## VEHICULAR: THE INDIVIDUAL STREETS AND DRIVING

### NORTH/SOUTH STREETS

MAIN STREET: (in traditional "Main Street" role) is a primary and town-centered circulation spine (2-way) with two purposes regarding vehicles: First, it is Lee's major north-south local street (and primary commercial hard public space) that feeds to all town areas. Second it is the major regional route (Rt 20) connecting to and passing through downtown en route to greater regional and interstate locals. (The dual vocabulary of Interstate lightpoles and signage coexisting with the smaller local signage now attests to simultaneous multiple scales of vehicular meaning). Main Street therefore endures the bulk of all traffic. It's south end is specifically the most traffic-congested part of town, especially obvious as one makes the swinging turn from Park Street, (the most dangerous interesection) where the traffic competes with high cbd activity and chaos. Trailor trucks, moderate trucks, and autos either barrel around corner or hesitate in confusion. They race up Main Street on minimal days, and on busy days jam and bottleneck at entry, competing with pedestrians, with vehicles parking (backing up or waiting) or turning to/from Eaton Street. A reduction here of traffic volume & conflict, and a smoother sequence is much desired for driving efficiency, safety, and a pleasing impression; It is most urgentlty needed at south/oval end of Main Street, and signifigantly needed at north and mid Main Street. Traffic lights are non-existant, and may be needed as part of a response to traffic conflict in those locations, pending further study. (See e/w streets regarding intersection descriptions). A truck bypass outside of Main Street, in conjunction with design correction throughout town and on Main Street itself, are all needed to minimialize Main Street's traffic problems.

HIGH STREET: provides secondary n/s travel, along the upper eastside residential hill, for two-way traffic for residential & local use. It is in good condition and has relatively light use, as it should for a residential street, except for some oil an other service trucks. It connects from Park Street at the east side of the south end (bypassing the Oval/Main street area) to upper Center Street on the north end-- which ultimately engages much of its traffic. This street holds option for becoming a formal traffic bypass-- indeed it already serves as a back up for emergencies. However this study discourages it as a bypass, because though it would reduce flow on Main Street, it would still bring traffic through downtown. (The residential area should instead be protected, and traffic on the intersections on Main and Upper Center Streets should be minimized).

RAILROAD STREET: provides secondary n/s two-way travel, through the west side of town for autos, but especially for all kinds of light and very heavy service trucks. It provides the chief service access to buildings of the Backside of Main street, Chopper, and the Eaton street stores, bank, post office and arobi areas; it also provides customer/employee access and parking /drive through for those immediate buildings. In addition, buildings at the northern end are directy accessed by Railroad Street, including the Dresser-Hull properties, the promising Sullivan Station Restaurant, and a dozen small residences. Railroad Street itself is accessed at it's north end by Elm street; and at the south end by either Eaton Street where it merges, or indirectly connects the Chopper/Morgan entrance or from Park Street (by struggling randomly through Price Chopper parking activity and competing with the menuvering service vehicles). Fortunately some trucks enter and leave Railroad Street from Elm Street without penetrating the length of the Chopper Area, nor hitting Eaton/Main Street. Railroad Street has extremely poor definition, irregular or no edges and a wide curve ambiguously merging with the parking expanses at the Eaton intersection-- which is space consuming, confusing, and dangerous. Surface conditions vary from fair to very poor. Railroad Street is rarely

used as an effective bypass or alternate for Main Street-- as one might expect by its own flow problem, circuitousness, and poor image-- except for those engaged in miscellaneous driving behavior, or attempting short cut from Elm to Eaton and back when Main Street is jammed. The street is limitedly used for those destined for Main Street buildings in general (beyond the backside areas) because the Eaton Area parking is limitedly used for Main Street destinators. * Though it does not relieve Main Street traffic congestion at this time, Railroad Street potentily holds good options for creating an innertown version of a truck bypass, possibly by realigning it and extending it to West Park St.

CANAL STREET: Accessed from lower (west) Center Street, is a dead-end passage of varied width & rough surface, with two right angles, terminating at Gendels. At present it adequately serves the lower river area at the north end of town to access the resident and commercial working places (Fumasoni's, Milton North's, or Gendel Enterprsies). Volume at this area is relatively low. Canal Street is another option (but not first choice) for a truck bypass. Otherwise, improvements are necessary only if there is an increase in commercial activity or the vacant lot near the train tracks, or possible conjunction with a proposed river scheme (for vehic/ped access) or other developments. Canal Street's immediate saftey/flow problem is its excessively wide and ill-defined curb cut where it intersects the Lower Center Street town entry turn.

