



VELOMONT TRAIL

VELOMONT VISION PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

You are reading the executive summary of the Velomont Vision Plan. For additional detail, and an in-depth understanding of the vision, policies, and geographic approach being taken to build an amazing mountain bike trail across Vermont, visit www.velomonttrail.org

This document is a digital pdf. It is intended to be viewed on a computer or mobile device. The layout will still support printing on 11x17 pages. As a digital pdf, it supports interactive document navigation and links to external online resources.

Chapter Header Hyperlinks

- These bars are color coded to reference each of the document's five chapters. Look to the upper right of each page for indication of the viewer's current chapter, and click on any other to quickly navigate to the next chapter.



Internal Document Hyperlinks

- These hyperlinks provide access to specific parts of the Velomont Plan without needing specific page numbers or lots of scrolling.

[Take me to Chapter 4!](#)

External Document Hyperlinks

- These hyperlinks connect to external online resources for additional information.

[Take me to the Internet!](#)

Terms

ANR: Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

Corridor of Opportunity: The identified swath of focus for planning and connecting the Velomont

DEC: Vermont Dept of Environmental Conservation

DST: Vermont Agency of Natural Resources District Stewardship Team

F&W: Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife

FPR: Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

GMNF: Green Mountain National Forest

LVRT: Lamoille Valley Rail Trail

The Velomont: The Trail and hut system itself – a contiguous alignment of trail, pathways, and roads across Vermont that creates a backcountry experience linking huts, hostels, and more than 27 town centers across the State of Vermont.

VMBA: Vermont Mountain Bike Association

VTrans: Vermont Agency of Transportation

Acknowledgements

Steering Committee

This plan owes its final quality and direction to the following steering committee members who graciously volunteered their time and lent their expertise throughout the planning process:

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This plan was funded by the Vermont Outdoor Recreation and Economic Collaborative (VOREC) and completed by planners and designers at





01. THE STORY

THE VISION

A vision is being crafted in the Green Mountains.

Imagine a continuous trail and conservation corridor that links mountain ridges to Vermont villages, all supported by a backcountry hut network. This ambitious project has the potential to conserve landscapes, connect communities, build economies, and create an incredible recreational resource. This is the Velomont.

The Velomont invites people on bikes, skis, and foot to one day explore 485 miles of trail which will connect 30-45 backcountry huts & downtown hostels and 27 communities, potentially conserving over 200,000¹ acres of crucial wildlife corridor. When complete, the Velomont will represent the largest hut- supported trail network in the United States.

This plan documents the vision and accomplishments of the Velomont to date, and provides clear guidance and direction for the next phase of trail and hut planning, design, permitting, and development. This plan was written to:

- Illustrate progress, opportunities, constraints, and the long-range vision for the Velomont
- Establish planning and design principles to guide future trail and hut development
- Document public input, as well as state and federal agency collaboration that helped develop this plan
- Outline a process for continued collaboration and partnerships



Linking Vermont's trail systems and downtowns.

¹ Based on 2021 analysis by the Trust for Public Lands based on identification of non-agricultural parcels over 200 acres within the Velomont Corridor of Opportunity

PLAN HISTORY

In 2016, a VMBA Chapter, the Ridgeline Outdoor Collective, began to discuss connecting trails to neighboring chapters rather than building more loops within their own trail networks. This idea offered a chance to expand trail networks while better balancing recreation and conservation interests. That same year, Vermont Huts Association (VHA) was founded with a vision to create a cohesive statewide hut network. Ridgeline and VHA joined forces and opened conversations with Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, (FPR) to explore central Vermont connectivity. During these discussions, FPR representatives recommended investigating a bolder vision – a state-wide trail.

This vision took hold and was dubbed The Velomont. Since 2016, 33 miles of the Velomont Trail Corridor have been established in the Green Mountain National Forest. An additional 97 miles are currently proposed and under review by state agencies.

The Velomont is envisioned to connect Massachusetts to Canada, through a scenic corridor rolling through the mountains, valleys, and villages of Vermont. Using existing trails and building new connections, the Velomont will create a unique and valuable hut to hut and village to village experience across the state of Vermont.

