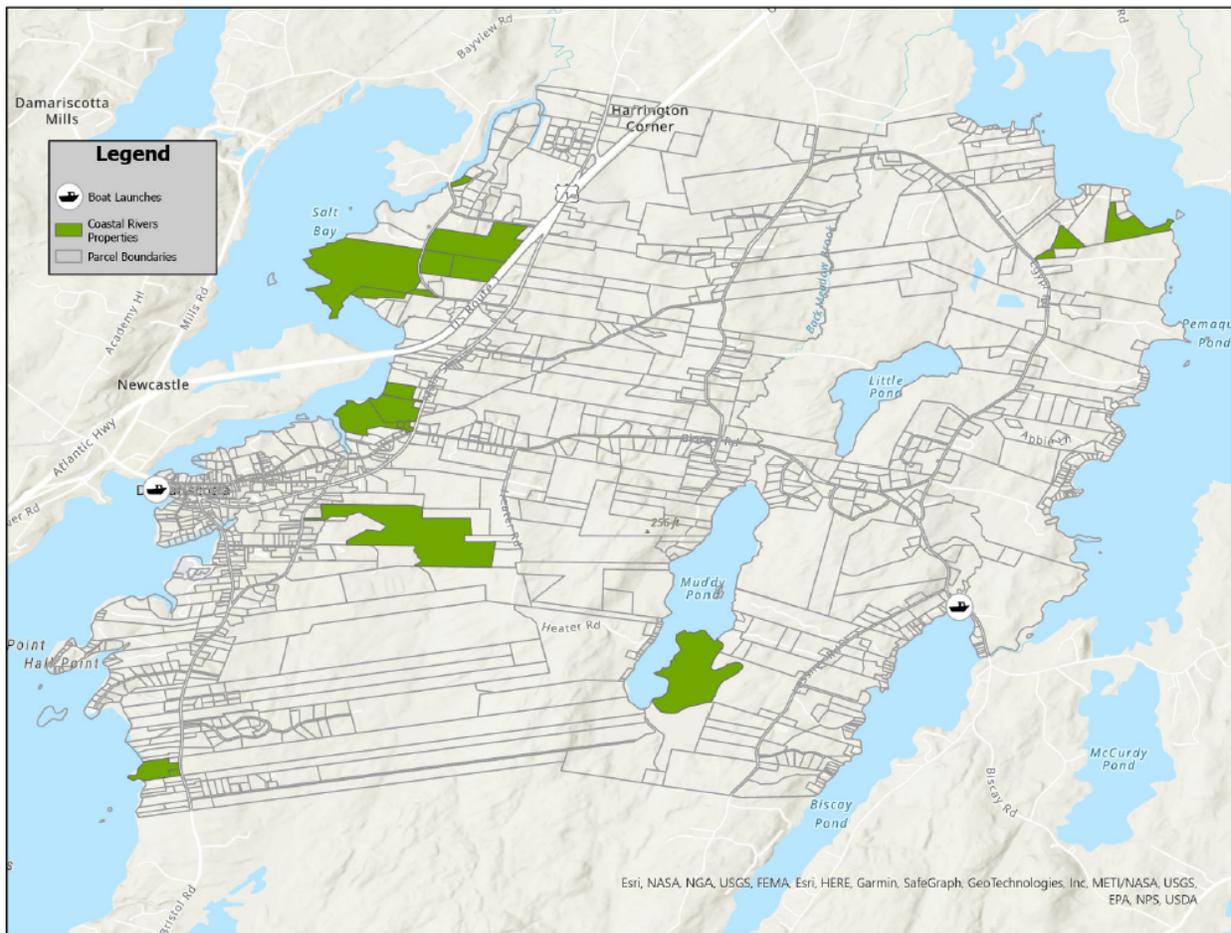
The Town relies primarily on Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust, a local nonprofit whose stated mission is to “care for the lands and waters of the Damariscotta-Pemaquid Region by conserving special places, protecting water quality, creating trails and public access, and deepening connections to nature,” to conserve land for open space and passive recreational use.

In the surrounding communities, Coastal Rivers maintains more than 30 trails totaling more than 51 miles (and counting!). Five of these trails are in Damariscotta. All of Coastal Rivers’ trailheads in Damariscotta are kept plowed throughout the winter for year-round access. One trail in Damariscotta, the Rhoda and Leon Cohen River Trail, which connects Round Top Farm to Whaleback Shell Midden State Historic Site is specifically designed for accessibility. The trail is 8’ wide with very little slope and a firm, smooth surface. Both trailheads are accessible for vans. There are no known use conflicts on these trails.

Trail Name	Parking available?	Sidewalk connection	Toilet facilities available?	Hunting allowed?	Dogs allowed?
Doyle Preserve (Coastal Rivers)	Yes	No	No	With permission	On leash
Huston Landing (Coastal Rivers)	Yes (1-2 spaces)	No	No	No	On leash
Round Top Farm (Coastal Rivers)	Yes	No	Seasonally	No	On leash
Salt Bay Farm (Coastal Rivers)	Yes	No	No	No	On leash
Whaleback Shell Midden State Historic Site (Maine DACF)	Yes	No	Seasonally (on Round Top Farm side)	No	On leash

Source: Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust

The Town does not currently have a mechanism (such as an open space fund or similar) to conserve land. The community relies on Coastal Rivers to permanently conserve open space that is of high recreational or ecological value to the community and occasionally appropriates funds to Coastal Rivers through the annual budget process (however, this has not occurred since 2020). Within the Damariscotta-Pemaquid Region, Coastal Rivers owns 60 properties, holds 58 conservation easements, and co-manages an additional 11 properties, which together total nearly 4,000 acres. For properties in Damariscotta specifically, see the map below.



*Data Sources: Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust, Town Tax Records*

The Town owns a narrow strip of land maintained as a waterfront park along the edge of the Damariscotta River. There is year-round parking available in the abutting downtown parking lot, as well as a public kayak storage rack and restrooms available seasonally from May to October. This area also includes the Town boat launch, which is accessible to the public along with parking spots set aside for boat launch users.

## **Access to Water Bodies**

Water bodies in Damariscotta include the Damariscotta River and Salt Bay, Pemaquid Pond, Biscay Pond, Muddy/Paradise Pond, and Little Pond. The public has access to some of these water bodies (Damariscotta River, Salt Bay, Pemaquid Pond, and Biscay Pond). Access may be only visual, or full boating access as described further below. Muddy/Paradise Pond has no public access. Little Pond has limited public access by design as it is the Town's public water supply.

Preserves maintained by Coastal Rivers allow passive outdoor recreation alongside the Damariscotta River (accessed via either Round Top Farm or Huston Landing), Salt Bay (accessed via Salt Bay Farm), and Pemaquid Pond (accessed via Doyle Preserve). All trails allow pedestrians water views, but there are no formal swimming or kayaking locations at any of the above. The Town does put out a canoe/kayak rack near the town landing that is available to the public during the spring and summer months for storage and easy access to the Damariscotta River. However, this is one of the few areas along the Damariscotta River in Damariscotta that is publicly-owned. There is limited public access to the river otherwise.

A boat launch maintained by the Town is located at the northernmost end of Biscay Pond (off Biscay Road). This site is very shallow with a sand bottom, which limits the size of watercraft that can be launched here; however, this limitation is important for the protection of swimmers as well as natural resources within the pond, such as loon nesting areas. The survey conducted as part of this planning process identified potential conflicts between swimmers and boaters at this location. Muddy/Paradise Pond has no public access. A portion of the southern end is owned by Coastal Rivers, but no trails or access is available through that property.

For the purposes of this plan, the term "**passive recreation**" means low-impact, non-motorized outdoor recreational activities or uses that do not require developed facilities and can be accommodated with minimal change to an area and its topography. Examples include but are not limited to walking or hiking, cross-country skiing, bird-watching, snowshoeing, hunting, fishing, and other similar activities.

