

Trails Connect 2: Filling In The Gaps

May 12, 2010

***A Community Trails Forum hosted by the Upper Valley Trails Alliance.
Co-sponsored by Montshire Museum of Science, Norwich, VT***

6:15 - 6:25 pm Welcome & Updates from UVTA

Russ, John and Kari spoke about UVTA's activities since last Trails Connect forum.

6:25 - 6:35 pm Community Trail Updates

Cindy Heath - City of Lebanon

Cindy, Lelia Mellen and UVTA have been working together over the past six months to move forward with the Mascoma River Greenway project for which the City Council approved funding two years ago. At this point, cost estimates for the first phase (a paved, multi-use pathway from where the Northern Rail Trail ends in Lebanon to Slayton Bridge) have been submitted. Hopefully, work on this will start in the fall; the program will continue to move along, phase by phase.

Dave Celone - Town of Lyme

Dave gave an update re the town's Recreation subcommittee and their efforts to find a route from the Town Green to Post Pond as an alternative to Route 10. They have also been working with landowners to identify a path. This has been an ongoing effort over the last 15 years.

Joanna Whitcomb - Hanover Bike/Ped Committee

The Town of Hanover's Bike/Ped Committee is planning to improve safety along Lyme Road from the Co-op Food Store to Richmond Middle School with construction of a sidewalk on the east side of the road starting this summer. They have also been making progress on other Safe Routes to School projects, including off road opportunities to schools and working with map people to designate bike routes.

As a representative from Dartmouth's planning office, Joanna mentioned that they have been working on enhancing trail connections between Sachem Village and DHMC.

Greg Norman - HEAL

Greg gave a brief summary of what Upper Valley HEAL (Healthy Eating Active Living) is doing with its partners (including UVTA) to promote healthier habits for those in the Mascoma Valley area. More info can be found at: www.uvheal.org

6:25 - 6:35 pm Community Trail Updates, cont'd

Lelia Mellen - National Parks Service

Lelia Mellen commented that she feels that many of the Upper Valley's current initiatives (Loop Trail, Safe Routes to School, prescriptive active living) are all in line with the First Lady's "Let's Move" plan.

6:35-7:00 pm Upper Valley Trail Finder Demonstration

7:00-8:00 pm Breakout Sessions

See separate notes.

8:00-8:30 pm Breakout Session Report Outs

Larger Trail Network:

Facilitators and Discussion Topic: *Lelia Mellen and Mark Buck – The Larger Trail Network: Northern Rail Trail to Moose Mountain to AT to Cross Rivendell Trail – How can we connect our large regional trails? What other trail systems should be included?*

Discussion:

Major Loop Trail:

- Find a way to develop a trail outside Trails Connect 2 geography: much larger, big mileage, outlying communities.

Connection with the long distance trails:

- Connect existing networks with some of those trails (AT, Long Trail, etc.); improve connectivity for a walkabout.

Connection of town networks:

- Connect the many existing town loops and other trails.

Upper Valley Loop Trail:

Facilitators and Discussion Topic: *Lucy Gibson and Dwight Aspinwall – The UV Loop: Now that we have a road route on the ground, what is our vision? What is the next set of short- and long-term steps? What do we need to do to get there? What specific bike and pedestrian improvements are needed?*

Discussion:

Concerns:

- Old Pine Tree Cemetery: Bike trail marking is only on one side of the road (needs to be fixed).
- Some people may not understand dangers of traveling on high-speed roads (may assume it's safe because it's signed).
- General concern as to how to improve relations between drivers and cyclists.

Areas for Improvement:

- Hitchcock/Centerra: Safety and accessibility from Hanover and Norwich.
- Off-road access from Norwich to connect to multi-use Wilder path. (Bob White mentioned a study that had been done re: wetlands on east side of 91, but there may be potential on west side.)
- Interest in a trail from Rte. 120 (Jesse's/Centerra) to Greensboro.
- Cut a barrier at the end of Mount Support Road (to improve access for bikes).
- Approach towns for additional signage to benefit both drivers and cyclists.
- Improvements needed along Route 4 from West Lebanon to WRJ, across Bridge Street bridge (tricky for biking).
- Improvements needed for biking along Route 10 through Seminary Hill and Mechanic Street as it can be dangerous; excitement about possible connection via Greenway.

Other Opportunities:

- Excitement about potential access to David Clem's property along the Connecticut River (Lyme Properties).
- Potential for bike/ped trail from the Boston Lot area, paralleling route 10 up to Sachem.
- Potential for an interior loop for mountain biking and skiing near Boston Lot area.
- Discussion of the potential for a suspension bridge over the old Wilder Dam, which could potentially open up routes for commuters (access to Sachem, DHMC, etc.).

