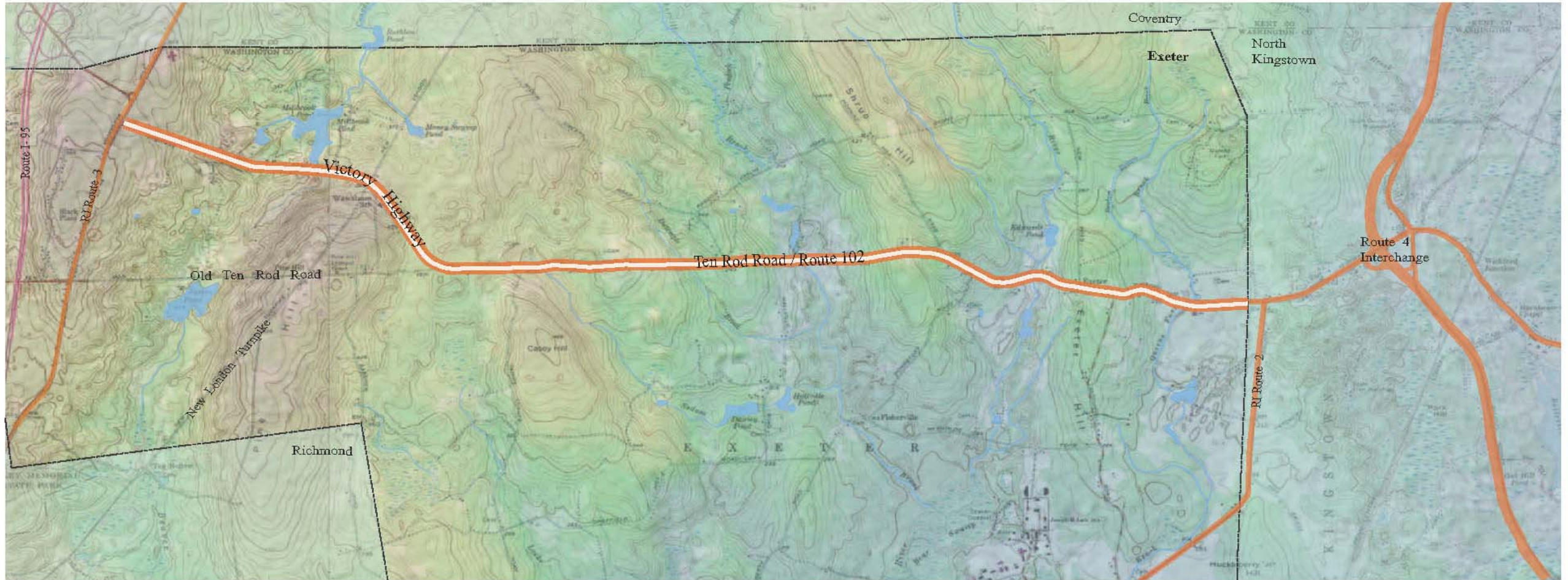


# THE ROUTE 102 / TEN ROD ROAD / VICTORY HIGHWAY SCENIC ROADWAY STEWARDSHIP PLAN

Exeter , Rhode Island



*Prepared for :*  
The Rhode Island Scenic Roadways Board  
*and the*  
Town of Exeter, Rhode Island  
*May 2004*

## Scenic Roadways

Some of Rhode Island's greatest treasures are our highways and byways. Roadways have become important links for travelers to experience the scenery, history, and natural landscapes of our state.

Although the scenic quality of our significant roadways is easily appreciated by anyone, many people do not recognize how fragile their beauty can be – or what can be done to safeguard these roadways for the future.

## The Scenic Roadways Program

The Scenic Roadways Program is an important resource for Rhode Island communities to preserve the roads they love.

Established by state statute in 1985, the 11-member Scenic Roadways Board helps groups and individuals around Rhode Island conserve and enhance the scenic character of their roads.

Designation as a Scenic Roadway gives local communities more input about tree trimming, highway and bridge construction, and other matters; provides access to the Scenic Roadway Board's resources and expertise; and may qualify the road to receive federal grants to carry out enhancement projects.

## Route 102 / Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway Scenic Roadway

In 1993 the Exeter Town Council applied for designation of Route 102 between Route 2 and Route 3, as a Scenic Roadway.

The Scenic Roadways Board formally approved the designation in September 1993, and in 1996 the Rhode Island Department of Transportation received funding on behalf of the Board to prepare Corridor Management Plans for six Rhode Island Scenic Roadways. Work on the Route 102 / Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway Scenic Roadway Stewardship Plan began in 2002 and included public workshops, meetings with public officials and many site visits.

This Report is the result of those meetings, visits, and work. This Stewardship Plan is intended to help the Town of Exeter guide development and preservation along Route 102 in accordance with the goals outlined in the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Scenic Roadway application.

*This Report was prepared for the Rhode Island Scenic Roadways Board and the Town of Exeter by:*

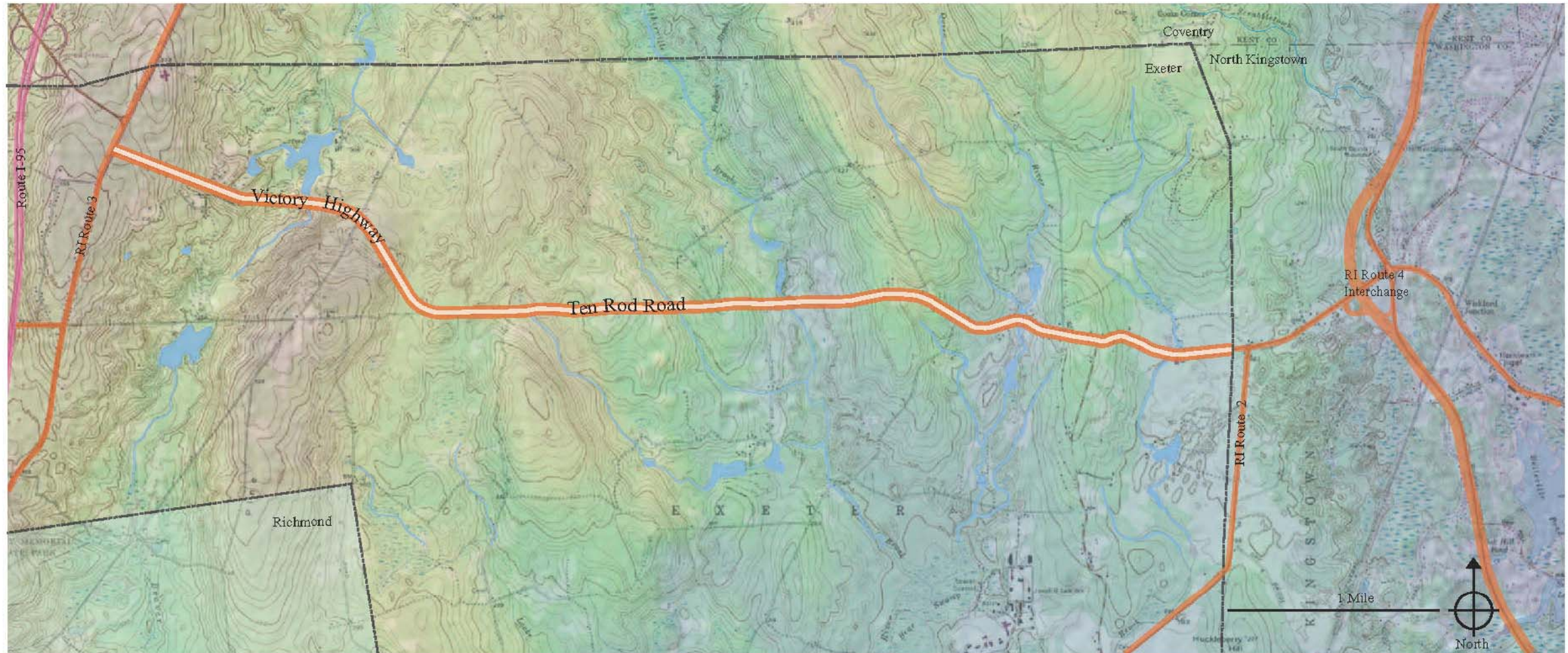
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Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, Inc., Transportation Consultants  
and  
Past Designs, Historical Landscape Consultants

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The Stewardship Plan for Route 102 / Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway Scenic Roadway proposes an approach to the protection, management, and enhancement of this Rhode Island Scenic Roadway so that future travelers will experience the historic and scenic qualities of Exeter that are evident today.

This Report presents recommendations to guide that effort. The analysis of traffic and travel conditions, historic sites and settings, public and private property ownership, and landscape character have led to a Corridor Management Plan offering ways in which the intrinsic scenic qualities can be preserved through the collaboration of State Agencies and the Town of Exeter.

These recommendations include the establishment of a Scenic Roadway Overlay District in which the Town will maintain review authority over development within the roadway's viewshed, an Action Plan outlining tasks and roles for all involved (citizens, the Town and State Agencies), and suggestions for site specific landscape enhancements.

Also proposed are the incorporation of Old Ten Rod Road from Victory Highway to Route 3 as a Special Historic Roadway District and the continuation of the Scenic Roadway Overlay District westward from Route 3 to the Connecticut border.