Little Pond only has a public access foot trail to the water through an easement from the property owner, the Great Salt Bay Sanitary District utility company, with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife. Limiting public access to Little Pond is by design since it is the Town's water supply. In order to protect the water supply, no motor craft of any kind, including boats and snowmobiles, are allowed on Little Pond. Ice fishing, swimming and live bait are also banned. However, fishermen are allowed to use the foot trail and to

store canoes on the property, which also protects the water supply by encouraging users not to use the canoes on other ponds and potentially bring back invasive species. Fishermen are also asked to register their canoes with the Great Salt Bay Sanitary District.

## **Impediments to Accessing Recreational Lands**

Perhaps the largest threat that may impede traditional access to private lands in the future is development and a changing culture around public recreational access on private property. Large swaths of forest are required for hunting activities as it is unlawful to discharge a firearm within 300 feet of a building. Development pressure in more rural areas of Damariscotta threatens to break up existing forest blocks and limit hunting. However, Coastal Rivers is continually receiving donations of or purchasing new land, which typically includes increased access for the public.

Respondents to the survey conducted as part of this planning effort indicated that easements or increased public ownership would be the top improvement that would allow increased access to water bodies in Damariscotta (21.4% of respondents). This was followed closely by sidewalks (21.1% of respondents), increased maintenance at existing areas (16.9% of respondents), and bike lanes (14.7% of respondents).

Top improvements that would allow respondents increased access to trails, managed preserves and wildlife areas were similar. Sidewalks and increased easements or public ownership were tied for the top improvement, at 24.3% of respondents. This was followed by bike lanes (19.1% of respondents), and parking (16.9% of respondents).

## **Challenges & Opportunities**

What has been identified as missing from the community is active recreation infrastructure such as playgrounds, ball fields, basketball courts, pickleball courts, and similar that are open to all. As demographics in the community continue to shift younger (based on projections outlined), this disparity in recreational amenities will likely become much more pronounced.

It is also important to note that there is currently no access to the water for those with disabilities. AARP produces a biannual policy book which outlines policies that governments at all levels should aim to undertake in creating livable communities. One of the principles of livable communities is the ability for people of all abilities and ages to be able to enjoy community services and features that meet their needs.<sup>3</sup> Without ADA-accessible access to the water, a broad swath of Damariscotta's community is unable to enjoy this precious resource. In 2002, the United States Access Board, an independent federal agency that

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<sup>3</sup> AARP Policy Book 2023-2024, available online here: <https://policybook.aarp.org/policy-book/livable-communities/aarp-livable-communities-principles>

promotes equality for people with disabilities through leadership in accessible design and the development of accessibility guidelines and standards, released the minimum accessibility guidelines for recreational facilities, including boating facilities and fishing piers and platforms.<sup>4</sup> Any future changes to water access in Damariscotta will be required to follow these guidelines.

There is also limited parking at Biscay Beach for hand-carry boat launch users and swimmers. The parking that is available is quite informal and leads to users parking on adjacent, private property if the beach is busy.

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<sup>4</sup> The ADA Accessibility Guidelines provide requirements around locations, number of accessible boat slips required, minimum widths, maximum slopes, changes in level, doors, surfaces, and more, which must be followed when a new boating facility or fishing pier is created or when an existing boating facility or fishing pier is substantially renovated. For additional information, visit: <https://www.access-board.gov/ada/#ada-1003>

# Transportation

## Overview

Infrastructure such as bridges, established evacuation routes, sidewalks, cycling routes, parking lots, and more are essential for ensuring safe and effective vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle movement throughout the community. While the primary mode of transportation in Damariscotta is currently vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle accessibility is also important to the Town for both transportation and recreation purposes. Finding balance between the mobility of vehicles along the Town's road network and the safety and availability of pedestrian and cycling amenities has long been an objective of the community, documented in planning documents dating back to the 2008 *Damariscotta Sidewalk-Bicycle Plan*.

Enhancing walkability and bikeability are key components of our Town's values of liveability, vibrancy and sustainability. Biking and walking instead of driving reduces greenhouse gas emissions, allows people to be more connected to their community, and can reduce identified traffic congestion issues – but choosing to walk or bike requires infrastructure to make those trips both safe and appealing. Biking and walking are also primary modes of transportation for people who do not own cars, as public transportation within Damariscotta is essentially nonexistent.

This chapter analyzes the transportation system including roads, traffic impacts, pedestrian links, cycling infrastructure, bridges, railroads, and public transit. Understanding these issues and planning for solutions are important steps in meeting the Town's future priorities and needs. Consideration of impacts from natural hazard events will also be crucial as we continue to plan for the future of transportation infrastructure.

## Existing Infrastructure & Maintenance

### *Road System Infrastructure*

Damariscotta has 37.9 miles (200,491 linear feet) of public roadways, which vary in function and condition. The Town is served by one arterial road – Route 1. The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) defines an arterial road as serving countywide, statewide or interstate travel, linking cities and large towns to an integrated highway network.<sup>1</sup> There are also collector roads, which link villages, neighborhoods, and major facilities to the arterial network. Major collector roads in Damariscotta are Route 1B (Main St) and Route 129 (Bristol Road). Minor collectors are School Street south of Route 1B and Biscay Road. The State maintains both arterial and collector roads scheduled according to a 3-Year Work Plan, which is updated and revised on an annual basis.<sup>2</sup> Maintenance includes road resurfacing, repaving sidewalks, drainage work (ditching, replacing culverts, and replacing catch basins), pavement markings, pothole repair, winter snow and ice control, signage installation, and complete road reconstruction. Table 2 in the Appendix summarizes the work MDOT performed in 2022 in Damariscotta.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/csd/docs/roadwayinfo/RoadClassification.pdf>

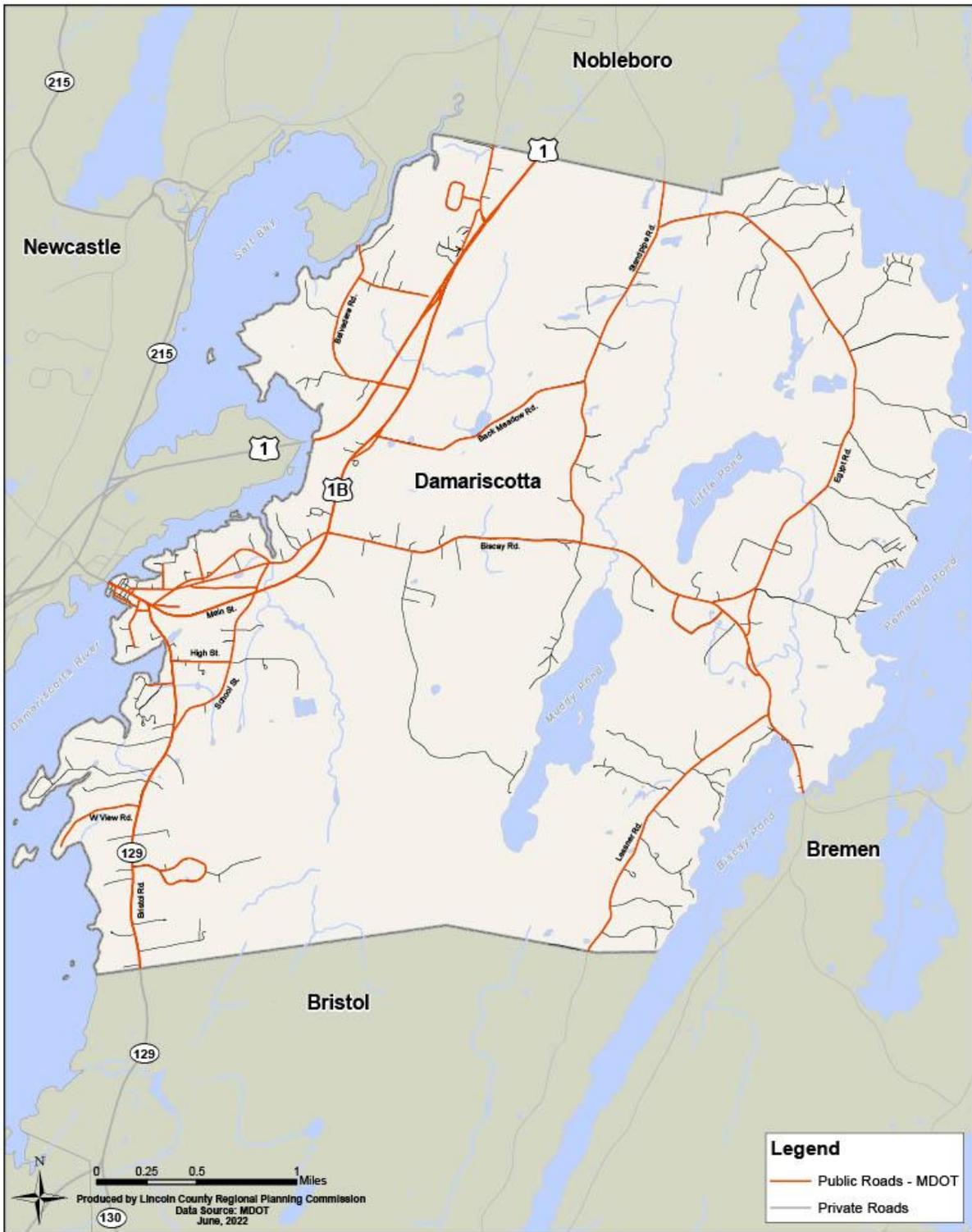
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/projects/workplan/data/workplan/town/Damariscotta.pdf>

