



July 27, 2020

Dear LVRT Supporter,

We have some very exciting news for you! The Vermont legislature has just passed a capital bill, signed by Governor Phil Scott, to totally fund completion of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail!

What This Means

The reason this is such good news is that the state's allocation of the total funds needed means that the entire trail can be completed in as little as three years vs. the 15-20 years it would have taken for VAST to do the fundraising itself. We at VAST remained totally committed to the completion of the trail, but we also know that its many enthusiastic users and supporters would rather have it done sooner than later!

While the state is working on completing the trail construction, VAST will remain responsible for the LVRT's maintenance and upkeep. That upkeep itself is time-consuming and expensive: repairing washouts, bridges, and culverts after storms; removing fallen trees; clearing ledge and rockslides; and keeping the StayMat surface in good shape to meet ADA standards for disability access.

Consequently, VAST will no longer be soliciting donations for construction of the trail, but we will gladly and gratefully accept contributions for the LVRT's maintenance needs. (We should note that, at this point, donations for ongoing LVRT upkeep will no longer be eligible for the 80% federal match.) We hope our donors will continue to help us with funding for this maintenance.

How We Got Here

Almost 20 years ago, VAST participated in a competitive RFP for ideas on what to do with the abandoned railroad that covered most of the northern east-west quadrant of Vermont. VAST's idea to develop an all-season, multi-use, public recreation trail was chosen as the best use. At that point, the State awarded to VAST the responsibility to develop this trail.

Your donations to the construction of the trail have been what has enabled us to complete a little over a third of the trail to date – and without you, that would not have been possible!

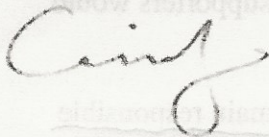
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With each passing year, though, it was becoming increasingly obvious to us, to leaders at the state level, and to our most ardent supporters that raising sufficient private donations and foundation grants for the completion of such a mammoth project was going to be a very heavy lift. This was the case even with the federal grants, including the latest 80% match, that our Congressional delegation (Senators Bernie Sanders and Pat Leahy and Representative Peter Welch) has been so instrumental in securing for the LVRT. The wide support for the trail, proven by donations, and the positive impacts to public health and recreation and to small businesses along the trail in areas where it was completed all helped make it clear to state leadership how valuable completing the trail would be.

VAST will be doing a press release on this development soon, but we wanted to inform our donors first. Once again, we want to whole-heartedly thank you for your donor support for the LVRT to date and, with you, we look forward to the accelerated completion of the trail that the state of Vermont has now made possible! Soon, we'll be able to enjoy using the entire length of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail!

Sincerely,



Cindy Locke
VAST Executive Director