*Pastoral Views from Ten Rod Road*

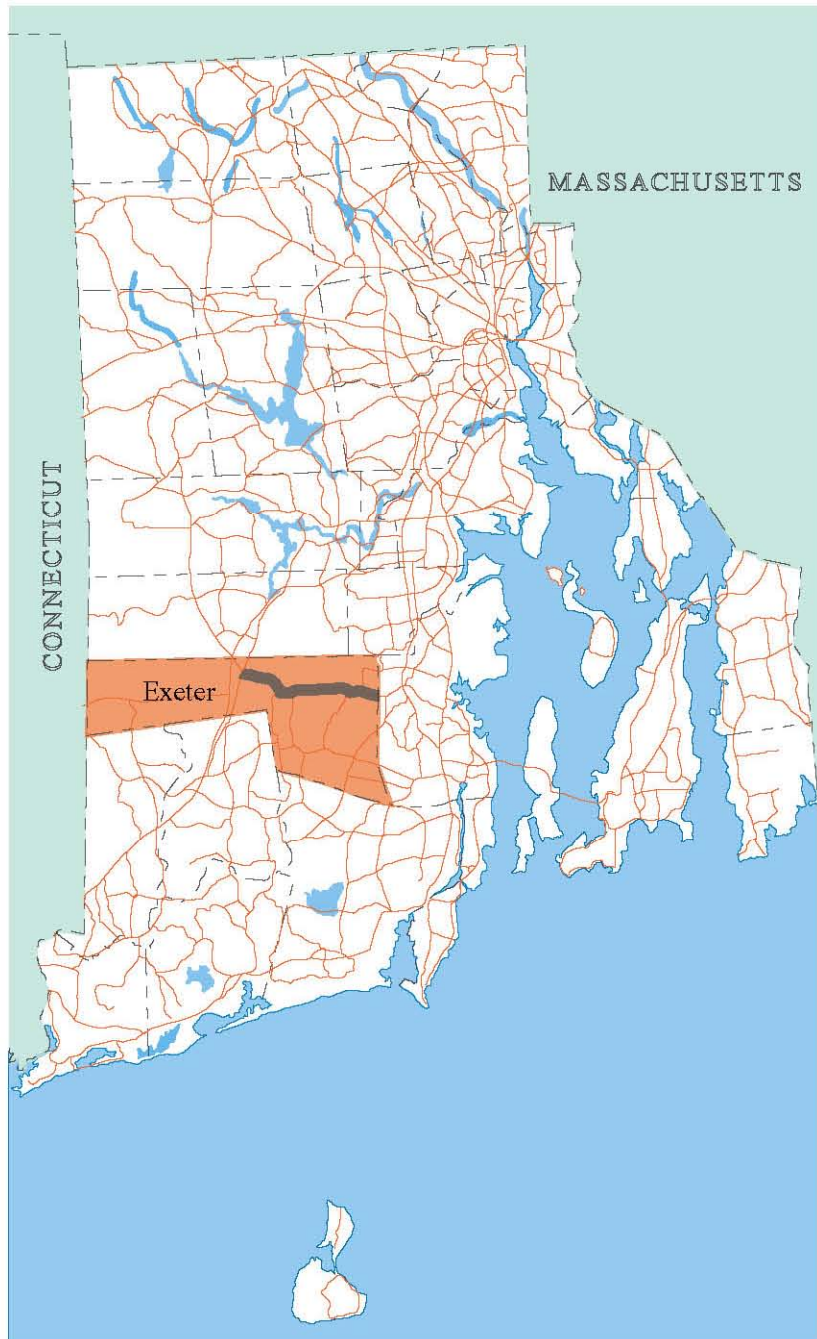


*Exeter Hollow*

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## THE ROAD and ITS CONTEXT



### The Roadway

The entirety of the Route 102 / Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway Scenic Roadway is within the Town of Exeter.

The Scenic Roadway is approximately 7.3 miles long and runs west from the intersection where Route 2 turns south, to Victory Highway, and along Victory Highway to its intersection with Route 3.

The Route 102 / Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway Scenic Roadway is a predominately straight, east-west route through secondary growth woodland, dotted with a few open pastures, nursery grounds, and golf course fairways. While zoned residential, houses are concentrated in five sparsely populated villages lining the roadway. Eight areas of wetland enhance the roadside, most easily identified by the stands of red maple, holly, and other plants characteristic of Rhode Island's wooded wetlands.

The topography is relatively flat and rolling. The road crosses five major hills between Routes 2 and 3 along the way varying in elevation from a low of 290 feet above sea level to a high of 560 feet.

Agriculture remains an important economic activity in the town. Along the edge of the road, cornfields and nursery production fields are the most notable, located at the eastern end of the corridor. The rest of the corridor is primarily wooded.

These characteristics inspired the Town of Exeter to request scenic roadway designation in 1993.

This Scenic Roadway Stewardship Plan encourages: preservation of the roadside agricultural uses and wooded and open scenery that are characteristic of Exeter; coordination of natural, historic, and recreational resources to attract visitors to the Scenic Roadway; and, provision of signs and informational amenities offering direction to motorists, bicyclists, and the occasional pedestrian.

While the historic and linear continuation of Ten Rod Road to Route 3 and beyond, as Route 165 to the Connecticut border, is not included in the Town's Scenic Roadway application, this Plan recommends protection through an overlay district that would be administered by the Town.

# THE ROAD and ITS CONTEXT

## Opportunities

Ten Rod Road is an historically important, central transportation spine serving the Town of Exeter. As such, its importance as an early highway connecting the coastal villages of Narragansett Bay with inland Rhode Island and Connecticut towns should be celebrated and its Native American history researched so that each can be properly marked and described.

Much of the original 165' right-of-way width of this road (ten rods wide) is defined by occasional stone walls which should be cleared of brush and debris so they remain visible. While the actual right-of-way width varies along Ten Rod Road, the existing paved roadbed occupies less than 30' in most areas.

Traffic volumes and topography encourage consideration of this roadway as an inviting location for recreational biking and pleasure rides by car. It is a RIDOT designated bicycle route and its width and gentle vertical alignment provide an appealing challenge to riders comfortable with the levels and speeds of traffic here. This use should be encouraged so that the road's natural beauty and cultural heritage can be better appreciated.

Where conditions permit, the shoulders of the road, or separate paths adjacent to the stone walls, could be improved for walking and biking. However, pedestrians are less likely to use such paths as there are few walking destinations given the overall length of the road and the limited opportunities to create pedestrian loops to circle back to residential areas or the few public parking areas.

A longer range recreational trail could extend westward from Route 3 to the Connecticut border, connect with RIDEM management areas, and include loops to explore the 19th century road system of Exeter, east of Route 3, including the New London Turnpike.

Interpretive signs describing historic sites, family histories, ecosystems, village locations, Native American history of the road and settlements, and other cultural features can enhance recreational uses. In addition to presenting these man-made features are similar opportunities to interpret scenic vistas, agricultural landscapes, native vegetation and ecosystems.

Signs and pavement markings alerting motorists to the fact that bicyclists may be on the road should help insure their safety.

The roadway and the rural nature of Exeter, with its sparse pattern of settlement, do not promote pedestrian use along Ten Rod Road, other than near the several hilltop and valley "villages." Visibility is a key concern, and signs alerting drivers would be helpful in these locations.

The roadway is bordered primarily by private property. Land in public ownership is located at Routes 2 and 3, the Town facilities at Dutemple Hill and the Fire Station, and at the Wawaloam School. Opportunities for public roadside facilities and landscape enhancement are limited.

The picnic area near the Exeter / North Kingstown line presents one such opportunity. With its existing tree canopy, historic stone fireplaces, parking possibilities, and view of adjacent farm fields, it is an attractive area that announces the beginning of the scenic roadway.

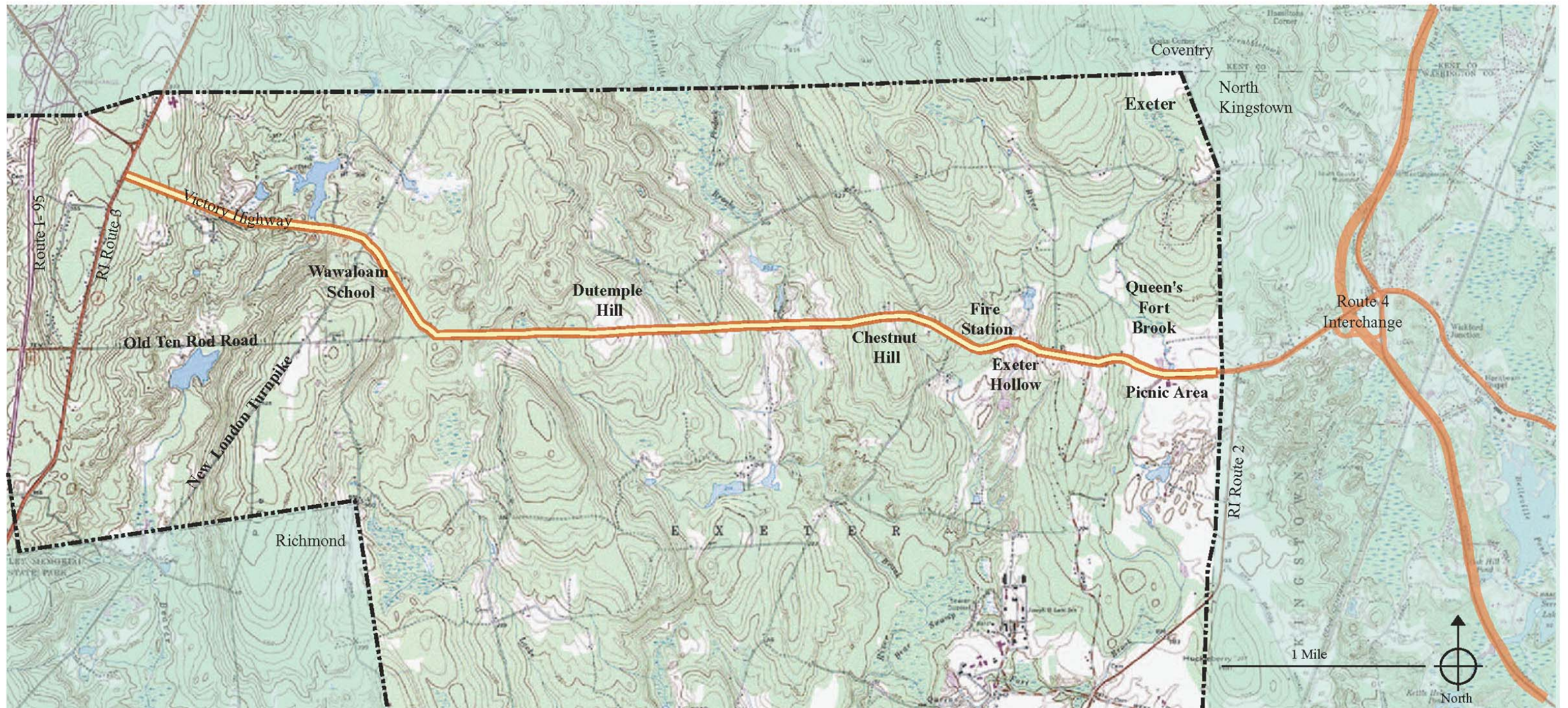
A second opportunity area is found at Dutemple Hill, between Reuben Brown Lane and Widow Sweets Road. The Exeter Town Hall and Town Clerk's Office are among the buildings located here that contribute to the civic life of the town, and there is a large parking area that invites consideration of such recreational off-hour and weekend uses.