EAST-WEST HILL STREETS

Located east of Main Street in the residential hill area, these four one-way streets have adequate width (that vary per street from narrow to moderate, with and without walks), and are in fair to good condition. These are used to access residences, the churches, the old stone school house, and for a relatively quiet about or through-town local use. Some unnecessary truck traffic (beyond needs of oil co or servicing buildings) brings noise and disruption requiring enforced legible policy. Any signifigant traffic congestion occurs at Main Street intersections. No traffic/pedestrian lights exist but their need is dubious on quieter streets. Specifically:

FRANKLIN STREET: (the only one way from Main St to High St) is a moderately wide, visible sidestreet (with walks on both sides; parallel parking informally occurs on south side occassionally in week or during Church events, crowding street travel somewhat). It is only moderately active, but the busyest and most public-tolerant of the easthill streets. It services High street area residences, or local drivers exiting southbound by avoiding south Main Street. It also provides access to the Franklin Church and the Congregational Church, with informal dropoff at the curb and the grass side lot (which is a candidate for parking extentions). As a connector between Main and High Street/Park Street, Franklin Street sometimes acts as a clock-wise circulation loop around the whole Oval Park area, especially for church and courthouse activity-- adding to its public/commercial relevancy. There is actually limited residence on Franklin Street itself to disturb, until it meets High Street, so if necessary Franklin Street can endure even heavyer or more continuous local use during different times to relieve Main Street than it does presently, especially for southbound traffic. But caution must be taken by planners not to overtax the street commercial visitor traffic because it esentially is within the residential district. Northbound traffic using Franklin Street particularly needs to be controlled so to not add disturbance to the High Street residential area. Note too that southbound turns from Main Street would require crossing the northbound lane creating possible intersection problems. It seems acceptable however that the street and residential area can absorb occasional overflow parking and exceptional use during special days of commercial and church events.

CHOPPER ENTRYWAY : The Chopper Way (one lane entry/ one lane exit) is analogous to Eaton Street in serving the Eaton area, but with concentration on Price Chopper. It is actually a parking lot double entry defined by clumsy planters, and much wider than need be for actual travel, and overwhelms Main Street. It is even more of a traffic problem than Eaton Street, as the most troublesome intersection within downtown (except for Park Street Main Street)-- occuring opposite Oval Park, as the first intersection after for northbound traffic on Main Street; Drivers use this way to enter and leave the Chopper/Backside area are in conflict with the entry's own parking activity as well as Chopper's and Morgan House's activity, and lane crossings on Main Street. (See also limited walks). ((NOTE: Northbound left turns into Chopper Way entail Main Street lane crossings that creace most of the problem; and northbound exits from Chopper Way left to Main Street are secondary. Southbound exits are tertiary as a problem on Main Street but cause bottleneck in the south side of parking lot itself. Southbound entries would help Main Street, if it weren't for the bottlenecked parking within the lot that spills out into the street)). The need for a Chopper Entry Way seems inevitable, here at least in restricted form. But the urgent need for general Main Street traffic relief by regulation, or a bypass or other Eaton area access/departure points is most evident here as well.

ELM STREET: Connects Main Street to Railroad Street, to provide access to and from the Eaton/Railroad Street areas. (See Railroad Street traffic discription). Presently Elm Street is poorly defined (lacks curbs or walks), and has an unresolved intersection with Railroad Street at the promising Sullivan Station development. Sullivan Station, parking, and the empty north parcels should be resolved in conjunction with this street. The success of Sullivan and adjacent projects, and any parking/driving improvement in the Eaton/Railroad area would bring Elm Street increased importance. (Elm Street aligns with Ferncliff Street, but endurs only moderate thru travel at this time from Ferncliff (one way). This Elm/Main Street intersection has minimal congestion problems now, but any increase on Railroad Street might require a traffic light and traffic policy).