PLAN PROCESS

This document's overarching planning process began in 2023, funded by a grant through the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Community Grant Program and a US Forest Service cost share grant agreement. Built in close collaboration with state and federal land managers across Vermont, this plan included numerous coordination meetings, including:

- Monthly Velomont / Green Mountain National Forest Ranger District meetings
- Five dedicated ANR District Stewardship Team meetings to discuss opportunities and constraints in each of the five districts
- Meeting with Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) leadership to provide direction on Velomont utilization of state transportation routes
- Quarterly Velomont / Trust for Public Land meetings
- Three meetings with Natural Resource Board, Vermont Land Trust, and Trust for Public Land to coordinate trail and conservation projects.
- Five public open houses and a public online survey
- 14 monthly steering committee meetings. This group provided direct input on the content and presentation of this plan.

PROJECT LEADERSHIP

The Velomont Collective:

The team working to build the Velomont. Formed through a broad collaborative effort spearheaded by Vermont Huts Association, VMBA and its chapters, and the Catamount Trail Association, The Velomont Collective is a term used to encompass the local, regional, and statewide nonprofit organizations working to develop and implement the Velomont.

Catamount Trail Association (CTA):

The Catamount Trail Association is a passionate group of outdoor recreation advocates and trailblazers working to expand access to Vermont's backcountry by stewarding the Catamount Trail and a growing network of world-class terrain, protecting access to mountain lands and pioneering programs to expand equitable access to skiing.

Vermont Huts Association (VHA):

A nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster a deeper appreciation for our natural environment and strengthen Vermont's communities by providing enriching and immersive outdoor experiences for all.

Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA):

A non-profit overseeing 28 local mountain bike advocacy Chapters across Vermont, ensuring a unified voice. Their mission is to ensure the sustainability of mountain biking in Vermont and thoughtfully promote exceptional riding experiences for all through advocacy, education, and community-driven stewardship.



PROJECT LEADERSHIP:



PROJECT PARTNERS:

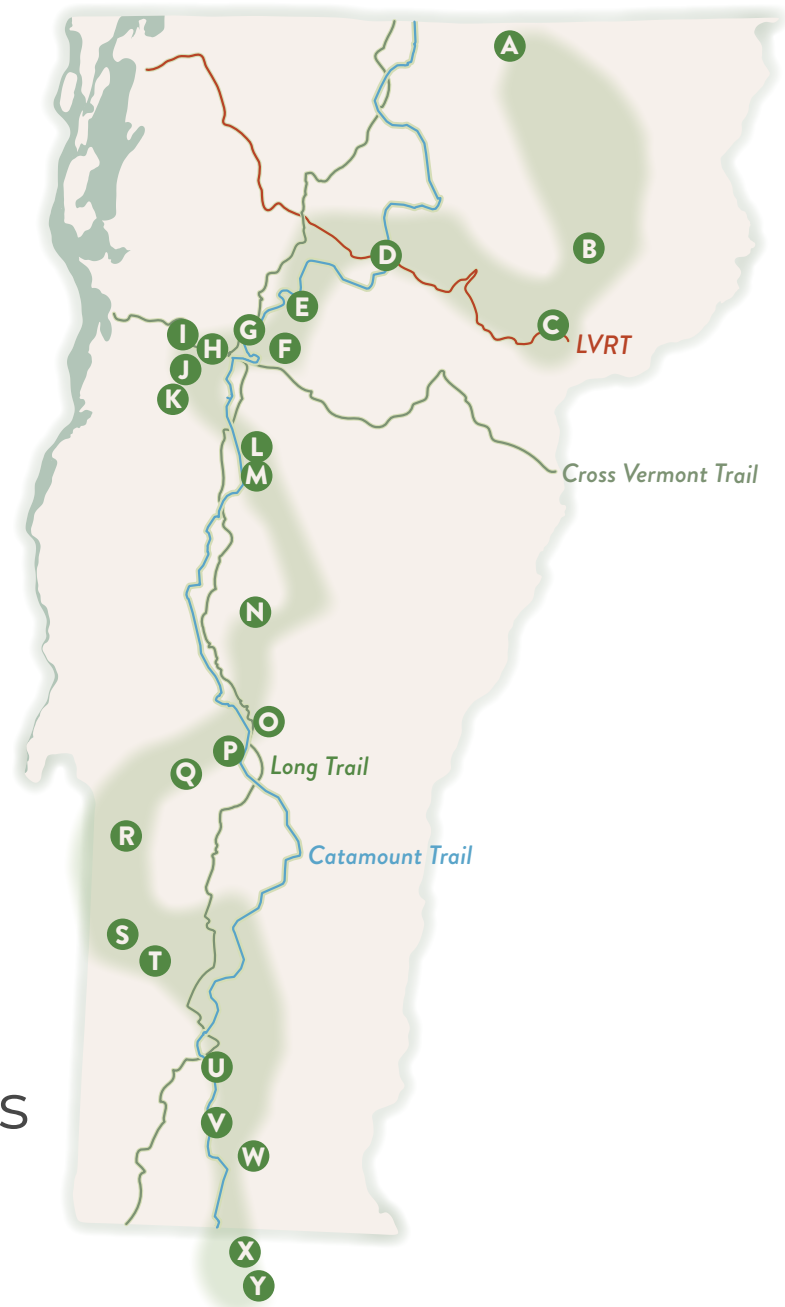


Local Partners

- A. Memphremagog Trails
- B. Kingdom Trails Association
- C. Caledonia Trail Collaborative
- D. Lamoille Valley Rail Trail
- E. Stowe Trails Partnership
- F. Waterbury Area Trails Alliance
- G. Bolton Valley Resort
- H. Cochran's Ski Area
- I. Richmond Mountain Trails
- J. Sleepy Hollow Inn Ski & Bike Center
- K. Fellowship of the Wheel
- L. Mad River Riders
- M. Mad River Path
- N. Ridgeline Outdoor Collective
- O. Killington Mountain Bike Club
- P. Mendon Mountain Club
- Q. Pine Hill Partnership
- R. Slate Valley Trails
- S. Merck Forest & Farmland
- T. Northshire Area Trail System
- U. Southern Vermont Trails Association
- V. Mount Snow
- W. Hoot Toot and Whistle Bike Club
- X. Deerfield Valley Trails
- Y. Thunder Mountain Bike Park

Statewide Partners

- Cross Vermont Trail
- Green Mountain Club
- Trust for Public Land
- VAST-VT Assoc. of Snow Travelers
- VT Youth Conservation Corps
- Vermont Land Trust
- Vermont Adaptive Ski & Sports
- VT Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation
- US Forest Service, Green Mountain National Forest
- Vermont Agency of Transportation



PARTNERS

The Velomont Collective is a collaboration between three main partner organizations: Vermont Huts Association, the Catamount Trail Association, and the Vermont Mountain Bike Association. These groups will pool resources to support the ongoing efforts needed to successfully plan, fundraise, and complete the establishment of a contiguous trail for biking, skiing, and hiking across Vermont. The role of The Velomont Collective will be to manage and oversee all portions of trail planning, grant writing, use agreements, wayfinding sign installation, and trail construction needed to see this project forward. The Velomont Trail will not be built by any one group, however. As a collaborative, state-wide effort, it will require the support of numerous groups, including:

- **Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation (FPR):** Review proposals and provide guidance to support the connection and completion of the Velomont Route and hut sites to support statewide conservation and recreation goals.
- **Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF):** Review proposals and provide guidance to support the connection and completion of the Velomont Route and hut sites to support goals for stewardship and recreation on Green Mountain National Forest lands.
- **Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans):** Review proposals and provide guidance to support the connection and completion of the Velomont Route to support goals for public safety and non-motorized transportation between

communities. This agency manages many rail trail resources in the state of Vermont, and will be a key partner as the Velomont moves towards co-location with portions of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) and Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail (D&H).