*Roadway and Shoulder*



*Intersection at Widow Sweets Road*



**Route 102 / Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway Scenic Roadway**  
Exeter, Rhode Island

# TRAFFIC

## Vehicular Conditions

Ten Rod Road is a local road maintained by the Town of Exeter. It runs in an east-west direction connecting Rhode Island State Routes 2 and 3. Traffic on the road is light, averaging between 6,000 and 9,000 vehicles per day. Speeds are posted at 45 miles per hour.

**Larger setting:** Ten Rod Road is centrally located within the state. The land use in the area is primarily farmland and open space. Development in the immediate locality of the roadway is sparse. Much of the lower elevation sections of land adjacent to the road are wetlands.

**Physical characteristics:** Ten Rod Road is a fairly narrow, two-lane local road with no bicycle or pedestrian accommodation. Although speeds are low on these local roads, drainage swales and stonewalls are very close to the roadway, eliminating safe refuge for bicyclists or pedestrians. The travel lanes are 12 feet wide, and the roadway width is generally 28 feet with a 2-foot shoulder (varies).

**Travel trends:** Automobile traffic on Ten Rod Road maintains a consistent volume throughout its length primarily due to it serving as a connector between Rhode Island State Routes 2 and 3. In general, the Annual Average Daily Traffic count (AADT) is currently between 6,200 and 8,400 vehicles per day (vpd). Automobile traffic has grown about 27 percent since the early 1990s.

Specific traffic volumes recorded along the following Traffic Study Areas include:

1. Ten Rod Road between New Road and South Road: The road saw a 25 percent increase in overall AADT between 1991 and 1999, with the AADT rising from 6,700 vpd in 1991 to 8,400 in 1999.
2. Ten Rod Road between Hallville Road and Sunderlund Road: The AADT increased from 5,300 vpd to 7,100 vpd (34 percent) since 1991.
3. Ten Rod Road between Widow Sweets Road and Hallville Road: The road saw a 17 percent increase in overall AADT between 1990 and 2000, with the AADT rising from 6,000 vpd in 1990 to 7,000 in 2000.
4. Ten Rod Road between Tripps Corner and Widow Sweets Road: The AADT increased from 5,100 vpd to 6,200 vpd (22 percent) since 1992.
5. Victory Highway at Route 3: AADT for the road increased 39 percent between 1991 and 2000 (an increase from 4,600 to 6,400 vpd).

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

The Rhode Island Department of Transportation's map, "A Guide to Cycling in the Ocean State," classifies Route 102 / Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway as a "suitable road" for **experienced cyclists** (the map notes that ". . . on these roads, bicyclists will find less adequate or no shoulders . . ."). Ten Rod Road route connects other bike routes on RI Routes 2 and 3 and continues farther east, terminating at the scenic village of Wickford on Rhode Island Sound.

Route 102 is relatively narrow and has no specific accommodations for cyclists (such as separate designated bike lanes). However, with the current land uses and the relatively modest traffic volume, motorists can pass cyclists safely.

The absence of sidewalks or other paved walking paths on Ten Rod Road is a deterrent to pedestrian traffic, even for short distances. The lack of shoulders in some locations puts pedestrians directly next to traffic, virtually in the travel lane, or in a situation where it would be difficult to move completely out of the right-of-way if necessary. Snow reduces the available safe walking area. With the existing land uses, pedestrian traffic is light.

Shoulders on roads increase safety for all users. Widening Ten Rod Road to provide a sidewalk or bike lane could dramatically impact the scenic qualities of the roadway. Preserving the roadside agricultural uses will limit the number of pedestrians traveling along the road.

Before cycling is heavily promoted along Ten Rod Road, improvements should be made to better accommodate cyclists, including creating a wider space on the side of the road or shoulder. One option to explore is to decrease lane widths from 12 feet to 11 feet in order to make the shoulder wider without widening the road. In addition to providing more room for cyclists, narrowing the travel lane widths would improve safety for cyclists by reducing traffic speeds.

Other possible improvements include increasing the clear space beside the edge of the pavement to provide a safer refuge for cyclists (accepted roadway design standards call for a 3-foot clear zone at the edge of the roadway). However, managing a scenic roadway calls for balancing increased accommodation for all users with maintaining the road's scenic qualities, which in the case of Route 102 / Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway includes the sense of enclosure created by the wooded corridor.

Finally, adding more and better signage, including "Share the Road" signs to warn drivers to watch for cyclists should improve the road's safety and attractiveness for bicyclists and pedestrians.



Traffic count study areas on Ten Rod Road

## Threats to the Scenic Qualities of the Roadway

Traffic volumes along the full length of Ten Rod Road have increased over the past decade. The roadway has seen an average increase of 27 percent and up to a 39 percent increase near the Route 102 / Route 2 intersection near the Town of Exeter.

The majority of the traffic on the Scenic Roadway is through traffic with motorists using it as a link between Routes 2 and 3. Ten Rod Road provides the only direct route between Routes 2 and 3 for several miles. Although there are other existing east-west routes that could accommodate the traffic, each has drawbacks and may not be as attractive an alternate. Motorists could be encouraged to use State Route 401, approximately five miles to the north of Route 102 or Route 138, approximately six miles to the south, which provides the same east-west linkage.

Without a viable and well-marked alternate route, traffic on Ten Rod Road will continue to increase and degrade the scenic qualities. An alternate route could also be used to serve more trucks, therefore decreasing truck traffic on this visually significant roadway.

With the potential for increased development along Routes 2 and 3 there is a corresponding threat of increased vehicular traffic on Ten Rod Road, which could detract from its scenic properties and possibly increase pressure for similar undesirable development along Ten Rod Road itself.

Alternative land uses should be sought out to discourage the kind of development that would increase traffic along the scenic roadway. And, through traffic should be encouraged to use alternate routes. However, restricting development in one location can force it elsewhere, with negative consequences including increased traffic on secondary / feeder roads and traffic volume mitigation required by widening to provide turn lanes for queuing vehicles.

New access points and additional curb cuts on Ten Rod Road should be limited. Planning should guide future residential development to provide access from other Town roads. Any commercial development should be subject to stringent traffic design guidelines that limit the trips generated and require sensitive height, location, and materials used for signage.

# ROAD SEGMENTS



*Distinctive road segments and access routes of Ten Rod Road*

## Segmental Character

The Route 102 Scenic Roadway can be divided into eight specific segments of varying lengths with each providing a unique visual experience as one travels through the landscape.

## Scenic Views and Viewsheds

Aside from the initial wide and mid-distance views of agricultural fields and woodlands at the eastern end of the roadway, most of the longer distance views from the road are to the road sides and beyond, of clusters of houses, historic buildings, stone walls and cemeteries, streams and marshes, and small fields within the woods.

The physical characteristics of the landscape through which the road passes define a visual corridor, which varies from middle distance and peripheral views to the north and south, to linear tunnel-like segments lined densely by over-arching trees. These visual qualities of the roadway and its surroundings vary with seasonal changes and sunlight intensity.

## Segment 8: The western Gateway and the beginning of Victory Highway between the Route 3 intersection and Millbrook Pond, a straight, gently inclined segment, approximately 0.85 m. long.

The westernmost segment of the scenic roadway, this tree-lined stretch directs views towards the road. Several times, the tree canopy arches overhead, and is a striking contrast to the eastern end of the roadway.



*Approaching Route 3, the Western Gateway*

## Segment 7: Victory Highway between Millbrook Pond and the New London Turnpike.

Although the roadside vegetation is dense during non-winter months, there are opportunities for enjoyable, longer views north and east towards Hopkin's Pond and its farm buildings. Other views are more limited to the "tree corridor" quality of the road.



*Visual corridor, Victory Highway*



*Wawaloam School*

**Segment 6: Victory Highway between the New London Turnpike and Ten Rod Road.**

The Wawaloam School is located at the intersection, set back toward the woodline. The road runs alongside the northern edge of Pine Hill, and is typified by its grade change and stands of large pine trees, which add a strong vertical and textural element to the visual aspects of the road.



*Old Ten Rod Road at Tripp's Corner*

**Segment 5: Ten Rod Road from Victory Highway to Dutemple Hill.**

(n.b. Old Ten Rod Road forks left to Pine Hill and James Pond).

Two large rock outcroppings and wooded wetlands define this portion of the roadway. Notable buildings include the Exeter Chapel, The Kingdom Hall, and the Blueberry Hill Store. The new Town Library is to be built next to the Exeter Chapel.



*Visual corridor, Locust Valley & Lawton's Mill*

**Segment 4: Ten Rod Road between Dutemple Hill and the crest of Chestnut Hill.**

One of the longest, linear views of the road itself, this segment offers attractive peripheral views of Locust Valley Farm and its pasture fields and to Lawton's Mill to the north.

**Segment 3: Ten Rod Road between the crest of Chestnut Hill east, to the base of the hill.**

This short segment typifies how the sequence of views on Ten Rod Road vary from open fields and wooded sections to groups of historical buildings and houses. Chestnut Hill settlement has views of the Baptist church, Grange Hall, and an historic cemetery. Views are directed to the road and its "tree corridor" while going down Chestnut Hill.



*"Tree Corridor," Chestnut Hill*

**Segment 2: Ten Rod Road between the base of Chestnut Hill, through Exeter Hollow, to the crest of Exeter Hill.**

There are significant views of the roadway and Exeter Hollow. Views north show the farm, the restored buildings and mill at Queen's River, while views south are of the Exeter Country Club golf course. Views are redirected to the roadway while driving up Exeter Hill.