Local Trail Groups and Resources:

Facilitators and Discussion Topic: *Jennifer Schiffman and Kari Speer – Local Trail Groups: What do they need to succeed? How can we best support them? What services and resources can UVTA provide? What are the best ways to utilize volunteers, plan for events, and communicate with landowners?*

Discussion:

Provide People:

- Groups (UFLT, Hartford Conservation Commission, Green Mountain Club) expressed need for volunteers to help with trail maintenance.

Provide Recognition:

- Showcase other member trail groups' efforts (online, in newsletter, etc.).
- Volunteer recognition.

Start Conversations:

- Pursue the question among members of how to turn trail users into trail stewards (how to change the culture).
- Create a conversation with trails groups and conservation commissions, recognizing the differences (i.e. conservation groups charged with conservation) but help with an understanding of differences and similarities.

UV HEAL:

Facilitators and Discussion Topic: *Greg Norman and Sara Coons – UV Healthy Eating Active Living: How can we build a stronger connection between “HEAL” and Trails? What can schools do to participate?*

Discussion:

What are systems and processes to help young access trails?

Expand on the Passport to Winter Fun Program:

- Develop a multi-season Passport program.
- Create lists of trails for children to hike as a goal (e.g. The Upper Valley 22, the Woodstock 7 or the Canaan 5); reward students with incentive prizes.

Connect with Educators:

- Direct teachers to interact with the HEAL website.
- Train physical education teachers to incorporate trails in the curriculum (as NPS has done).

Other:

- Provide online options for non-traditional physical activity (e.g. a walking club where students could track progress online).
- Summer trail work programs.
- Connect with Valley Quests/Geocaching.
- Teens to Trails program in Maine- workshops for teens re: trail education.
- Work with town Rec Departments to offer “Trails Days” for families; UVTA could provide training to the leaders of these programs (teach them how to introduce people to trails).
- Working with Rec Departments and/or schools, establish Community Tool Sheds stocked with equipment such as mountain bikes, snowshoes, etc. for people to try (before buying).

Mountain Biking:

Facilitators and Discussion Topic: *Jennie Hubbard and Jonathan Frishtick – Mountain Biking and Trails: What are the biggest issues? How can we resolve them to build a MB friendly community? What is the best way to get the word out on where it is allowed or not? Are people using Mountain Bikes for commuting as well as recreation?*

Discussion:

Areas for Improvement:

- Build better sustainable trails for multi-use.
- Ensure better signage at trailheads indicating appropriate uses (and work with landowners to take on this responsibility).

Concerns:

- Will more use affect wildlife?
- More towns are embracing multi-use trails; how can everyone come together to keep trails healthy for community?

Notes from Breakout Sessions

Larger Trail Network:

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Discussion Notes:

- Gile Mountain>Thetford Hill> Union Village Dam area
- Additional connections around Norwich
- Connect the 5 villages of Hartford with a trail
- Expand/renew Clark Pond Trail
- Hulbert to Thetford – Mimi’s Trail
- Connect the Outdoor Learning Centers:
 - o Hulbert
 - o Sceyon
 - o VINS
 - o Montshire
 - o Marsh Billings
- Canaan> Moose Mountain>AT>Moosilauke
- Cardigan>Canaan>Kearsarge
- Smith Pond Road>1/2 mile pond>woods roads to Exit 13 (89)>Leavit pond>Croydon or Meriden
- AT>Ridge trail on Moose Mtn.>Rail Trail>Harford>Gile Mtn.>Cross Rivendell trail >Lyme or Thetford – A Grand outer loop
- Lyme village to river >Trout Pond>AT
- Something around the Croydon Turnpike going South
- Connection to Sunapee Trails through to Monadnock
- North/South rail trail along the Connecticut River
- North Rail Line through Leb. along river

- Open Wilder dam for Pedestrian crossing to connect to 5 Villages trail or new Rail Trail

Some general thoughts and suggestions:

- Would be very desirable to have all area trails on one map. (Sounds like Trail Finder.)
- Suggested something like the Snow mobile clubs have where the whole trail network is mapped.
- Several comments about the lack of useful trail signs especially at trailheads. Many times there is nothing marking the trailhead at all and new people are not confident they are at a trailhead.