Local roads in Damariscotta are paved and maintained by the Town's Public Works Department. Of the 37.9 miles of public roads in Damariscotta, about 22.1 miles are maintained by the Town. These include Belvedere Road, Church Street, Hodgdon Street, Pinkham Road, and Vine Street, to name a few. The Town annually appropriates funding for normal road maintenance and repair, including contracting out winter maintenance (plowing and salting). Larger-scale projects such as road resurfacing (needed about every 10 years), complete road reconstruction (needed about every 30 years), and replacement of certain kinds of culverts, for example, are typically proposed as capital improvement projects. Table 3 in the Appendix provides more details on these projects. At the 2023 Annual Town Meeting residents approved \$125,000 for FY24 for the Paving Reserve account, which is reserved for larger scale projects like road resurfacing (milling and overlay) or full road reconstruction, as needed.

The 25.4 miles of private roads in Damariscotta are maintained by the property owners served by the roadway. When a private road is created as part of a subdivision, §103.7(C)(2.10) of the Damariscotta Subdivision Ordinance requires that the private roads be maintained by the developer or lot owners until such time as they meet all municipal street design and construction standards (described in further detail below) and are approved by the voters of the Town at a Town Meeting.

The Damariscotta: Public & Private Roads map, below, shows the public and private road network in Town.

# Damariscotta: Public & Private Roads

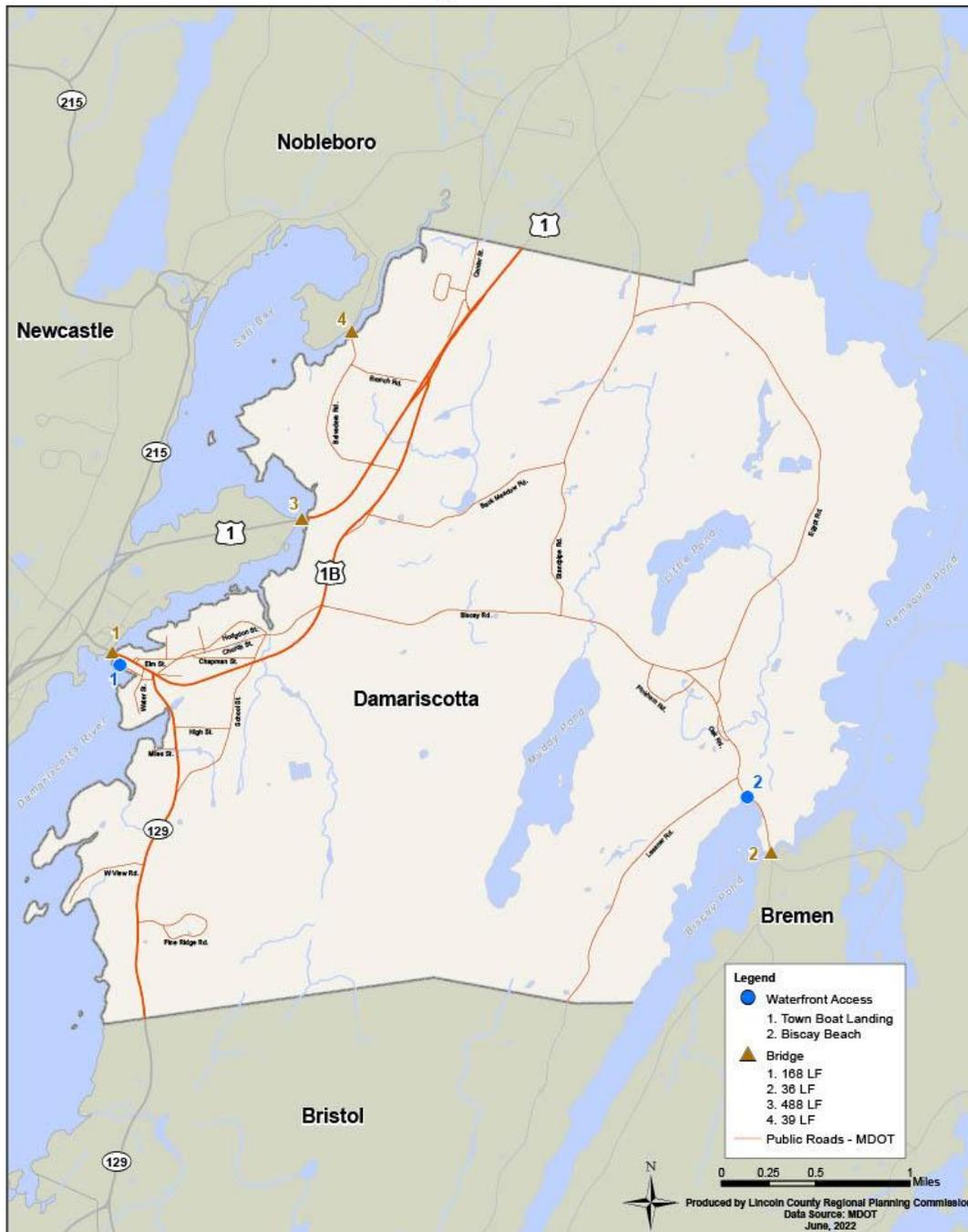


Map Prepared by Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission

### Bridge Infrastructure

All four bridges in Damariscotta are owned and maintained by the State and there are no bridge improvements being proposed by MDOT at this time. Table 5 in the Appendix shows details on their condition. The map below shows the locations of bridges in Damariscotta, the length of each bridge (in linear feet), as well as the locations of waterfront access - the Town Boat Landing and Biscay Beach.

**Damariscotta: Bridges and Waterfront Access**



Map Prepared by Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission

### ***Parking Infrastructure***

There is one public (town-owned) parking lot for automobiles in downtown Damariscotta as well as two bicycle racks. Winter maintenance of the downtown parking lot is currently contracted out with a local company through 2024. The municipal lot has recently been improved with an electric vehicle (EV) charging pedestal for public use. Access to downtown Damariscotta in the summer also frequently occurs by boat. Parking for watercraft is discussed in greater detail in the Marine Resources section of this Plan.

Other available public parking in Damariscotta includes marked on-street spaces on Main Street, Elm Street, Theater Street, Water Street, and parking lots at the Town Office, fire station, and elementary school.

Damariscotta adopted a Traffic and Parking Ordinance in 1998, last revised in 2015.<sup>3</sup> The Ordinance describes parking limits in the municipal lot downtown. The entire lot has a three hour parking limit between the hours of 6AM and 6PM (with the exception of the parking spots along the water's edge, which have an eight hour parking limit). The Ordinance also sets forth one-hour parking on Main Street between the hours of 6AM and 6PM daily, as well as winter parking bans.