*Oscar Swanson Farm at Exeter Hollow*

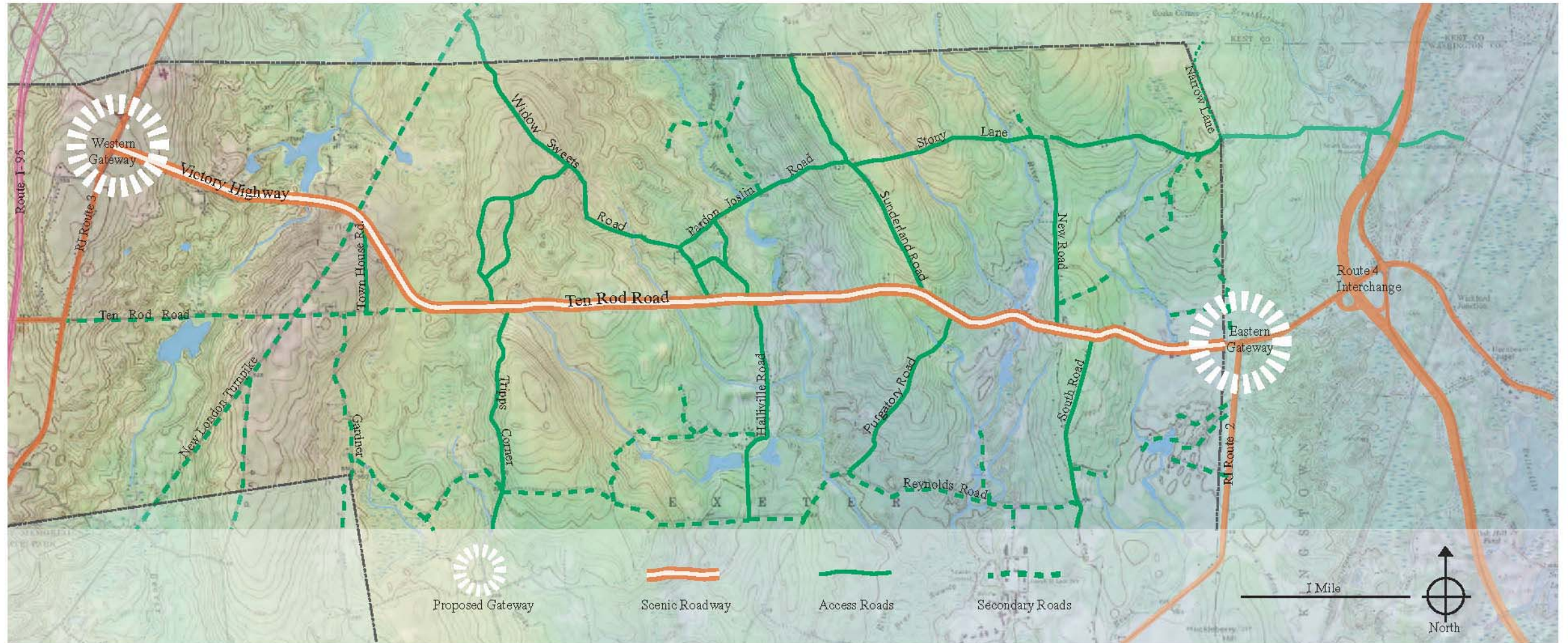
**Segment 1: From the crest of Exeter Hill to the eastern end of Ten Rod Road at the Route 2 intersection.**

Agricultural fields and farms dominate the views on this segment of Ten Rod Road. On the south side there is a prominent stand of white pine trees bordering the fields of Bald Hill Nursery. Several stone fireplaces and picnic tables are situated among the trees, providing an ideal rest spot and a view of the open farm fields to the north.



*Picnic area at the Eastern Gateway*

## GATEWAYS and ACCESS POINTS



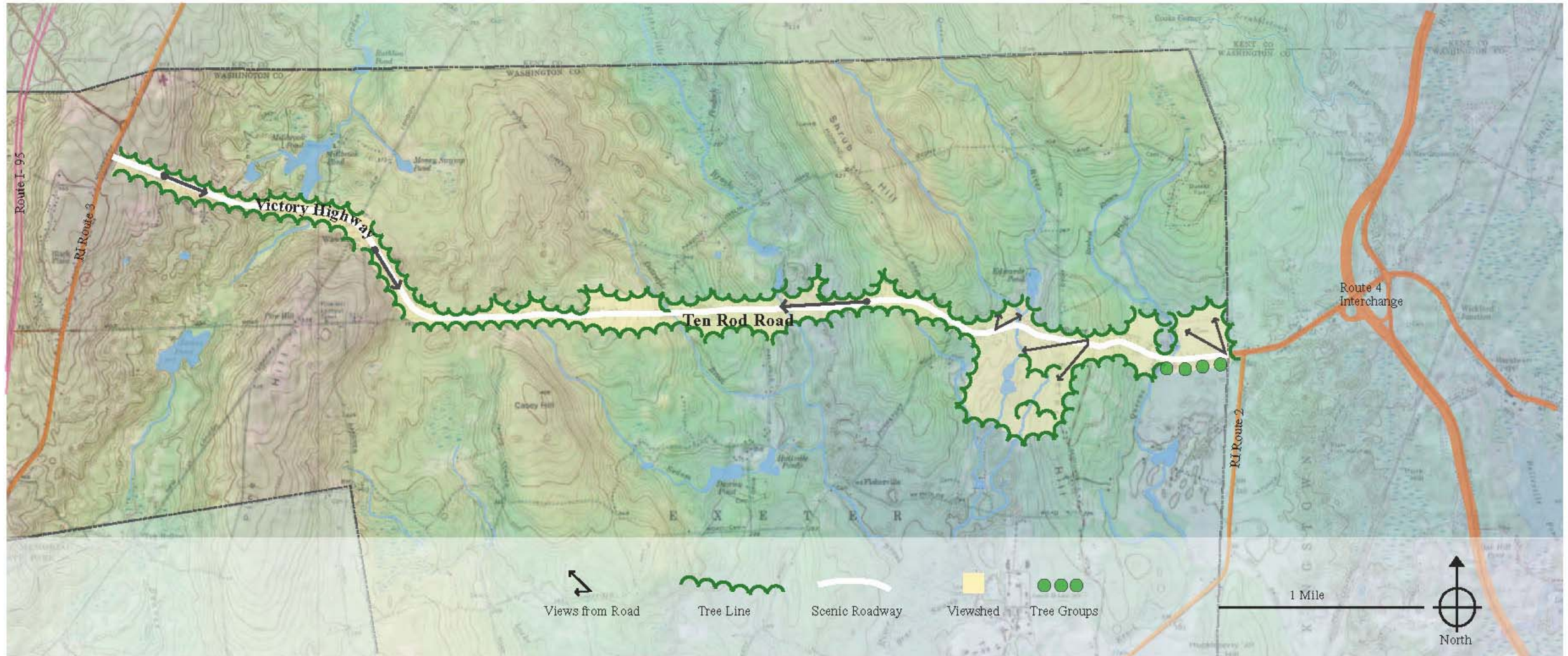
There are two natural “gateways” to the Ten Rod Road Scenic Roadway, one at the western end of its length at the Route 3 interchange, and the other at the Route 2 intersection near the existing picnic area. While each marks a naturally-occurring landscape transition from the character of the adjacent roads, neither location announces that this is an entry to a Rhode Island Scenic Roadway.

A number of Town roads intersect with the Scenic Roadway. Their relative infrequency enhances the rural and scenic character of Ten Rod Road.

The western gateway is characterized by a stands of large white pine trees and low-rising landform to either side of the road, but little else to distinguish the scenic highway’s beginning.

The eastern gateway is more noticeable due to the existing picnic area and the open fields to north and south of Ten Rod Road.

The intersecting access roads lead to inland areas and secondary Town roads.



Ten Rod Road offers a variety of visual experiences. Generally, its views can be categorized as those from the road to nearby properties, fields and woodlands and those of the road, contained within the right-of-way, its **Visual Corridor**.

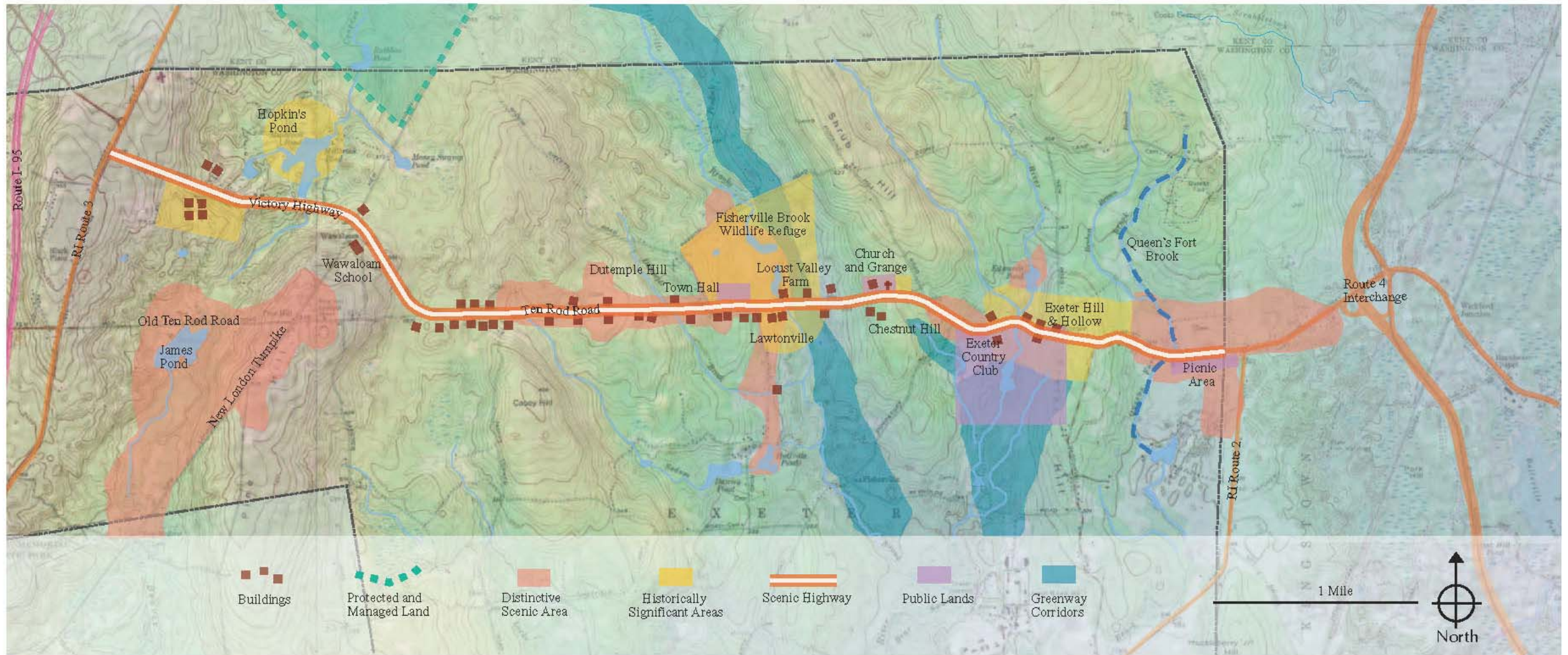
The visual corridor illustrated above is defined by the road itself and by the trees and lower vegetation found along it.