"THEATER STREET"- is prominantly located at the north edge of the "South Main Street Distict" (on the north side of the theater building, where it runs between the public library (eastward) and the public arobi building (westward), connecting Main Street with Railroad Street. It is undersused, being narrow, short, dangerous in winter, curbless/walkless, broken surfaced, muddy in rain, and steeply graded-- but it must be addressed with redevelopment of the theater building and overall revitalization systems. Though the road surface is poorly defined, the spatial passage is itself tightly defined by the several structures along it-- in a pleasing "medieval" scale (making the street seem appropriately longer)-- requiring exactitide in spatial sub-delineation. The street's alignment with two major public buildings begging connection, makes this unique e/w-penetrating visula/space corridor have great potential for pedestrian and/or auto use,-- in possible conjunction with new structure(s) and parking schemes. The pedestrian vs vehicular options, within the limited width of the space, constitute a "promising delimma" worthy of strong design focus.

SCHOOL ST, FERNCLIFF ST, ACADEMY ST: (one-way from High St to Main St):

Academy Street is the dominant of these three westward hill side streets, with greatest local thru traffic. Its greater width (allowing present walkways and parallel parking both sides, without hindering the travel lanes) appropriately handels travel/parking/walking for its heavyer residential population and the white church at the Main Street intersection. It also services the beautiful stone "school" building at the east end (High Street intersection): a dramatic terminal vista is seen of the school building from Main Street. This street does and can absorb additional local thru-traffic, spillover commercial parking-- but caution should be taken to protected it from commercial and even peripheral local residents, because it is the most residential of the downtown streets.
Ferncliff Street is narrow, eroded and irregular, connecting eastward to beyond downtown (with a narrow sidewalk on its south edge). It accesses the oil company and a few residences only, with the lowest traffic demand of these three streets-- although is actually informally used two-way. It aligns to be continuous with Elm Street, but is used for thru travel only occasionally (as Railroad Street is limited to certain useage) therefore creating only slight conflict at the Main Street intersection. Winter passage is most difficult on this street.
School Street is the narrowest of these three streets, with irregular form and condition. It has a greater number of residences on it to service than the other three streets (that should not be disturbed), but the least off-site traffic-- as is appropriate to maintain.

**EAST-WEST LOWER-SIDE STREETS**

EATON STREET: is a dominant e/w street providing major two-way access between Main Street and the Eaton/Backside/River area in general, including its own "Eaton Street P.O. and commercial buildings". Beyond penetrating the Main Street Buildings, Eaton Street is defined by buildings and walkway only on its south edge; it is undefined on its north side as it merges with the dangerous Railroad Street curve in the ambiguous parking area, where conflict occurs by service trucks and autos, even when numbers are low. More importantly, the Eaton/Main Street intersection creates traffic jams for both Main Street and Eaton Street, due to vehicles entering/leaving/crossing Main Street plus conflict from parking and pedestrian movement on Eaton Street itself. Particularly on busy days, the difficult & unsafe entry/leaving of Main Street (used mostly for entry from south) adds to the Chopper Street disruption-- contributing to backups on both sides of lower Main Street. Eaton Street is also wider than need be for its own traffic flow, even for the present informal parallel parking (resulting in the limited pedestrian walks). Studies show that Eaton Street holds a major opportunity as an auto/pedestrian link to revised parking and to the river.

Lower Center Street (750' between Main Street and north riverbridge), on the north end of downtown, continues the local/regional/interstate rt 20 traffic flow (via Laurel Street to/from Lenox 4 miles and Pittsfield 10 mlles and beyond; plus it directly accesses a signifigant density of its own roadside CBD structures-- including neighborhood oriented stores (grocery, services, Joes), the generic KFC, mill property, and some residences. Inevitable curb-cuts at each (needlessly wide at the KFC/Railroad Street junction), the train passage, the unrestrained roadside parking, and cross-lane turning all contribute to the driving disruption on this street and stop-go jamming on busyer days. Winter conditions replace on-seasonal volume as a traffic problem-- the hill requires careful plowing and sanding through the winter due to steepness and turns. Throughout, the confusion factor remains tolerable, but the street occassions rather severe driving problems where it approaches and intersects Main Street. Clear reorganization of parking and service truck pullovers, tighter control of curb-cuts, and reduction of distracting visual clutter would desirabley reduce driver's confusion and conflict for an improved, even flow. (Yet, even here, to restress a maxim for all Lee, it is important to maintai most the existing unique, authentic character, that is indeed desirable-- and avoid the undesirable generic-engineered impositions). This would also allow driver's to experience the existing positive qualities: for vehicles entering the north end, after crossing riverbridge would engage a sublime and iconic eastward view of rising street, dressed with powerfully expressive old utility lines, signs, buildings juxtaposed against the looming, encroached landform backdrop. * For Center Street's problems, though, the 'contextual' situation of regional/interstate traffic volume (and need of a truck-thru bypass), is again to be considered the major problem source, and proper focus for proposals.