Plans for a waterfront project downtown, which includes improvements to the municipal parking lot, are in the final design phase with an RFP for construction anticipated to be awarded Winter 2023/24. Construction could start as early as Spring 2024 with a final completion date expected by April 2025.

### ***Parking Standards' Impact on Development***

The Town's Site Plan Review Ordinance provides minimum parking requirements. Sec. 102.6(H)(2) of the Ordinance allows the Planning Board to waive the minimum number of required on-site parking spaces to zero in the downtown area (the current C-1 zoning district) for good reason, such as when shared parking scenarios or adequate on-street parking exists within 500 feet of the proposed development. Given this, minimum parking requirements are not believed to be discouraging development in downtown Damariscotta. However, minimum parking standards may need to be addressed through an Ordinance amendment rather than anticipating that the Planning Board will waive them in the downtown area, which can lead to controversy during project review.

### ***Pedestrian Infrastructure***

The map below shows the locations of about 12,700 linear feet of existing sidewalks in Damariscotta (further described in the Appendix, Table 6), including whether they meet ADA compliance. The majority of sidewalks are considered non-compliant mostly due to curb ramp issues including slope or lack of detectable curb warnings.

The sidewalk network in the downtown area is fairly built out, but there is a desire from residents to connect more of the surrounding residential neighborhoods to the downtown. In addition, sidewalks do not currently connect the elementary school to surrounding

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.damariscottame.com/sites/g/files/vyhlf4311/f/uploads/traffic\\_parking\\_ord\\_07-15-15.pdf](https://www.damariscottame.com/sites/g/files/vyhlf4311/f/uploads/traffic_parking_ord_07-15-15.pdf)

neighborhoods nor do they provide access to the businesses through the length of Business Route 1/Upper Main Street.

### Damariscotta: Downtown ADA Compliance



Map Prepared by Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission

In 2021 the Public Safety and Accessibility Collaborative (PSAC) created the Twin Villages Walking Map. The PSAC is a volunteer community group, composed primarily of

Damariscotta residents, dedicated to promoting safe pedestrian and bicycle initiatives and infrastructure. Their walking map shows the locations of sidewalks and trails in both Damariscotta and neighboring Newcastle, as well as the location of the Damariscotta Measured Mile – an easily accessible one mile walking loop adjacent to the downtown area involving Hodgdon Street, School Street, and Chapman Street. These streets have less vehicular traffic making the Measured Mile a pedestrian destination for safe walking (though it should be noted that these streets do not have sidewalks currently).

### ***Cycling Infrastructure***

The map below shows the locations of road cycling routes as designated by the Bicycle Coalition of Maine.<sup>4</sup> MDOT also has Damariscotta and Pemaquid area bike routes available on their website.<sup>5</sup> However, all of these routes require cyclists to share the road with vehicular traffic and in some cases to cycle on narrow shoulders, some of which need repair. Lack of paved shoulders was identified as a concern through the online survey and public engagement events held as part of this planning process.

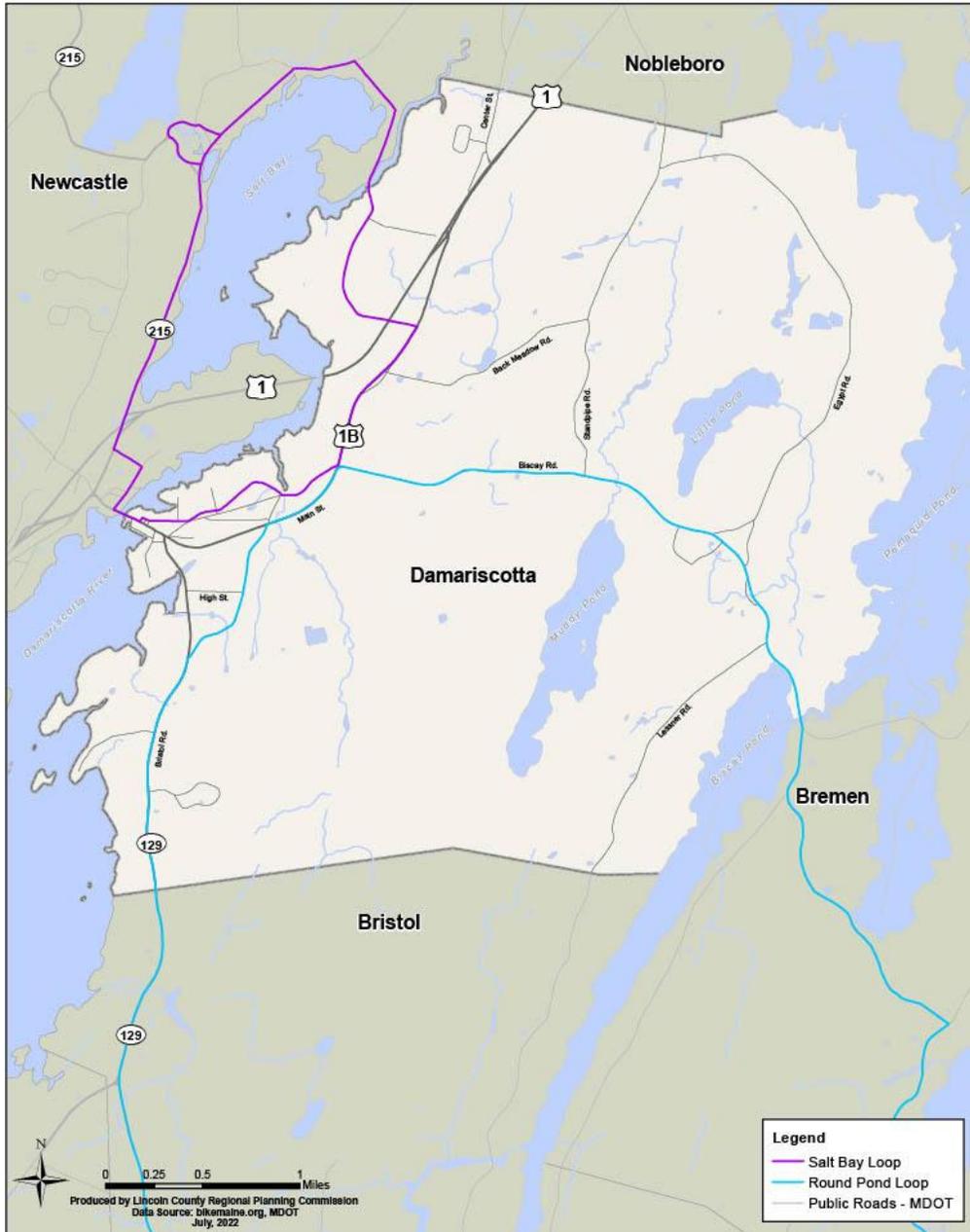
In addition to typical road bikes, e-bikes and other motorized mobility devices are becoming more popular nationwide.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bikemaine.org/where-to-ride/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.exploremaine.org/bike/midcoast/damariscotta.shtml>

## Damariscotta: Road Cycling Routes



*Map Prepared by Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission*

In terms of regional cycling amenities, a portion of the East Coast Greenway, a 3,000 mile walking and biking route with connections from Maine to Florida, runs along roadways in neighboring Newcastle.

In 2015, the Newcastle-Damariscotta Bicycle-Pedestrian Committee, along with Robert Faunce, Lincoln County Planner, prepared the Newcastle-Damariscotta Bicycle-Pedestrian

Plan.<sup>6</sup> Goals and objectives to increase safety included signage and traffic-calming measures, embracing Maine Safe Routes to Schools programs, and creating routes to key destinations.

In 2021, the PSAC developed and circulated a Bike Rider Survey to Damariscotta residents and seasonal visitors to better understand cycling habits, needs, and current infrastructure gaps. 136 respondents provided valuable feedback on desired cycling routes, concerns about existing cycling infrastructure issues, and biking facilities that could be provided by the Town (such as public bike racks or bicycle parking). Respondents also underscored the need for regional coordination in bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Following the survey, the PSAC developed a Cycling Subcommittee to analyze the response data and begin prioritization of recommendations and implementation measures. So far the Subcommittee, with support from the full PSAC, identified suitable locations for bike racks, assessed current conditions of existing cycling routes, and created a Resolution for Bicycle Safety and Accessibility (see inset) that was recently approved by the Damariscotta Selectboard.