While seasonal changes in vegetation affect visibility and light qualities, the tree canopy, rock outcroppings and varying shoulder width form the immediate visual corridor.

The treeline bordering the roadway controls views along and from Ten Rod Road. What is seen from the road becomes a part of the overall visual experience.

During the foliage months, distant views beyond the treeline are limited. Nevertheless, a significant depth of dense plant growth is required to obscure a light-colored building during the day - let alone at night with an exterior light on. In the winter, these distances vanish.

# PUBLIC and PROTECTED LANDS



A range of Public and Protected lands either are nearby, border, or cross Route 102 / Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway.

**Distinctive Scenic Areas:** These are designated as areas of pastoral scenic beauty, ranging from open fields, farm houses, woods, and the road corridor.

**Historically Significant Areas:** Includes Native American archaeological artifacts, historic town buildings, original stone walls, historic cemeteries, and restored farm and mill buildings.

**Public Lands:** The Big River Management Area to the north provides linkages to Arcadia State Park to the west.

**Greenway Corridor:** The Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge is managed by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and passes through Locust Valley Farm. This area has a variety of habitats that include pond, stream, meadows, pine woods, and shrub wetlands and is a regionally important migration path.

## Historic References

Ten Rod Road and its neighbors have an important place in the history of Rhode Island and the region.

### Ten Rod Road

This road was originally part of the Pequot Path from the coastal village of Wickford to Exeter Hill to Connecticut. In 1703, a road from Wickford was laid out to carry agricultural produce and commercial traffic from Connecticut to the ports of Narragansett Bay, particularly at the Town of Wickford. The road was laid out as a ten-rod (165 feet wide) road, permitting the cattle to graze and water on their way to Wickford.

The stone walls, which line much of the road today, define the width of the eighteenth century road.

Butter, cheese, beef, pork, wool and other agricultural products were transported from the farms of Connecticut and Exeter to the coastal towns along the Bay. Flocks of sheeps and droves of cattle were driven the length of the road on their way to market.

During the nineteenth century, industrial goods from the region's small textile and woodenware mills were transported to market in the larger cities.

In 1926, with the increase in automobile traffic, the road was upgraded from a 12' gravel road with wide grass and wooded edges to a wider, two-lane highway.

### New London Turnpike

In 1815, the New London Turnpike opened as a private, toll highway running northeast to southwest connecting Providence to New London.

An important commercial road in its day, the road was a privately-funded venture paid for by tolls collected at Tug Hollow.

Today the section of this road through Exeter remains a narrow, dirt and gravel road, retaining much of its original character. It crosses both Old Ten Rod Road and Victory Highway.

### Victory Highway

Victory Highway, connecting Ten Rod Road with Route 3, was constructed in 1927.

### Queens Fort Brook

This brook crosses Ten Rod Road, running from a Native American structure built by the Narragansett Indians who controlled the Exeter lands, then known as the "vacant lands." The fort is a natural, rocky, wooded outcropping with numerous places for retreat. Stone monoliths, unveiled by the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1923, can be found along the road, indicating the location of three earlier Native American settlements.



*Church and Grange, Chestnut Hill*



*Historic buildings, Locust Valley Farm*

## CULTURAL and HISTORIC LANDSCAPES

### Exeter Hill and Exeter Hollow

Both of these “villages” were settled in the nineteenth century and served as important residential and commercial nodes in Exeter. Today all that remains of Exeter Hill are a series of exposed stone foundations.

Exeter Hollow retains a restored mill site and another series of building foundations, a schoolhouse, and some residential dwellings.

Other settlements along the road include the “villages” of Chestnut Hill (1750’s, 1838), Lawtonville (early 19th century) Dutemple hill (1838/1926) and Casey Hill (18th-19th century).

The Exeter town pound, constructed in 1743, is located beside the road, a reminder of the earlier agricultural history of Exeter and the importance of Ten Rod Road for interstate agribusiness.

Many other historic sites and structures are located within close proximity of the corridor, including a number of village nodes, cemeteries, isolated buildings and farms, and historic roads, many of which retain their gravel surface.

### Eastern Gateway Picnic Area

A small roadside picnic area marks the eastern entrance to the Route 102 /Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway scenic corridor, close to the intersection with Route 2.

This area, with its small pull-offs and old stone fireplaces, may have been developed as part of the CCC programs in the 1930’s.

The construction of the fireplaces and the scale and layout of the picnic sites is reminiscent of other picnic sites constructed in the state under the aegis of these and other Depression-era programs.

This spot was a popular stopping-off point for beachgoers in the 1930’s and 40’s. It is still used and enjoyed by travelers and Town residents.

#### *Sources:*

*For more information and illustrations on these properties, see the collections at the Rhode Island Historical Society and the Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission publications.*



*Town Pound, Exeter,  
Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission*



*DuTemple House, Early 19th century,  
Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission*

## Enhancement Opportunities

Public lands fronting on the roadway present opportunities to set public examples that can influence future private improvements of carefully designed, well-crafted, and economical landscape enhancements. Utility maintenance standards should be reviewed to insure careful treatment of the mature and important trees that give this road so much of its character.

Any change to the existing landscape character at the gateways of the Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway Scenic Roadway has the potential to impact the overall character of this corridor. These are critical sites deserving well-considered protection and enhancement.

### Public Lands

Town-owned land at Dutemple Hill, the Fire Station, and at the Wawaloam School present opportunities to re-establish some of the historic character of the original roadway alignment as well as enhance the appearance of Town properties.

The introduction of stone walls marking the original width of the right-of-way at these locations will be important first steps in presenting the historic and educational message of the scenic roadway.

Landscape plantings of carefully researched historic and native species between the roadway and these walls will contribute to the story.

Informational signage at these public locations can present opportunities for visitors to stop, get directions, and learn about the Town of Exeter, its history, people, and ecology.

Coordination of maintenance procedures for both the Town and RIDOT considering these roadside improvements will be important steps in maintaining the enhanced character.

### Gateways

Intersections with Routes 2 and 3 mark the beginnings (and ends) of the Scenic Roadway. While scenic and pleasant, there is currently very little at these locations that announces entry into a scenic corridor. Improving these settings with native plant materials and discrete signage can help to define these points as gateways and significantly improve the overall visual character of this roadway.

The Route 3 gateway is an undeveloped and wooded intersection with a traffic signal. It marks this beginning as a special visual experience and deserves to be protected.

The Route 2 gateway is distinguished by the different, yet complementary landscapes on either side of the road and a second traffic light. The open farm field on the north and the wooded picnic area on the south mark arrival in Exeter and the beginning of the Scenic Roadway in a dramatic way.

The land surrounding each intersection should be acquired by the Town, or protected with development restrictions, to maintain the landscape settings that define the ends of the Roadway.

Also, as the “dark sky” quality of Exeter is an important rural night time characteristic, the Town should work closely with RIDOT to ensure that good, unlighted directional signage is easily visible so that the possibility of future night lighting of the sky at these intersections will never happen.



*Exeter Town Clerk's Office and Exeter Rescue, Dutemple Hill*



*Barn and fields, near the Eastern Gateway*

# CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN



*Residence setback from road, Exeter Hill*



*Residence screened by trees, Exeter Hill*



*Church and Grange, Chestnut Hill*

## Stewardship Plan

The Stewardship Plan for the Route 102 / Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway Scenic Roadway proposes an approach to the protection, management, and enhancement of this Rhode Island Scenic Roadway so that future travelers will experience the historic and scenic qualities of Exeter that are evident today. Since there are few aesthetic intrusions on its consistent and overall landscape beauty, maintaining the appearance of the road is the Plan's highest priority.

Key to achieving this goal is the implementation of a Corridor Management Plan by the Town that offers ways in which the roadway's intrinsic scenic qualities can be preserved. The collaboration of State Agencies and the Town of Exeter will be required to accomplish this.

The recommendations of this report include the establishment of a Scenic Roadway Overlay District in which the Town will maintain review authority over development within the roadway's viewshed, an Action Plan outlining tasks and roles for all involved (citizens, the Town and State Agencies), and suggestions for site specific landscape enhancements.

## Scenic Roadway Overlay District

Exeter's Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway is also RI Route 102; as such, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation has responsibility for review, permitting, and design/construction activities within the road's right-of-way.

As a designated RI Scenic Roadway, those responsibilities also require review by the RI Scenic Roadways Board (staffed by RIDOT's Supervising Landscape Architect) to insure conformance with Scenic Roadway standards, including maintenance and tree-trimming work, and curb-cut applications. Scenic Roadway designation also establishes design and construction constraints regarding changes in width and re-surfacing.

While the physical / visual qualities and character of the road within the right-of-way were important considerations in its designation by the Scenic Roadways Board, those same qualities of the landscape visible from it, on both sides of the road beyond the right-of-way (its viewshed), were and are perhaps more important in the roadway's nomination by the Town, and subsequent designation, as a RI Scenic Roadway.

These views and viewsheds are mostly of private properties where change and development are controlled by the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Anything that happens beyond the right-of-way is the responsibility of the Town of Exeter, not the Scenic Roadways Board.

While current zoning and development plan review have helped to preserve the historic landscape character, the Town currently does not have any viewshed regulations that will preserve those qualities that supported the roadway's nomination and designation including consideration of buildings or towers that may be seen from a distance.