Upper Center Street (500' between Main Street and High Street, then continues eastward) is a quieter, local oriented street, appropriately narrower than Main and lower Center Streets. It directly accesses a dominance of private residences that line both sides of the street, and carries local traffic to/from High street for other local residences, for service or for general cut-through (eg to avoid Main Street traffic). Workers to/from mill add to the street flow as well. The only real conflict on this street for drivers is at the Main Street intersection: vehicles often don't stop as they build up speed westward down hill; or they unexpectedly continue to climb eastward against Main Street's dominant westward turning. This all lends to occassional jamming on Main and lower Center Street; Winter conditions make this dangerous. Note that stop sign is needed here for Upper Center (in conjunction with Main Street signage options in need of study). Traffic-light potential or improved signage here also needs study.

* Park Street/Main Street/Center Street "choreographic vehicular experience" potential: The existing structure of Park and Center Streets as Main Street's termini & regional connector junctions is fortunate for potential revitalization, because (when the distracting circulation problems are resolved and driving is quality enhanced)-- drivers would positively experience these existing right angles in context of the larger rt 2o (or pike) as distinct points of "entry" and "departure" at each end of downtown: a strong kinestetic sensation and sweeping views as one drives to/from regional connectors and Main Street; Main street is experienceable as a straight roadway piece strongly fixed by the clasping right angle Park and Center Street junction 'elbows' of the undualting ruruality of rt 20 roadway (perhaps preceeded or followed by the flikering commercial-rural mix of winding Housatonic Street and by the straight, wide, open fast pike and winding-down of the Lee interstate rotary). This horizontal sequence is complemented by simultaneous vertical change, so in all, the downtown experience is "enter - engage - depart" correlated by "turn - straight - turn" and correlated with "plateau - rise - fall (or fall, rise)". The existing riverbridges further signify entry and closure of downtown. Park and Center Streets, no matter which direction traveled, thus act in reciprocation-- sequentially rhythmic for drivers, and choreographically superb for marking a sense of coherent downtown Lee. (See regional description for the entire driving choreography, and prime information regarding different drivers' location/destinations and regional focal points).

## IMMEDIATE RT 20 CONNECTORS: WEST PARK/PARK STREET AND CENTER STREET

Main Street is a Route 20 widened straight-segment, running approximately 2250' north-south through downtown. Each end of Main Street connects at right angles to slightly undulated Route 20 segments (running east and westward) known locally as Park Street (at the south end) and Center Street (at the north end). These distinct "jointing" streets are the linkages of downtown Lee to the highly undulating regional Route 20 system and beyond. (See the contextual description/locus). They also have their own roadside buildings that are part of the CBD with direct curb-cut access. The general driving conflicts here are part of regional traffic flow problem described early, combined with functional design problems of these streets described below (eg curbcuts, poor definition, cluuetr, parking). This makes them at times inefficient for drivers, sometimes unsafe, and detracting from a potentially remarkable functional/aesthetic circulation experience. Despite these street's problems, their horizontal and vertical alignment sequence-- obscured by traffic problems on busyer days-- essentially hold a remarkable visual /spatial/kinesthetic experience that designers can reveal: for a distinct driving experience that's part of an overall contextual and downtown entry/exit sequence. This would be an important factor for regular drivers and for potentially attracting or diverting visitors. In detail these streets are:

Park Street (500' between Main Street and High Street, then eastward continuously) has signifigant volume combining different use patterns. Immediate to Oval park, Park Street provides access to True Value Tire, Victoria's, Lee Saving Bank CBD activity; eastwardly, Park Street becomes Housatonic Street (commercial strip and other residential access) leading to/from the pike or continued eastward with the aforementioned major local/regional/interstate flow. Westward of the Main Street intersection, Park Street becomes named "West Park Street" (600' between Main Street and south riverbridge) leading past Price Chopper & Bank area, over Lee's south riverbridge, and 4 miles to Stockbridge; Familiar regional and local shoppers destined for the Price Chopper & Bank and (less so) other buildings in Eaton vicinity often elect West Park Street entrances instead of Main Street entrances. This desirabley reduces Main Street traffic, although contributes to unorganized driving within the parking area; also, those entrances are in need of clarification and distinctly consolidated curb-cuts. The right turn from Main Sytret to West park is smooth for drivers at this time, once clear Main Street conflicts.

At the Main Street/ Park Street-West Park Street intersection, two short and narrow medium strips with a stop sign adequately separates Park Street's two-way traffic. Additionally, a small island with signage effectively allows west-pointed traffic lanes to divide so the majority of traffic can turn right for Main Street, and others stop and then go straight westward onto West Park Street. However jamming of the former lane occurs from Main Street's back up due to volume and downtown's internal circulation conflict (see description); (there is also some asphalt unclarity and conflict as it merges with Oval Park's parking area). Additional jamming occurs at the latter lane as vehicles stop to allow cross-over from Main Street to eastbound rt 20 or U turn to Park Street's commercial buildings. Main Street and much regional/interstate traffic volume (in need of a truck-thru bypass) is therefore again to be considered the major problem source and the focus for proposals. Traffic-light potential here seems obvious on first analysis, but needs further study not provided here.

## B) VEHICULAR: THE EXISTING DOWNTOWN PARKING

**IMPORTANCE OF PARKING:** Parking is crucial in Lee both for accomodating 'general' access to downtown, and 'particular' access to buildings and spaces-- at all times and for all purposes: for working, shopping, worship, recreation, visiting, and living. Although Lee has a walkable-scale downtown, people persist a strong desire to park immediate to destinations, especially if in a hurry, if carrying items (or service), and during rainy or winter weather. Even when already parked, people in Lee often drive and repark successively to different destinations in rapid turnover or in segments of the day. While this is often valid, there are negative aspects that accompany the excessive vehicular dependancy, such as overall traffic congestion and the diminishing of potential pedestrian space. Unfortunately too, there is an entrenched misperception in Lee that offstreet parking would be "incovenient" (when it would actually be overall more convenient for vehicles); and there is underestimation of the ominus pedestrian-space potential in Lee due from parking redistribution. Designers should therefore appreciate the vaildity of vehicular-dependency but have a strong conviction to persue great opportunities in trading-off mislocated proximate parking as they work with the town to forge proposals. The importance of balanced parking distribution in the context of an overall plan for pedestrian livability and better traffic flow is further compounded if Lee wishes to attract and accomodate a signifigant increase of visitors (shopping or recreating) in revitalization.

### THE EXISTING PROBLEMATIC DOWNTOWN PARKING PATTERN

As evident in the analysis diagram, the parking space pattern in Lee is one that evolved to eventually satuate the downtown-- especially in the busy South end. At present, there is actually a surplus "gross volume" of all kinds of parking space in Lee: along streets, drives, small and larger lots. Surfaces range from gravel to asphalt, with angle, perpendicular and parallel, or non-designated adhoc patterns. (Designers should recognize too the signifigance of parking "user overlap" in Lee, presently and potentially: for example, weekday employees swapping with church-goer parking in the south end; day vs nite and seasonal users sharing same lots at different times etc., as described below). While such generous gross available area is a fortune that is lacking in many confined towns, the inefficient organization in Lee, in terms of both the overall landuse parking-pattern and the detail design of each particular parking area, is problematic:

1) Excessive overall town space is given over to anarchic parking that can be selectively reduced in key places and convenientley centralized elsewhere (eg in the Eaton area). Parking now takes up much more gross space than necessary, especially in South/Oval area, robbing vital potential green and hard pedestrian areas needed for improved outdoor circulation and activity.

2) There is the frequent experience of 'net' parking shortage and parking/driving difficulty, for example in Southern Main Street/Oval and Joe's area, as decribed below. While demanded areas quickly fill and remain jammed, other areas (such as the Eaton area) remain underused.