The Resolution ensures the Selectboard will consider these safe cycling priorities, along with improvements for pedestrians, when planning for and/or modifying existing roadways, transportation and recreation infrastructure.

### **Resolution for Bicycle Safety and Accessibility**

- Incorporate engineering and funding to install paved shoulders on the following priority roadways in order to make cycling safer and more enjoyable: Bristol Road (HCP Level 3), Business Route 1 north of McDonald's (mostly HCP Level 2), and Biscay Road (HCP Level 4) to Egypt Road, School Street to High Street/Piper Mill Road.
- Set aside funds in a Capital Improvement Fund to construct shoulder improvements when MDOT is repaving or reconstruction to improve our roadways.
- Support community/PSAC efforts in establishing and implementing a Bike Rack Initiative – an effort to consistently install the same model of bike racks at strategic locations in Damariscotta – via funding considerations, use of town property, and installation support.
- Develop plans and supporting actions to construct a family/all ages route, or routes, for cycling through and around town. Examples of formalized, safe and enjoyable on-road and off-road cycling to consider include: enhancement to roadways, bike pathways, multi-use paths and trails, and emerging off-road development.
- Use the “Town of Damariscotta Bicycle/Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility Checklist” to ensure that bicycle safety and accessibility is being considered in roadway, transportation, and recreation planning.

## **Public Transportation Infrastructure**

From improved community health to affordability, public transportation systems create the foundation on which communities can become more livable and prosperous. Public transportation can include trains, ferries, or buses. In more rural areas like Damariscotta, small buses or vans may be the primary mode of public transit. Benefits of public transportation in a community can range from improved public health outcomes (encouraging more walking or bicycling from the home to the nearest bus stop), to positive environmental outcomes (allowing the use of less fuel to move more people), to lessening traffic congestion and improving community mobility. More than 68% of survey respondents

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[https://www.damariscottame.com/sites/g/files/vyhlf4311/f/uploads/2015\\_newcastle-dama\\_bicycle-pedestrian\\_plan.pdf](https://www.damariscottame.com/sites/g/files/vyhlf4311/f/uploads/2015_newcastle-dama_bicycle-pedestrian_plan.pdf)

indicated that public transportation in Damariscotta is either lacking or severely lacking, indicating that respondents are not able to experience the benefits of public transportation in the community.

### ***Bus Service***

Concord Coach Lines has a bus stop on Main Street. Passengers can purchase tickets online for once-daily service each for north- and south-bound rides. As the coach bus cannot pull off-street properly, traffic backups on Main Street occur when the bus picks up and drops off passengers.

There is currently no local bus service in Damariscotta. However, Midcoast Public Transportation through Waldo Community Action Partners (CAP) coordinates a few rides in Damariscotta through MaineCare to get riders to medical appointments. They are interested in expanding their public transit services in Damariscotta and the community is actively considering how to pay for this service. In addition, F.I.S.H. (Friends in Service Helping), a volunteer-run organization, offers rides at no-charge to people across Lincoln County, including Damariscotta.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Railroad Service & Infrastructure***

Damariscotta is located in proximity to the Rockland Branch, which connects Brunswick with Rockland via railway. The line was owned by Maine Department of Transportation and operated by Canadian Pacific Railway from 2019 to 2022.<sup>8</sup> In 2022, Midcoast Railservice became lessee-operator of the 57-mile Rockland Branch of the rail corridor. The line provides freight transportation to industrial customers in 23 states and two provinces, including 40 marine and inland ports, per the Midcoast Railservice website.

In 2014 a twice-daily excursion route between Rockland and Brunswick (with trains stopping occasionally in Newcastle at the train stop off of Depot Street) was piloted. Expansion of this route has been discussed and attempted previously. The desire for alternative transportation, as well as economic development brought by increased visitors through rail lines, are frequently considered as organizations try to make the passenger rail line financially viable.

In the summer of 2023, Coastliner Excursions (a part of Midcoast Railservice) resumed scenic passenger operations by piloting trips between Bath and Wiscasset, as well as in the Rockland area, which included a stop in Newcastle (in walking proximity to Damariscotta's downtown). Trips utilize 76-passenger, self-propelled railcars. Initial public response to the trial excursion route has been positive.

### ***Ferry Services and Water Access***

Currently Damariscotta does not have a ferry service or water taxi, although public access to the Damariscotta River is available in the downtown, as discussed further in the

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<sup>7</sup> <https://lincolncountyfish.com/>

<sup>8</sup>

[https://knox.villagesoup.com/news/canadian-pacific-to-buy-rail-company-that-runs-rockland-branch/article\\_498b37a5-4e99-52fb-8277-3be0ffb5df5.html](https://knox.villagesoup.com/news/canadian-pacific-to-buy-rail-company-that-runs-rockland-branch/article_498b37a5-4e99-52fb-8277-3be0ffb5df5.html)

Recreation chapter of this Plan. A survey question about the desire for this kind of service was posed during this planning process, and the majority of the community has not expressed any strong interest in further exploring waterside transportation facilities.

### ***Airports***

The closest airport serving Damariscotta is the Wiscasset Airport. Wiscasset's airport is located at such a distance that activities in Damariscotta have no impact on its airspace. The closest airports providing commercial service are Portland International Jetport, Maine State Airport in Augusta, and Bangor International Airport. Other airports in the greater region include: Brunswick Executive Airport and the Knox County Regional Airport in Owls Head.

### **Road Design Standards**

The design of highways, streets and roads are highly important for user safety and the maneuverability of vehicles. Quality roadway design directly impacts the user experience, and roads themselves are a key contributor to the development and growth of the local economy. It is important for roads to allow the creation of a network of interconnected streets, rather than many cul-de-sacs off of one central roadway. Road design can support alternative transportation (such as biking or walking) – but only if they are thoughtfully designed with all users in mind.

In Damariscotta, new roads are typically only proposed as part of private subdivisions (both residential and commercial subdivisions). The Town is primarily focused on maintaining its existing roads. Thus, the road design standards included in the Town's Subdivision Ordinance are critical, as they dictate the Town's expectations for the creation of new roads, which are primarily constructed by private developers

### ***Subdivisions***

There have not been any new subdivisions constructed since the prior (2014) Comprehensive Plan. A recent subdivision, approved but then not built, was required to install sidewalks at the expense of the subdivider in accordance with the regulations outlined below. However, as the subdivision will not be built, the sidewalks will not be built.

With respect to street layout, certain kinds of subdivisions (single-family subdivisions containing less than 14 lots, multi-family subdivisions containing more than 4 units but less than 25 units, or commercial subdivisions) may have one dead-end street than may be up to 1,000 feet in length, with turnaround connecting with existing public streets on an approved subdivision plan for which a bond has been filed. Single-family subdivisions with 15 or more lots proposed or multi-family subdivisions containing more than 25 dwelling units shall have at least two street connections with existing public streets on an approved subdivision plan. More detailed road design standards are shown on Table 4, within the Appendix.