To protect these qualities, a Scenic Roadway Overlay District is proposed within which any development or improvement would be subject to special review by the Planning Board to insure that those viewshed qualities are not compromised.

## Corridor Management Strategy

The Corridor Management Strategy that follows on pages 18-19 outlines Action Plan tasks for the Town and related State Agencies.

## Opportunity Plans

Opportunity Plans for public property enhancements at Dutemple Hill and at the Eastern Gateway are presented on pages 20-21.

## Scenic Roadway Administrative Extensions

The continuation of the Scenic Roadway Overlay District westward from Route 3 to the Connecticut border, and the incorporation of Ten Rod Road from Victory Highway to Route 3 and the New London Turnpike as Special Historic Roadway Districts are presented on pages 22-25.



## Scenic Roadway Overlay District

Limits for the Scenic Roadway Overlay District should extend at least 200 feet beyond the edge of any treeline visible from the road. This zone would extend the existing visual corridor defined by the treeline bordering the roadway and open fields.

Specific review guidelines, to be established by the Town, should list all possible developments and improvements to be reviewed including: buildings, fences, walls, re-grading, lighting, and landscape plantings.

Any changes to existing conditions as well as new construction should be subject to review, ensuring preservation of roadway character and protection from development that would threaten the integrity of the roadway and its surroundings.

*Note: The Scenic Overlay District shown above is presented for illustrative purposes only, and is not intended to be an accurate representation of the proposed 200 foot distance recommended above.*

# CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGY



Forest Hills subdivision



New house near completion, northwest of Bald Hill Nurseries

## Action Plan

The primary objective of managing the scenic roadway is to build upon the existing visual and environmental characteristics of the roadway corridor and surrounding areas visible from it and protect them so that the qualities that promoted nomination and selection of Route 102 / Ten Rod Road / Victory Highway as a Rhode Island Scenic Roadway are not lost. A successful Corridor Management Strategy involves a number of steps and a variety of players.

The Town of Exeter should take responsibility for coordinating both the steps and the players. The successful implementation of this management strategy can contribute to the preservation of the scenic roadway so that existing scenic, historical, and cultural qualities will not be lost or compromised in the future. Tasks 1 - 9 are specifically for the Town; Task 10 outlines agency coordination activities.

### 1. Develop a Scenic Roadway Overlay District:

Establish the Scenic Roadway Overlay District and incorporate it in the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Define existing conditions criteria to direct evaluation guidelines for use in review of private and public projects within the Scenic Roadway Overlay District.

### 2. Develop landscape guidelines:

Working with RIDOT's Landscape Section, develop a list of appropriate native species of groundcovers, shrubs, and trees (evergreen and deciduous) for use within the right-of-way and in the rest of the Scenic Roadway Overlay District.

### 3. Develop a maintenance plan:

Establish a schedule for pruning and maintaining vegetation along the length of the roadway.

Identify opportunities for others to carry out selective maintenance pursuant to the plan (i.e. volunteer groups).

### 4. Create an identity at both gateways:

Coordinate enhancement of the Eastern Gateway with the historic picnic area to create a unified theme, combine resources, and minimize confusion.

Coordinate enhancement of the Western Gateway with RIDOT and abutting property owners to maintain the existing rural and wooded character.

### 5. Create safe pedestrian links and trails:

Ensure that all future improvements related to pedestrian use are universally accessible and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### 6. Create a coordinated signage program:

Identify appropriate places for gateway signage at eastern and western gateways.

Direct visitors to bicycle paths, parking areas, facilities, and historic resources via discrete signage.

Capitalize on any opportunities to minimize signage by consolidating messages whenever practicable.

Ensure on-going compliance with local, State and Federal laws regarding controls on outdoor advertising.

*Note:*

*Rural or scenic areas are not protected under Federal regulations such as the Highway Beautification Act. Thus, billboard operators in Rhode Island are allowed to clear-cut any trees and vegetation on public rights-of-way to improve the view of private billboards. RIDOT is not empowered to make judgements on these matters.*

*By Rhode Island law, town and city councils have the power to regulate outdoor advertising in their city or town, as to the place where that advertising may be permitted, the size and kind of structures upon which it may be placed, and the subject matter that may appear on the outdoor advertising.*

### 7. Prepare an interpretative plan:

Work with the Town Historical Society and the RIHPHC to identify all historic sites within, and adjacent to, the roadway corridor.

Consider topics including family histories to ecosystems for exhibit at outdoor locations including the Fire Station, the Grange Hall, Town Clerk's Office, and the Wawaloam School.

Document and prepare an Interpretive Master Plan and propose locations for appropriate displays along the road.

Apply for funding to implement the Interpretive Master Plan and create the display panels with a Graphic Design consultant experienced in such work.

Determine potential for coordinating historic site/tour dates and times.

### 8. Describe how on-going public participation will be achieved in the implementation of scenic highway management objectives.

Work with the RI Scenic Roadways Board to identify working relationships and procedures.

Coordinate all related Town boards, commissions, and volunteer organizations that have an interest in the Scenic Roadway and its preservation / protection.

### 9. Support open space protection strategies.

Review the Town's Open Space strategy to identify, prioritize, and preserve key farm and other open space parcels of land that contribute to the roadway's intrinsic landscape qualities.

Once the strategy is completed, encourage all parties involved (private land owners, the Town, DEM, DOT, etc.) to work together to plan for the permanent protection of these properties for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

### 10. Schedule implementation responsibilities:

State and Town agencies will be involved in the effective implementation of this management plan, and, through the RI Scenic Roadways Board and its Staff, will conduct a continuing assessment of its progress. These agencies and their responsibilities include:

RI Department of Transportation:

Responsible for implementing signage improvements within the right-of-way.

Responsible for vegetation maintenance (tree trimming) within the right-of-way.

Responsible for larger scale roadway construction projects.

Responsible for review of curb cut applications.

Responsible for review of private construction, signage, landscape planting, and lighting within the right-of-way.

RI Department of Environmental Management:

Responsible for review of projects that may impact wetlands within or adjacent to the right-of-way.

RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission:

RIHPHC may play an advisory role in review of appropriate conservation treatments of the historic properties, as well as providing information for the development and location of interpretive materials.

RIHPHC will also ensure that any changes using State or Federal funding within an historic district will comply with Section 106 standards of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Town of Exeter:

Stewards of several properties along the scenic roadway, responsible for operation, maintenance and improvements.



*Exeter Hill, Entrance to New Road*



*Views west from Chestnut Hill*

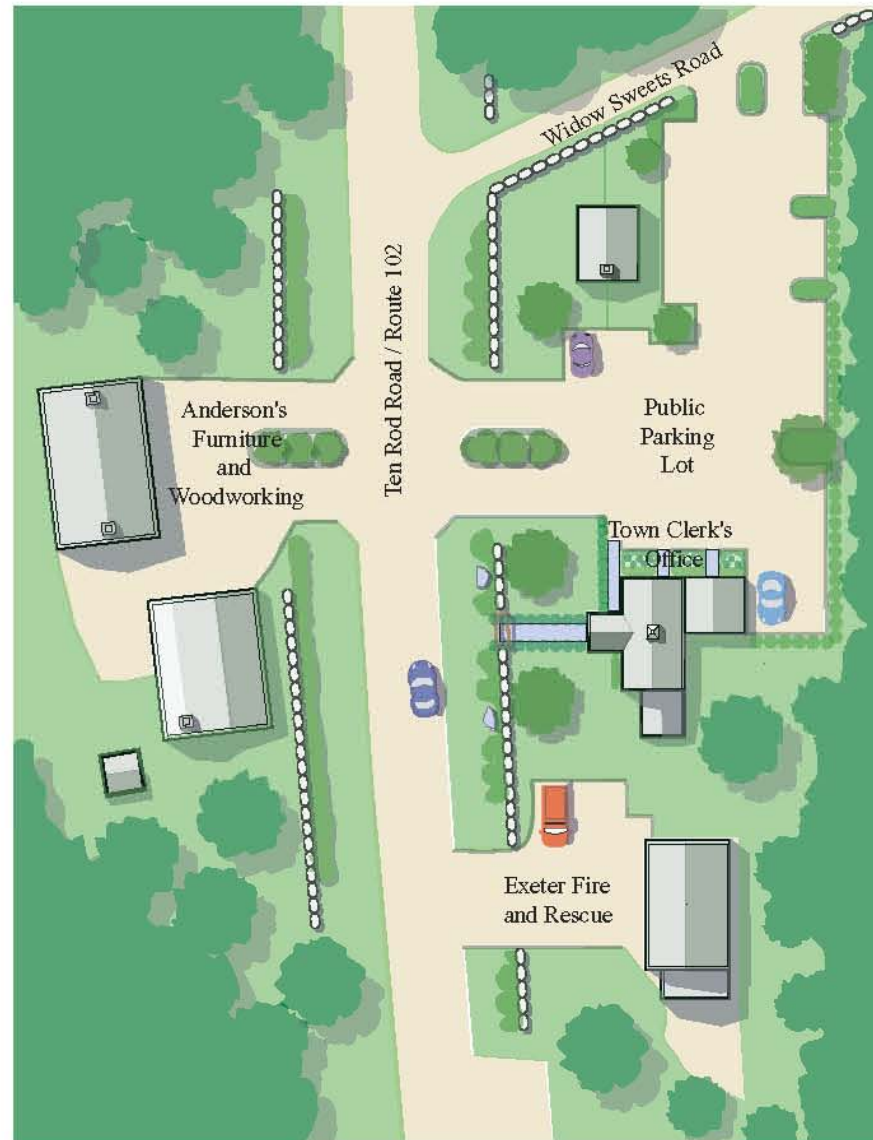
# OPPORTUNITY PLAN: Dutemple Hill



*Exeter Fire and Rescue*



*Exeter Town Clerk's Office and the Hall Schoolhouse*



*Possible enhancements at Dutemple Hill*

## Enhancements at Dutemple Hill

The Exeter Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Exeter Rescue, the historic Hall Schoolhouse, a large public parking lot, and Anderson's Furniture Store occur at the crest of Dutemple Hill in a large clearing on both sides of Ten Rod Road. Public land is on the north side of the road, and private on the south.