3) The poor town parking layout results in multiple access points, increased maneuvering conflict and hazard for driving on Lee's roads (especialy Main Street accessing and leaving lots). This exasperates the general traffic circulation already stressed by the regional thru-traffic situation.

4) Internally, each particular parking area is ineffecient for parking and driving for those entering, moving, storing (quantitatively) and exiting those areas. Winter snow makes things worse-- although demand is down.

## ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION MODES

At this writing, alternate transporation by BUS, AIRPLANE, and RAILROAD promises to become increasing important in the future Berkshire/ Revitalized-Lee area in conjunction with improved primary automobile use.
At issue is the potential diversity of connections between alternate transporation modes, and their impact upon all Lee and Berkshire activity in the future-- commercial, industrial, recreational, residential, and municipal-- concerning local, regional and interstate people moving to, from and thru various places different times of the day and year. An increase of future transportation demand in general is predicted by planners' extrapolation and premises for wise economic growth. Moreover, a proportional increase of alternate transportation seems inevitable-- due to pressing energy, environmental and economic efficiency factors-- and societal awareness of these and new alternate modes. (Predicting the full positive/negative aspects of transporations in far future is well beyond the scope of this study, other than to stress its signifigance as an ongoing challenge that mixes logic with open minded yet often limited speculation). However it is clear that designers/planners can anticipate and creatively manipulate alternative transporation to a tremendous extent as signifigant for Lee during the next two decades, at least.

Specifically, physical and programatic linkage to these and other alternate transportation modes should be emphasized in any Lee design proposal:

BUS:
Local and interstate bus service presently make Lee conveniently accessable to/from Berkshire county and beyond. (Lee's McClelland Drugstore on Main Street conveniently handels ticketing & information service at present. See "Main Street" section for a description of downtown bus stops). Bus transportation for commuters, shoppers, visitors-- both to and from Lee-- is now the strongest and likely to be Lee's future most important alternate mode of transportation. Special van and autopool use, organized for personal or select activity, is potentially of similar relevance. Bus promotion is relatively weak, however, in contemporary public and travel guides.
Local/regional bus service: The 'Berkshire Regional Transit Authority' passes through Lee on the hour from 7 am to 5pm, connecting from Great Barrington to Pittsfield (interstate terminal). This provides local & regional connection to larger urban areas, for people commuting, shopping or visiting out from Lee, or conversely to bring people visiting or doing business into Lee from the outside.
Interstate bus service: For the above purposes, but especially in terms of tourism, interstate bus is now convenient as well. From Boston, the 'Bonanza', 'Englander' and 'Greyhound' lines serve Lee, Lenox and Pittsfield. 'Greyhound/Trailways' has 2 buses/day to Pittsfield ($28); From Manhattan, 'Bonanza' serves Berkshires 3 daily. ($30/40 round).

**AIRPLANE**

Airports for servicing Berkshire County are in Great Barrington, Pittsfield, and North Adams and provide regular or special-charter service: To/from New York City ($675-1000 per one way, twin engine; Boston ($275-525); Albany (165); Hartford. Limo, bus connecets to Lee from airports.

**RAILROAD**

Non-passenger through Lee: 'The Conway Freight-lines/ NY-New Haven' passes through the west side and across the river bridge of downtown Lee, servicing the paper mills especially to the north of town. They passes through 4-5 times a day with a light load (relatively quick and quiet) of less than 10 cars. Additional commercial/industrial uses, or even passenger use of such route(s) should be considered open for future opportunity in Lee. Railroad connection to the town has additional signifigance that transcends functionality: an unspoken yet sensed, authentic "historical/aesthetic/poetic presence" that can contribute to revitalization, especially in the spirit of tourism.

Regional passenger train (proximate to Lee): provides good access into Berkshire county at Pittsfield, making Lee quickly accessible with bus. From NY City, 'Amtrack' assists travelers only partly to the Berkshires, requiring taxi or limo to complete trip. (Southern Berkshire uses 'Amtrack' stop in Hudson; Northern Berkshire uses Rensselaer; taxi or limo 40 miles). From Boston, Amtrack offers a single train per day connecting to the Pittsfield shelter ($38 round trip). Albany has a single train per day to Pittsfield ($17 round trip); Montreal routes into Albany ($60+) then to Pittsfield.

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