For dead-end roads, in addition to the design standards detailed above, the Road Commissioner must approve the design of the turn-around for those roads that are proposed as public ways. The current language reads that the Planning Board *may* require

the reservation of a 20-foot easement in line with the road to provide continuation of pedestrian traffic or utilities to the next road. The Board may also require the reservation of a 50-foot easement in line with the road to provide continuation of the road where future subdivision is possible.<sup>9</sup>

The Subdivision Ordinance requires that subdivisions be designed to provide access to individual lots only by interior subdivision roads. This effectively prohibits ‘piano key’ subdivisions along public roads, instead requiring developments to extend perpendicularly from the road. This is especially important in rural areas where piano key lots create a suburban appearance even though overall densities may be low, and they effectively preclude much future development to the rear. It also minimizes the number of curb cuts, thereby reducing potential traffic conflicts and improving traffic flow.<sup>10</sup>

The Planning Board *may* require, under the same Road Design Standards (Sec. 103.7(E) of the Ordinance), that sidewalks or pedestrian paths are installed at the expense of the subdivider between the existing sidewalk and the subdivision if a public sidewalk is located within 200’ of where the subdivision abuts or fronts onto a public major street. In addition, if significant pedestrian traffic is expected to be generated by the proposed subdivision (in the determination of the Planning Board), then the Board can require the installation of sidewalks adjacent to the project site. There are no specific requirements under the subdivision ordinance to install bicycle racks or bicycle infrastructure, though the Site Plan Review Ordinance does give the authority to the Planning Board to require bicycle racks for certain large-scale developments being reviewed under that Ordinance (per Sec. 102.7(D)).

## **Traffic Management & Safety**

### ***Traffic Generators***

Damariscotta has a number of destinations that attract residents and visitors alike which play a role in the traffic counts provided on the map below. Damariscotta’s Main Street (Business Route 1) is home to a variety of shops, restaurants and grocery stores. Great Salt Bay Community School (GSBCS) is located on Route 1B and serves between 350-400 students in grades K-8. Adjacent to GSBCS is the Central Lincoln County YMCA, a significant community resource offering childcare, summer camps, wellness classes, exercise facilities, etc.

Additionally, the town hosts various community events, including the annual Damariscotta Pumpkin Festival (in October 2022, there were approximately 50,000 attendees).

Bristol Road (Route 129) is the access point for residents and visitors to the neighboring communities of Bristol and South Bristol, the Pemaquid Peninsula as a whole, and LincolnHealth - Miles Campus, the Town’s largest employer and the medical service center for the area. Traffic counts have remained relatively stable between 2016 and 2019, with Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts ranging from  $\pm 4,300$  to  $\pm 7,200$  including heavy truck traffic and between  $\pm 1,000$  to  $\pm 1,500$  trips to Miles.

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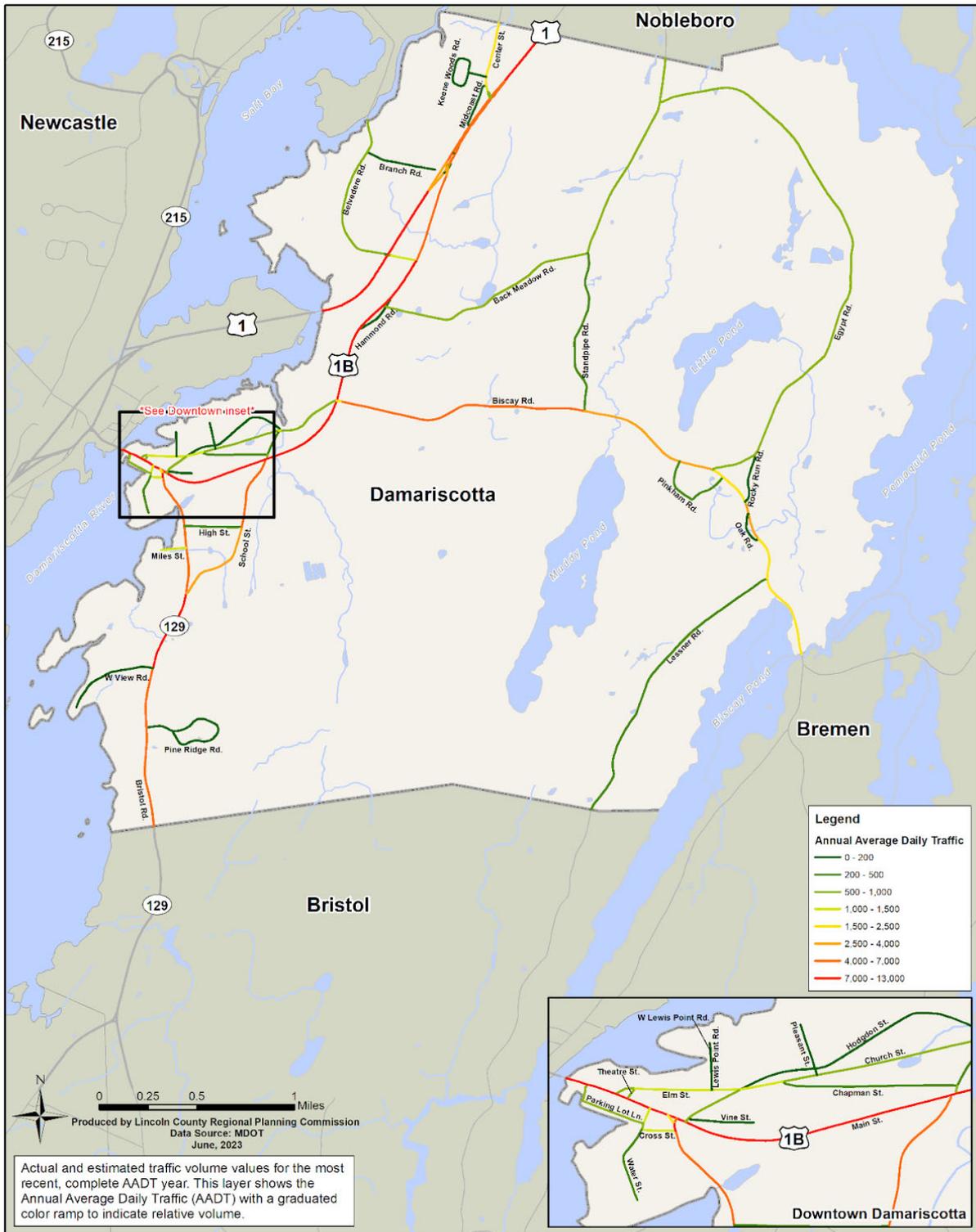
<sup>9</sup> See §103.7(H)(5) for additional information.

<sup>10</sup> See note on Page 32 of Chapter 103, Subdivision.

***Traffic Count Information***

The map below visually shows the daily traffic volumes on Damariscotta roads. This information comes from the MDOT short-duration counts (SDC) and continuous count sites (CCS) that provided estimated and actual traffic volume values for the 2022 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) Report. Table 7 in the Appendix provides the full AADT for all roads wholly or partially within Damariscotta.

# Damariscotta: Annual Average Daily Traffic



Map Prepared by Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission

### ***Accident Occurrence***

MDOT identifies high accident locations, which are intersections or road segments that are sites of a high number of accidents. These are also provided on the map below.

For 2017 to 2019 data, MDOT identified the road segment from intersection of Elm and Main to the intersection of Main Street and Parking Lot Lane as being a high accident location with ten (10) crashes occurring. 2022 data indicates the segment from the intersection of Main Street and Water Street to the intersection of Main Street and Theatre Street as a high crash section with eight (8) accidents occurring resulting in 4 injuries.

The intersection of Route 1B and School Street is also problematic with travelers using School Street as a cut-through. This intersection was the site of a fatal accident in 2019. It has been discussed extensively by MDOT and Town officials, but a safe solution to minimize crashes at this location has not yet been implemented.