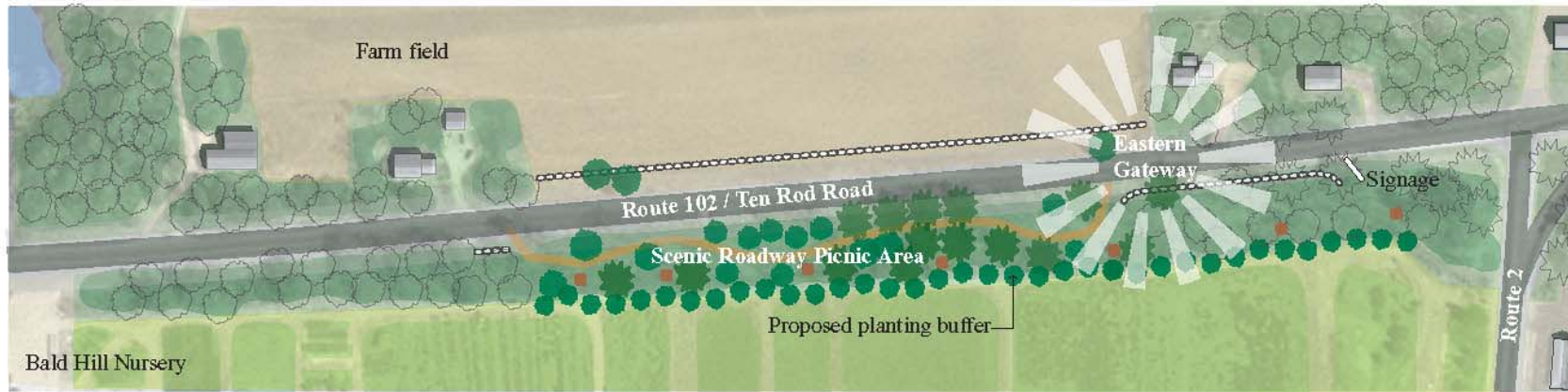
This is the civic center of Exeter. Public site improvements here will be very visible and could encourage private enhancements elsewhere along the roadway. Improvements to consider include layout and marking of parking areas, the rehabilitation and continuation of stone walls, signage, and additional landscape plantings.

Drives in and out of the public parking area should have low islands to separate entering and exiting movements, granite curbs throughout to mark pavement edges, low plantings to soften those edges, careful signage to guide visitors, and extremely discrete lighting.

Stone walls are important to the history of Ten Rod Road. Walls should be built here, 165' apart, on both sides of the road for the full length of the clearing. If remnants of existing walls are found, they should be rebuilt and marked. Breaks in these walls for walks to buildings should have wooden gates; for roads and parking lots, granite posts similar to those found elsewhere in Town will serve to mark these transitions.

Landscape improvements should include new walks and additional plantings. Stone walks should extend from buildings to parking areas and the stone walls. Low plantings along the stone walls, in the traffic islands, on the edges of the parking lot, and at building entrances will serve to domesticate and soften these settings. Existing stone monuments should be relocated to make them more visible and to allow for new flowering trees.

# OPPORTUNITY PLAN: Picnic Area, Eastern Gateway



*Possible enhancements of the Eastern Gateway*



*Existing picnic area at the Eastern Gateway*

## Enhancements at the Eastern Gateway

Shortly after Route 2 turns south, the picnic area found on the south side of Ten Rod Road invites exploration and distinguishes this spot as a special place with a history. The overhead canopy of conifer and hardwood trees provides shade and a sense of enclosure for visitors. The old stone fireplaces date from the 1930's.

The openness of the agricultural field on the north side of the road, and the present Bald Hill Nursery fields to the south, present a sharp contrast with the road experience farther to the east. This area is an inviting introduction and gateway to a more rural area of the state.

These visual and experiential contrasts mark this spot as a Gateway to the Ten Rod Road Scenic Roadway and present opportunities for public site improvements. Improvements to consider include layout and marking of parking areas, the rehabilitation and continuation of stone walls, restoration of the stone fireplaces, signage, and additional native landscape plantings.

The currently "informal" entrances to the picnic area should be carefully improved to mark the entry points and internal drive to each fireplace site. This should not be a hard-edged road with curbs but should remain as the shaded respite that it is.

Stone walls should be constructed in the same alignment and configuration as the picnic area's original boundary walls. A corresponding stone wall along the field, across the road will be a reminder of the historic 165' right-of-way.

Signage should be carefully placed announcing the beginning of the Scenic Highway and the entrance to the Town of Exeter. Informational signage and graphic panels should tell the history of this spot and who built it, when, and why.

As the future of Bald Hill Nursery is uncertain, the planting of a screening buffer of shrubs or small trees along the south edge of the picnic area will serve to maintain the shade and enclosure of this area into the future.



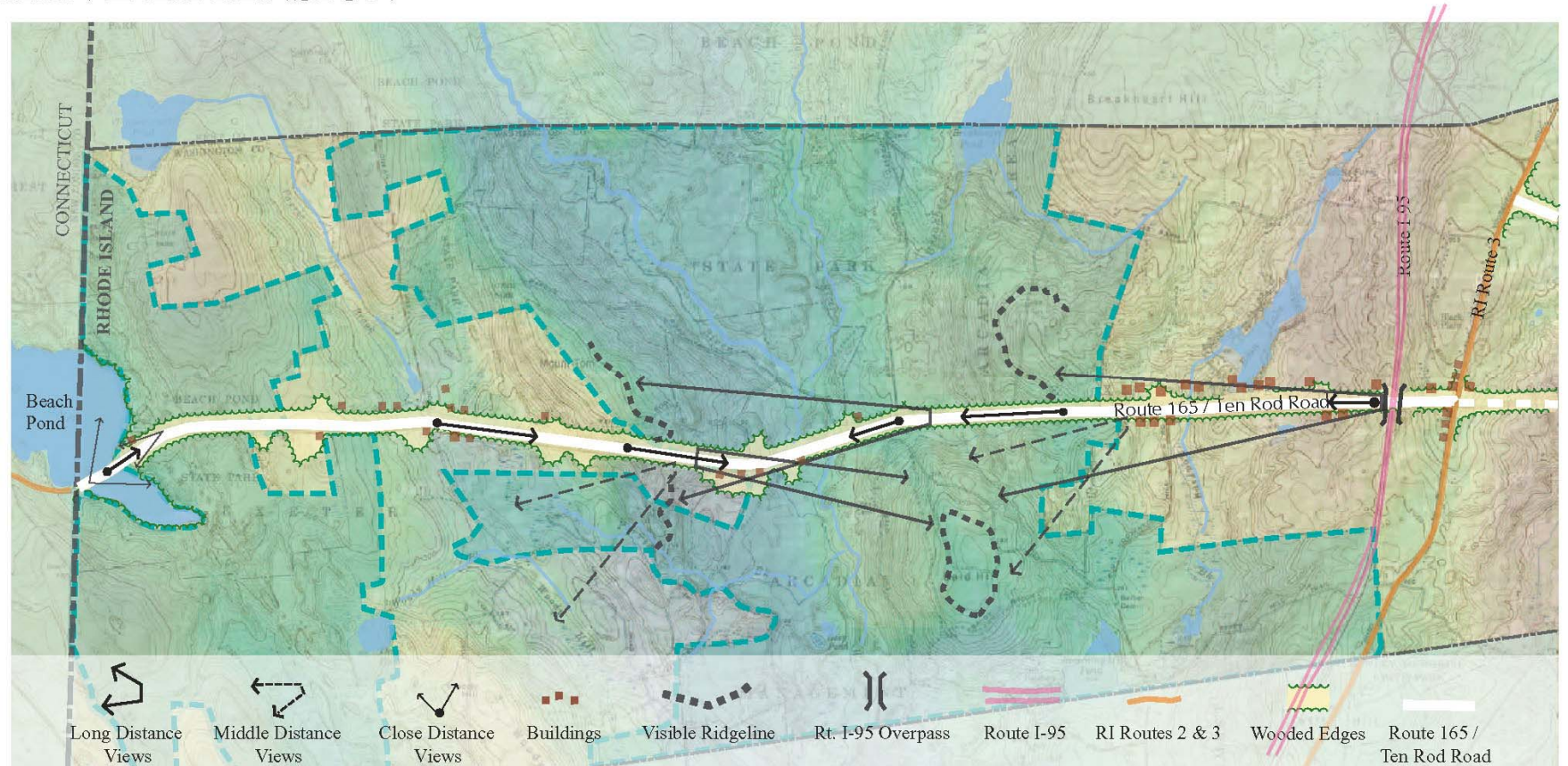
*Beginning of the Scenic Roadway*

# SCENIC ROADWAY ADMINISTRATIVE EXTENSION

The 1996 Inventory of Roadways with Scenic Character recommended the entire length of Ten Rod Road from Route 2 to the Connecticut border for consideration as a Scenic Highway.

While the Town's Scenic Roadway application and designation are limited to Route 102 - Ten Rod Road and Victory Highway between Routes 2 and 3, this Corridor Management Plan proposes that the Town extend its overview to include this area in three administrative categories:

1. A continuation of the Scenic Roadway Overlay District on Route 165 extending from its intersection with Route 3 west to the Connecticut border,
2. A special Historic / Scenic Overlay District for old Ten Rod Road between Victory Highway and Route 3, and
3. A similar Historic / Scenic Overlay District over the north-south New London Turnpike for its full length through Exeter.



