NH Vital Signs Readings

Transportation and Traffic

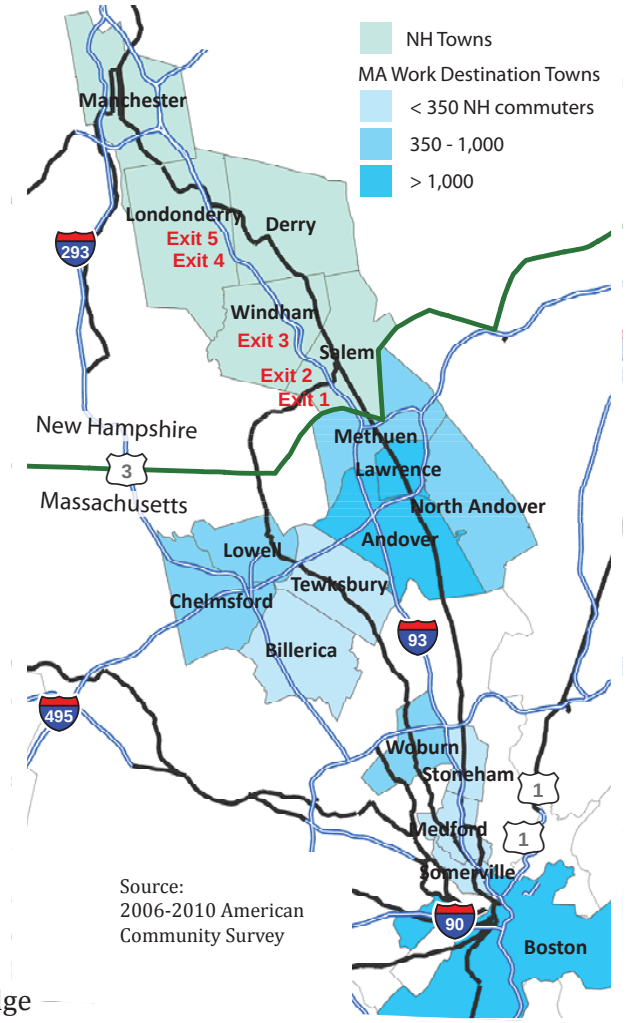
New Hampshire Interstate 93 Expansion

The widening of I-93, a project that began design stages in the early 1990s, is in the height of construction. The anticipated completion date is 2018. The section of I-93 being widened extends north from the state line with Massachusetts through Manchester. The southern part of I-93 was originally built in the 1960s and was designed for 60,000 to 70,000 vehicles per day.[1] Traffic between Exit 1 and the state line averages over 100,000 vehicles per day,[2] and is expected to increase to 140,000 vehicles per day by 2020.[3]

The expansion is one of the largest projects the New Hampshire Department of Transportation has ever undertaken. According to the NHDOT, "the project will add an additional two travel lanes in each direction over the entire 20 mile segment and improve the five interchanges south of Interstate 293 to the state line. Twenty bridges will be replaced and 23 will be rehabilitated or widened."[4]

On-going projects include work between Exits 2 and 3, at Exit 5, and six projects at Exit 3. Several projects specific to Exit 3, including reconstruction of red-listed bridges, paving and lane relocation on north and southbound lanes, and a new southbound on-ramp, are complete or near completion. Other projects, including relocating 1.25 miles of NH-111 and reconstruction and widening of 2.17 miles of northbound I-93 are on-going.[5] Aspects of the overall rebuilding that are completed include the reconstruction of Park and Ride lots and bus terminals at Exits 2, 4, and 5, and the Brookdale Road Bridge at Exit 2, which was completed in spring 2013.

Commuting to Massachusetts from Select Towns Along I-93 Corridor



1. New Hampshire Department of Transportation. Rebuilding I-93. Project Background. <www.rebuildingi93.com/content/background/>.
2. Data compiled by NHES from information provided by Department of Transportation.
3. New Hampshire Department of Transportation. Rebuilding I-93. Project Background. <www.rebuildingi93.com/content/background/>.
4. Ibid.
5. New Hampshire Department of Transportation. Rebuilding I-93. Construction Fact Sheets. Project Contract 13933H and Project Contract 13933I <www.rebuildingi93.com/documents/factsheets/April2012/13933H%20First%20Edition.pdf> and <www.rebuildingi93.com/documents/factsheets/July2013/13933I%20July.pdf>.