The intersection of Belvedere Road and Route 1 has been described as one of the “most dangerous rural intersections in Maine.”<sup>11</sup> MDOT has added the construction of a roundabout at this location to their work plan for 2025.<sup>12</sup>

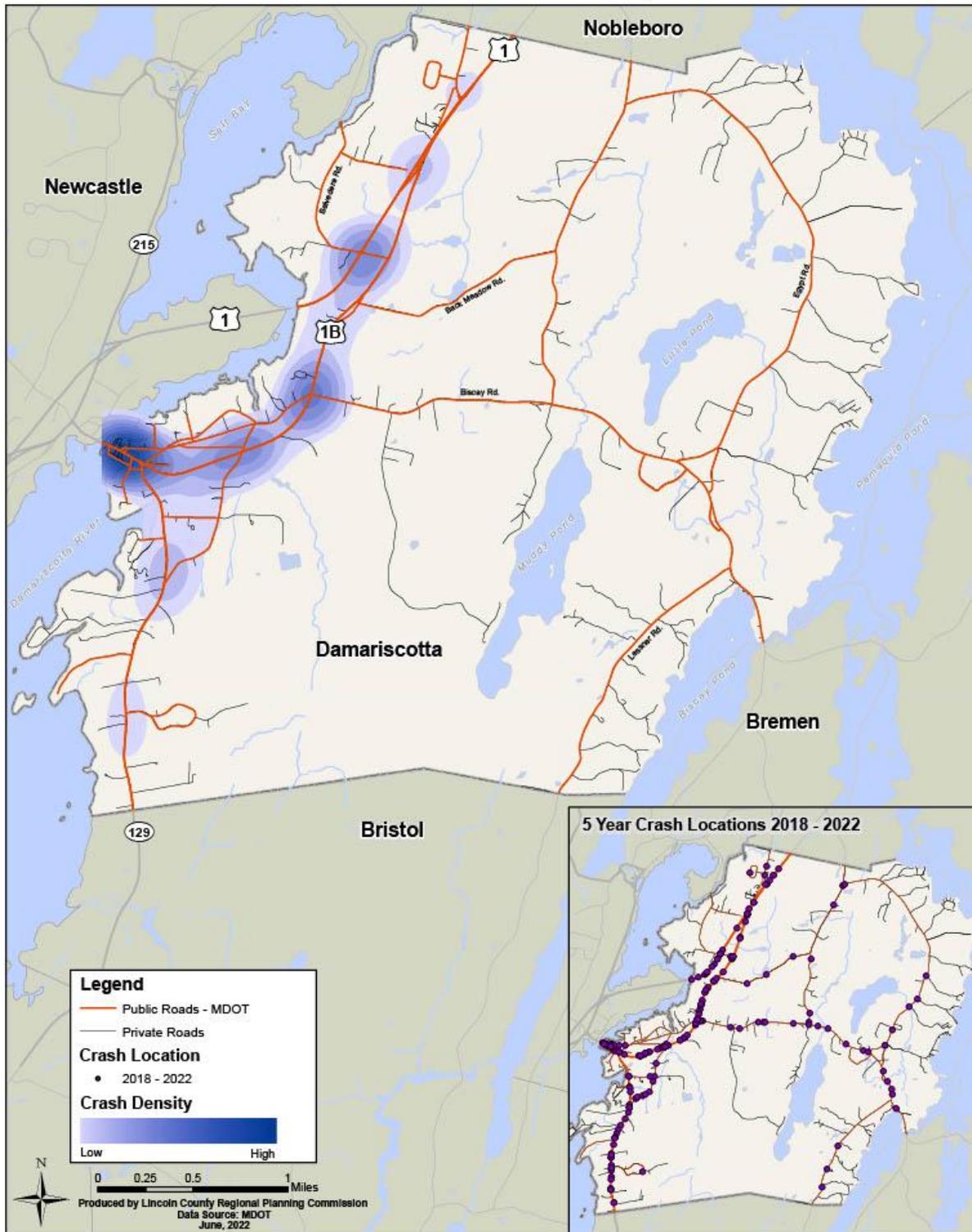
Accident occurrences are analyzed further in the Appendix of this Plan.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://lnme.com/currentnews/dot-planning-for-belvedere-road-roundabout-in-2024/>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.maine.gov/mdot/projects/workplan/docs/2024/2024\\_Work\\_Plan\\_Final.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/mdot/projects/workplan/docs/2024/2024_Work_Plan_Final.pdf)

## Damariscotta: 10 Year Crash Density 2012-2022



Map Prepared by Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission.

## **Access Management**

Damariscotta has adopted local regulations to ensure safe use of and access to roadways, including minimum site distance requirements, drainage improvements, and width standards. Such standards are described in the Subdivision Ordinance (Chapter 103) and the Driveway and Driveway Entrance Ordinance (Chapter 802). Neither ordinance addresses proximity of new driveways to existing driveways or to intersecting roads unless a project requires Site Plan Review by the Planning Board.

Route 1, as an arterial road, is access controlled so new development is prohibited from having a direct access onto the highway. A permit for a driveway or entrance being proposed on a major or minor collector road (state-aid road) is required from MDOT. In Damariscotta, these roadways are Route 1B, Route 129, part of School Street, and Biscay Road.

## **Regional Plans**

Transportation planning at the local, county, regional, and state level has occurred since the last Comprehensive Plan update. Below is a list of plans that are relevant to Damariscotta and should be incorporated into Town vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and alternative transportation planning in the future. Also noted is a brief summary of what has been done (related to transportation improvements) since the adoption of these Plans, where applicable.

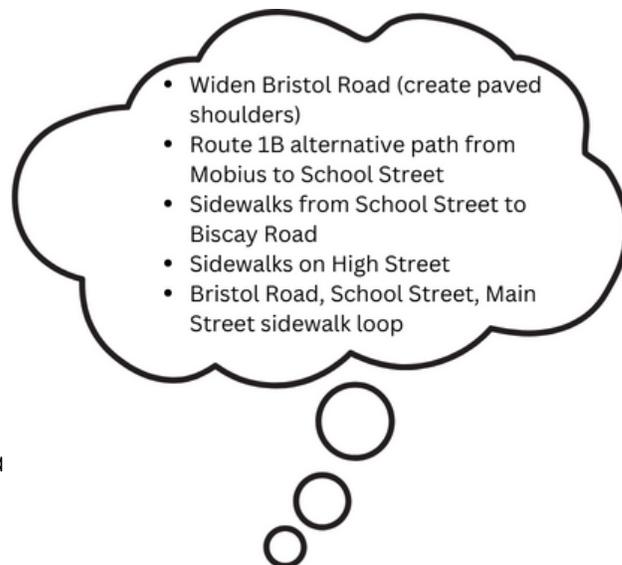
- The Damariscotta/Newcastle Sidewalk and Bicycle Plan (2008): Sidewalks were installed on Elm Street, Church Street, Bristol Road, and being implemented on a section of Route 1B from Biscay Road to Great Salt Bay School. Some traffic-calming measures were introduced.
- Damariscotta Heart & Soul (2010): Some improvements to the Municipal Parking Lot and some sidewalk extensions have been installed.
- Midcoast Route 1 Corridor Management Plan (2014): Some high crash locations have been addressed. A trolley service was piloted in 2014. Some sidewalk plans introduced.
- Sustainable Strategies for Small Cities and Rural Areas – Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities (EPA) (2015)
- Newcastle-Damariscotta Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan (April 2015)
- PSAC Bike Rider Survey (2021)
- Maine Department of Transportation Family of Plans (2022): This includes the State’s Active Transportation Plan.

## **Issues & Opportunities**

### ***Identified Community Concerns***

Results from the survey conducted as part of this planning effort show that transportation infrastructure is important for improving quality of life in Damariscotta. Specifically, “improve pedestrian infrastructure” was ranked 2nd out of 16 possible strategies, “enhance public transportation in Damariscotta in the region” was ranked 4th of 16, and “improve bicycle infrastructure” was ranked 10th of 16. When asked what Damariscotta needs more

of, 17% of respondents mentioned ‘sidewalks or pedestrian infrastructure’. At the November 9, 2023 Active Transportation Workshop (held as part of this Plan), attendees ranked the list of active transportation projects at right (listed in order of importance).



Notably, survey results related to parking in the community were inconclusive, as some answers mentioned increasing and others mentioned decreasing parking (especially within the Main Street/downtown area). Anecdotally, there is a perceived parking problem in the downtown area (as shown through some of the answers to the online survey and interactive mapping activity hosted as part of this planning effort), especially during large events and during the peak tourist season where public lots may be of insufficient size to accommodate an influx of visitors. Timed parking limits in the municipal parking lot have been identified as a potential issue for employees of downtown businesses, because there are few other public parking areas within close proximity to their employer.