Route 165 approaching Connecticut at Beach Pond

## VISUAL CORRIDOR

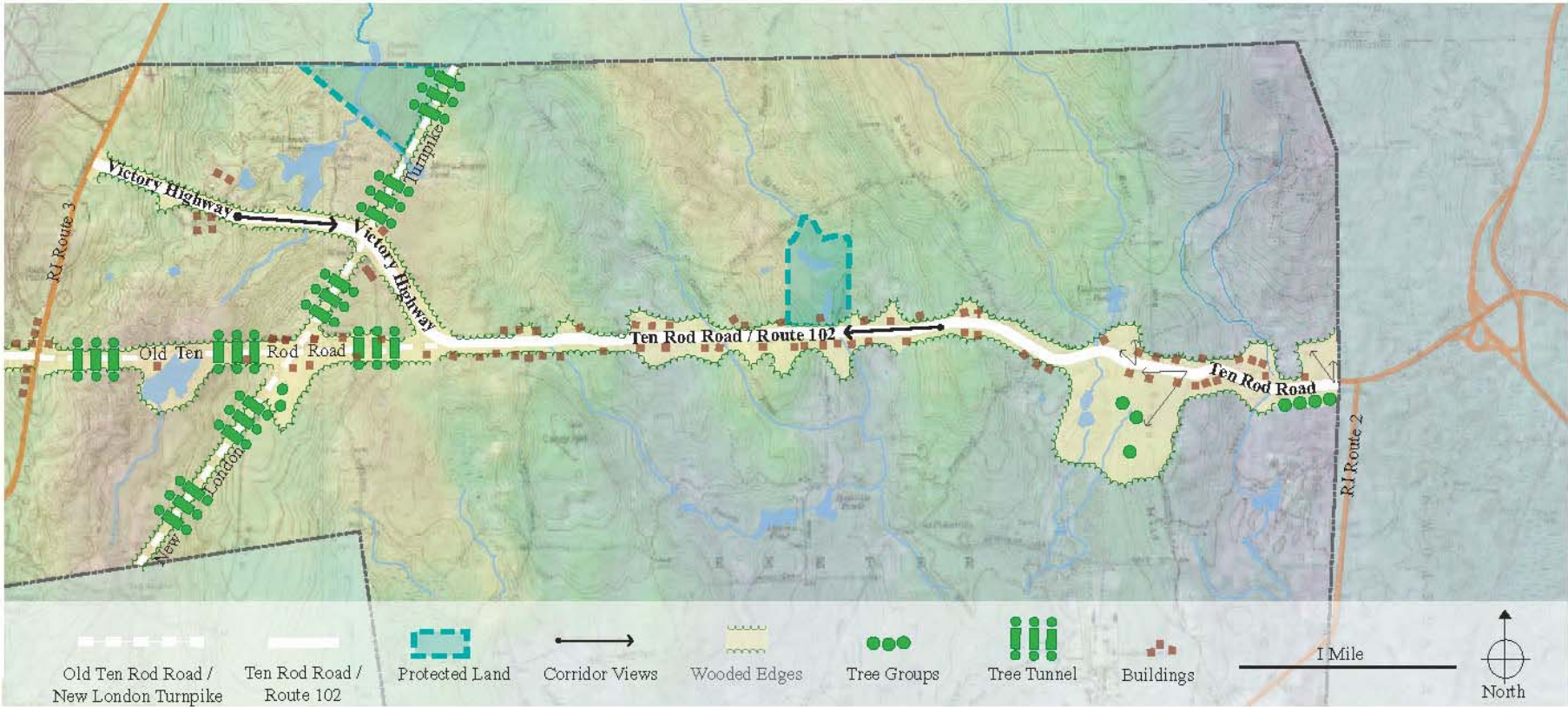
**From Route 3 to the Connecticut border,** The approximately 7.8 miles of Route 165 presents an extremely scenic, rolling roadway with remarkable long views to distant wooded hillsides. Dense roadside vegetation creates a strong directional corridor. Vertical and horizontal alignments, width, and lack of roadside development encourage speedy through truck and tourist traffic, whose volumes appear to be seasonally low to moderate, with greater tourist numbers during summer and colorful spring and fall months.

While much of the bordering land is public open space, protected and administered by RIDEM, there are groups of houses (screened from view) near Boon Lake, and near the Mount Tom Road intersection, unpleasantly open to view and not screened. The western end of the roadway at Beach Pond State Park is an important gateway for the Town and the State.



Views west, Route 165

# SCENIC ROADWAY ADMINISTRATIVE EXTENSION



*New London Turnpike*

These road segments are very different from each other and from Ten Rod Road and deserve special Scenic Roadway protection because of their historic significance, unique landscape characteristics, dramatic settings, and their potential vulnerability to incompatible development.

**Old Ten Rod Road** The approximately 2.1 mile long portion of Ten Rod Road between Route 3 and Victory Highway remains a partially unpaved gravel road serving local residents. The original Exeter Town House, the New London Turnpike and its timeless crossroad farmsteads, James Pond, and several family cemeteries are all in close proximity to the road. Dense and overhead roadside vegetation present a roadway that has been spared the pruning of overhead wire maintenance crews. Its occasionally steep and abrupt vertical and horizontal alignments, width, and sparse roadside development reinforce its rural and historic character.

**New London Turnpike** The New London Turnpike is an historically important road in the state having been the primary artery between Providence and New London for many decades. Its approximately 3.0 mile length in Exeter remains a mostly unpaved gravel road serving local residents. It is fairly level and well shaded with an arching tree canopy. It is a remarkable road.

Driving along these rural roads is to take a trip back in time, particularly at their intersection which appears to be unchanged over the last half-century of use.



*Old Ten Rod Road*

# SCENIC ROADWAY ADMINISTRATIVE EXTENSION

## Scenic and Historic Overlay Districts

**Route 165** While a significant amount of the roadway frontage on Route 165 is controlled by RIDEM, the private properties along the road and the wooded hillsides beyond are all potential development areas - as can be seen in several locations. The openness of this section of roadway can allow inconsiderate and un-controlled development to stick out like a sore thumb.

The same visual controls recommended for Route 102 are also recommended here. The inevitable development of new subdivisions require careful design review of roadway entrance intersections. They should be based on concern for compatibility with these dramatic and historic landscapes rather than their ability to contrast with them. Similarly, DEM roads and buildings should receive the same careful review. Tall buildings and cell towers require even more careful consideration as their visual impacts will last for a long time.

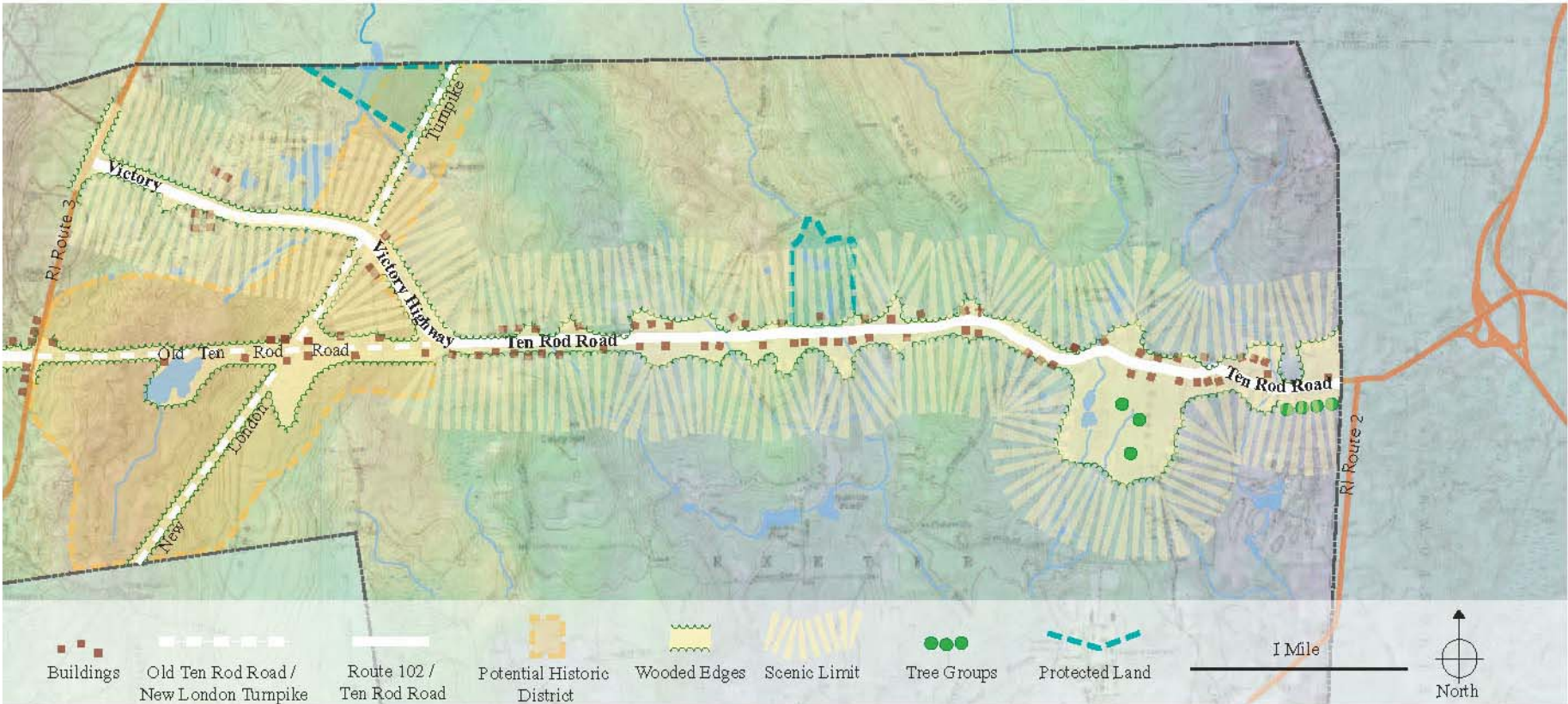
**Old Ten Rod Road** Old Ten Rod Road deserves special consideration and protection. Visual controls within the Town's right-of-way and beyond should consider the remaining historic qualities of the road, its alignment, the topography over which it passes, stone walls, over-arching trees, and the views from the road. Landscape maintenance here should be very carefully permitted and monitored.

**New London Turnpike** This historic road is virtually untouched for its full length through Exeter. It should have protective covenants similar to those recommended for Old Ten Rod Road.



*Views of the ever-changing character along Route 165.*

# SCENIC ROADWAY ADMINISTRATIVE EXTENSION



*This building complements the roadway . . .*



*. . . and this building does not.*



Eastbound or westbound on 165, many of the visual experiences between Route 3 and the Connecticut border are unique in Rhode Island - open sky, undeveloped wooded hillsides, and a tree-lined corridor. The chance of inconsiderate private development along this road, and the possibility of narrowly-defined highway changes recommend protection to insure that the present character maintains in keeping Route 165 the remarkable road that it is. The hidden qualities of Old Ten Rod Road and the New London Turnpike should be protected now, before those qualities are compromised.