According to 2006-2010 American Community Survey commuting data, for residents living along the I-93 corridor — Manchester, Derry, Londonderry, Windham, and Salem, NH — the most common out-of-state work locations are Andover and Boston, Massachusetts. Combined, 2,293 residents of these towns travel to Andover, and an additional 2,773 travel to Boston.

Most recent traffic counts show that peak traffic volume usually occurs during morning and evening work commuting hours and around holidays. Traffic congestion causes driver frustration, as well as negative long-term consequences. Traffic delays and congestion increase pollution and account for lost time, delaying worker productivity and slowing tourists traveling to vacation destinations. Known congestion can discourage business relocation or business expansion in an area.[6] Safety concerns arise, including reduced reaction time, because vehicles are driven closer to one another, increasing the possibility of chain accidents. First responders subsequently may have difficulty reaching accident sites quickly because of the congestion.

The section of I-93 between Exit 1 and the Massachusetts state line has historically been the most traveled. In 1983, the daily average was fewer than 55,000 vehicles traveling this stretch. This peaked at just over 110,000 vehicles daily in 2000, and has since stabilized, averaging 103,891 per day in 2012. The stretch of highway between Exits 3 and 4 is the least traveled, yet even this stretch averaged roughly 70,000 vehicles daily between 2000 and 2012.

The 2018 completion date for the project could be in jeopardy due to funding issues. The Commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation reported to the New Hampshire House of Representatives Public Works and Highways Committee that as of summer 2013, the project was funded only through the end of 2015, and an additional $250 million in funding would be necessary to complete the project. According to the project timeline, by 2015, I-93 will have been widened from the Massachusetts border up to Exit 3, where it would revert back to two lanes in each direction, only to expand again at Exit 5. [7,8]

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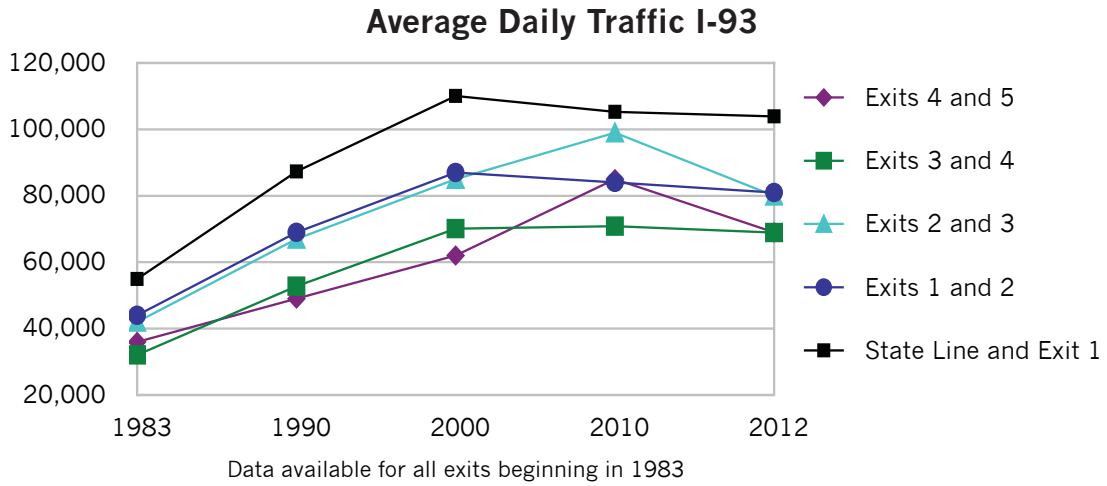

6. "Massive DOT layoffs, worsening road conditions in NH could come in 2015 if revenue continues decline." Nashua Telegraph. <www.nashuatelegraph.com/news/politics/1009031-476/massive-dot-layoffs-worsening-road-conditions-in.html>. June 26, 2013.
7. Ibid.
8. "DOT chief says I-93 widening project will run out of money in 2015." Concord Monitor. <www.concordmonitor.com/home/7169164-95/dot-chief-says-i-93-widening-project-will-run-out-of-money-in 2015?ID=abcde&CSAuthResp=62999%3A24550580%3A22819%3A1%3A24%3Aapproved%3A38E3154231C6193952AD31A3E82251F1>. June 26, 2013.

Vital Signs Readings discuss topics relevant to one of the 18 sections of *Vital Signs*, a compilation of social and economic indicators for New Hampshire. *Vital Signs* may be accessed at www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/products/vs.htm.