It should also be noted that the only municipal parking lot is within a FEMA flood zone, and while a deployable floodwall will be available as soon as 2025, it may be prudent to consider finding new parking areas for long-term use. A parking study may be necessary to understand if parking issues are actually due to a lack of parking spaces or from a problem of parking management. The facilitation of shared parking agreements with private parking lot owners (especially during large community events) has been identified as a way to manage parking in the community.

When considering the overall transportation system in Damariscotta, survey respondents found public transit options lacking or severely lacking. Similar responses were also given for access to regional transportation (railway); access to taxis or other rideshare; and accessibility for people with disabilities. Additionally, respondents felt bicycle facilities were severely lacking or lacking.

A common theme, from responses to the interactive mapping activity hosted on the project website, was bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Many commenters said they felt the existing sidewalk network was inadequate or in disrepair and noted the lack of shoulders on roadways. A few comments advocated for an increased number of safe sidewalks for “healthy walking activities for our aging population as well as young families.” Suggestions for improvement included sidewalks to enhance safety, introducing raised crosswalks and bump-outs to calm traffic and increase pedestrian visibility and safety, and creation of a multi-use path for pedestrians and bikes. One respondent in the mapping exercise noted that paved shoulders on Bristol Road would better allow for safe biking as well as better pedestrian safety.

Survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that Damariscotta’s downtown is safe to drive in and safe to walk in, while also noting that it is often congested. This is because Route 1B serves as Damariscotta’s Main Street, as well as the primary access point to the Pemaquid Peninsula, leading to conflicts by multiple uses of this road as both a major state route and a local service road with a pedestrian oriented downtown.

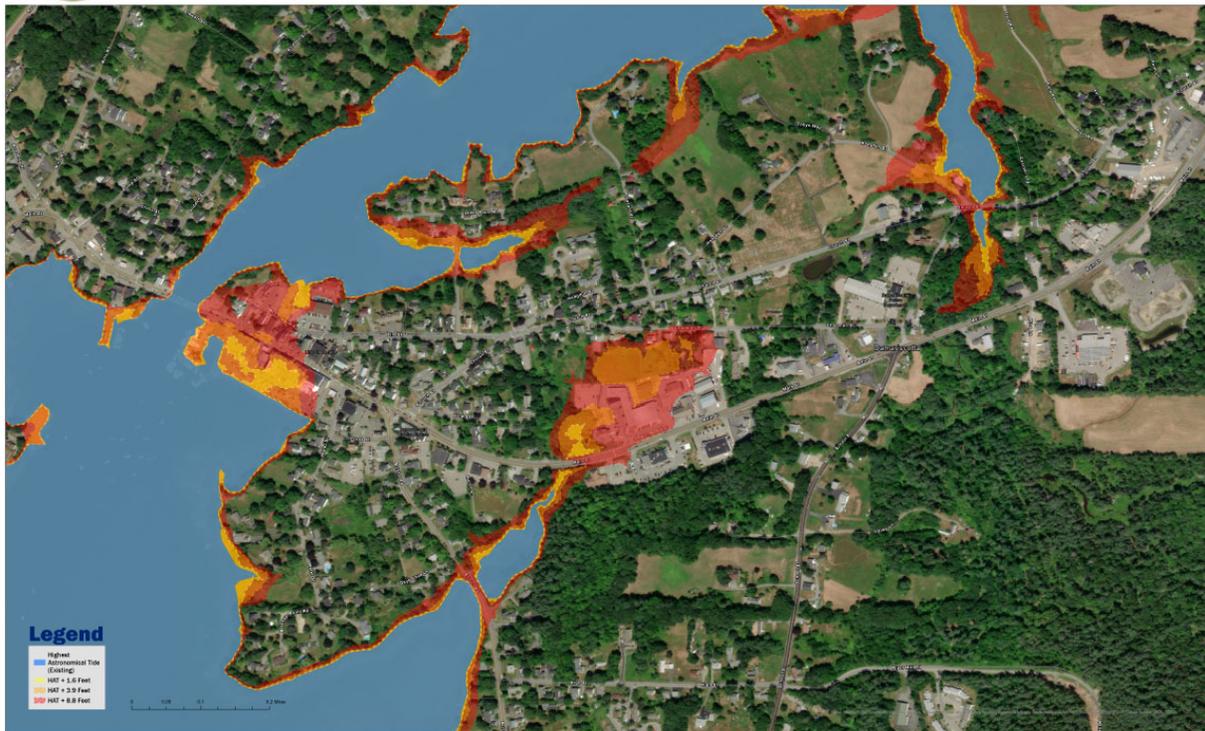
In addition, 88% respondents noted the ability of roadways and intersections to handle traffic was either only adequate or lacking. A similar response was noted for the condition of roadways.

### ***Considerations for the Impacts of Natural Hazards & Changing Climate***

In 2021, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in collaboration with federal and state agencies and the Town of Damariscotta, began development of a dynamic model to simulate flood conditions under different sea level rise projections. These models project future risk based on a combination of sea level rise and storm recurrence intervals identified by the Maine Climate Council and hydrologic analysis, respectively. Preliminary results suggest that sea level rise will contribute to substantial flooding in downtown Damariscotta during major rainfall or storm surge events. The image below shows the possible future inundation risk to the Damariscotta’s downtown.



## **Sea Level Rise & Storm Surge Scenarios**



In January 2024, Damariscotta experienced about 3.3 of storm surge, flooding the municipal parking lot and downtown businesses. Rising sea levels and flooding events in the future will also lead to inundation of roadways, preventing access to homes and businesses. *Maine*

*Won't Wait*, the State's 4-year plan for climate action, recommended committing to manage 1.5 feet of sea-level rise by the year 2050 and 3.9 feet of sea-level rise by the year 2100, and preparing to manage up to 3 feet of sea-level rise by the year 2050 and up to 8.8 feet by the year 2100. Under these scenarios, many roads would be inaccessible to emergency responders. The Nature Conservancy's Coastal Risk Explorer includes estimates of the cost to upgrade or fix roads that would be inundated at \$180,000 at 1.5 feet of sea-level rise, \$530,000 at 3.9 feet of sea-level rise, and about \$1.5 million at 8.8 feet of sea-level rise.

As part of the County Hazard Mitigation Plan update in 2021, Damariscotta identified a number of road and culvert mitigation actions, which will be crucial for reducing long-term risk to coastal and riverine flood hazards. A full list of projects and their current status is included in the Appendix of this Plan as Table 3.

### ***Emissions Reduction***

In addition to increasing resilience to storm events, a reduction of vehicle emissions can help mitigate climate change.

Transportation is responsible for 54% of Maine's annual greenhouse gas emissions. When analyzed by vehicle type, 59% of Maine's transportation-related emissions are from light-duty passenger cars and trucks; 27% are from medium- and heavy-duty trucks; and the remaining 14% come from rail, marine, aviation, and utility equipment vehicles.

While we don't have specific data for Damariscotta, we operate under the assumption that our data would be similar to the statewide transportation emissions trends.

In 2020, the Governor's Office of Policy, Innovation and the Future completed *Maine Won't Wait: a Four-Year Plan for Climate Action*. The Plan has identified statewide goals for improving the reliability of the State's transportation network while reducing emissions.

**Maine's rural character and relatively low emissions from other sectors – like electricity generation – make our transportation emissions disproportionately high compared to other states. The average Maine vehicle travels approximately 12,000 miles per year. An analysis of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in Maine found that 65% of our driving occurs on rural roads, with 35% in urban and suburban areas. Most of these miles are driven in the southern half of Maine.**

-Maine Won't Wait, Page 39

To embrace the future of transportation, the State has three goals: accelerate Maine's

transition to electric vehicles, increase fuel efficiency and alternative fuels, and reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Damariscotta can play a role in this effort, especially the strategies to reduce vehicle miles traveled. At the state level, strategies to meet this goal include:

- Increasing public transportation funding to the national median of \$5 per capita by 2024;
- Relaunching GoMaine to significantly increase shared public community options by 2022, and;
- by 2024, establish state coordination, strengthen land-use policies, and use state grant programs to encourage development that supports the reduction of VMT.