Upper Valley Loop Trail:

Facilitators and Discussion Topic: *Lucy Gibson and Dwight Aspinwall – The UV Loop: Now that we have a road route on the ground, what is our vision? What is the next set of short- and long-term steps? What do we need to do to get there? What specific bike and pedestrian improvements are needed?*

Discussion Notes:

- Route through Old Pine Cemetery is unsafe; not wide enough.
- Concern- are people “equipped to ride” on the loop; are all parts safe?
- Lots of people work at DHMC; non-road means of getting there from Lebanon would be good.
- Alternate route to Billings Farm/Dothan Brook from Norwich (corner/lights); east of 91? (less wet)
- Access off 120 from Hanover to hospital; Greensboro/120 S the worst.
- East side - Jesse’s to Centerra.
- Cut through barrier at David’s House dead-end of Mt. Support Rd.
- How to deal with contention between drivers and cyclists? Suggestions:
 - o Bikers to respect rules of road
 - o Signage, info targeting cars/drivers
 - o Go to individual towns
- Section from West Lebanon across bridge to Rte. 5 in Hartford bike-unfriendly.
- Seminary Hill needs to be rebuilt; nasty gutter
- Access to David Clem’s property on east side of CT River, north of Bridge St. bridge.

- Bike/ped trail parallel to Rte. 10 north out of West Lebanon to Sachem Village, along hillside
- Parallel network of mountain biking/ski trails following contour of mountains near Boston Lot area
- Wilder Dam- Patriot Act forbids trespass (“vulnerable site”)
- Suspension bridge across old Wilder Dam to old Wilder Rd. connect to Boston Lot?

Local Trail Groups and Resources:

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Discussion Notes:

- Most urgent needs for Conservation Commissions are manpower and money.
 - o Would be useful to have a list of volunteers and know volunteers in each town that can be counted on to help out as needed.
 - o Issues are complex; can be hard to manage problems.
 - o Some landowners now at point afraid to sign agreements because lack of management for some trails.
- How do we create a sense of dedication and stewardship among trail users?
 - o Signs soliciting volunteers at trailheads.
 - o VAST as an example (users/volunteers are very dependable in helping to maintain trails).
- Help educate the community about the work that trail groups are doing and the problems they face.
 - o Promote trail groups to a wider audience (age, location, etc.) by linking, using e-mail, website, etc.
 - o The balance between conservation and recreation; conservation groups support for sustainability.

UV HEAL:

Facilitators and Discussion Topic: *Greg Norman and Sara Coons – UV Healthy Eating Active Living: How can we build a stronger connection between “HEAL” and Trails? What can schools do to participate?*

Discussion Notes:

- Incorporate trails in P.E. curriculum
- Trails clubs/alternative to team sports
- Create Upper Valley “High Points 22” and modest incentives with increasing challenges
 - o Online forms
 - o Developmental variations
 - o Public “Wall of Fame”
- Work with local stores to have pre-packed “picnic lunches and trail map”
- Integrate uvheal.org in P.E./Health curriculum
- Using Facebook, etc. to give older youth the chance to document/challenge time use
- “Climb Mount Everest” virtual challenge/ “Vertical Feet Group”
- Teens to Trails Summit (T3) - teach basic skills
- Creating a “Trail Service” option
- Trails as classroom (cross-curricular learning)
- “Forest for every classroom” NPS training
- “Trail to every classroom” (AT)
- Summer trail work programs
- Trails as community history/wild foods
- Valley Quest/Geocaching
- Trails and pathway “common sense” education
- Trail leader volunteer trails
 - o Developmentally appropriate
 - o Embedded in rec programs
 - o Group trips

- Mountain bike stash/lending tool shed/community equipment

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Discussion Notes:

Issues:

- ATV's- Joshua Rd. Norwich
- Landmark Tract - south of DHMC
 - o Visibility and use balance
 - o Huge and multi-access- difficult to control
- Most trail undesignated, unsustainable
- Landowner must take responsibility and play a role
- Gile Mountain success- hikers, bikers- volunteers engaged
- Well designed trails will draw mountain bikers
- Multiple trail users, stakeholders
- Mountain biking is an “accidental” use- unplanned for (many local trails weren't originally designed with Mtn. Biking in mind)
- No mountain biking trails in Hanover
- Trails designed for mountain bikers
- Internet info re: bootleg trails
- To do: Information distribution to users
- Proper trail construction- trail use volume increases impact to wildlife; wildlife impacts may occur 300' width beyond trail
- Successes:
 - o Plainfield- French's Ledges- multi-use recreation
 - o Norwich multi-use/shared
 - o Lyme- Listserv info re: multi-use trails/limitations