- **Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports:** As a nationally recognized organization that empowers people of all abilities through inclusive sports and recreational programming, Vermont Adaptive Ski & Sports provides support and guidance as the Velomont develops adaptive-friendly trail corridors and huts, supporting access for all ages and abilities.
- **Conservation Partners:** Numerous conservation groups, such as the Vermont Land Trust, Trust for Public Land, and others have supported Velomont conservation opportunities and continue to advise and guide corridor planning toward the most suitable locations to align recreation and conservation resources.
- **Trail Stewards:** Individual VMBA Chapters, Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST), CTA, and other local trail networks continue to support the Velomont and serve as on-going trail stewards supporting established portions of the Velomont through maintenance and management.
- **Local Governments:** Town governments and Vermont Regional Planning Commissions support the Velomont through ongoing coordination and planning related to community connections, public roadway use, and project funding. Towns will also review proposal and provide guidance related to town lands.

THE BENEFITS

Trails and outdoor recreation bring tangible benefits to the communities they serve. The Velomont trail's environmental, economic, and community benefits are estimated here to illustrate how this project will deliver significant returns on investment.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

"People don't need trails. The Land needs trails." This simple observation from [Colorado's Guide for Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind](#) recognizes that trails focus human activity upon specific corridors within the natural

landscape. Without trails, outdoor recreation has the potential to disturb entire swaths of land, disturbing critical natural species habitats. Trails are a recreation tool that help us manage the impacts of human activity on the landscape by focusing certain types of use, like biking, hiking, and skiing, to well-designed corridors

Poorly planned trails can adversely impact wildlife and other natural resources. But the Velomont is not, and will not be poorly planned. Planned and designed as a conservation tool and sustainable, ecologically sensitive trail corridor, the Velomont offers numerous conservation benefits.

Conservation Success: Rolston Rest

- 3 Major Trails Connected
- 2,744 Acres Protected
- 140,000 Protected Acres Connected

Rolston Rest was once the largest unprotected inholding in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest. Spanning 2,744 acres of **dense forest, headwater streams, and scenic peaks**, Rolston Rest is a recreationalist's dream and an important habitat for bobcat, moose, otter, and the threatened northern long-eared bat.

The team behind Velomont and Trust for Public Land meet on a quarterly basis to ensure **recreation and conservation efforts are aligned**. Together, Rolston Rest was added to the Green Mountain National Forest, protecting the beloved forest, **connecting three major trails**, and linking **dozens of Vermont communities** so they can access the benefits of the outdoors.

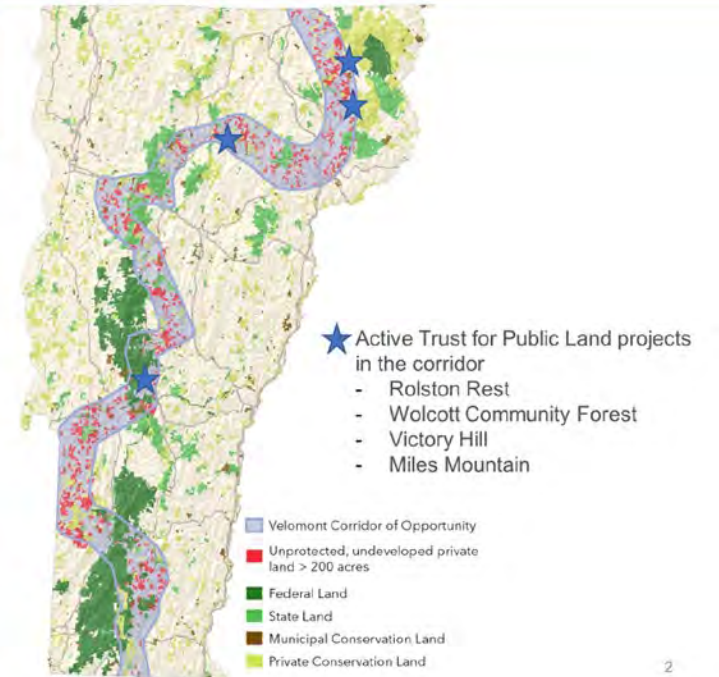


Conservation and public lands creation within the Velomont Corridor of Opportunity

Today: Over 27,000 acres of **active conservation projects** within the corridor

555 **unprotected and undeveloped parcels** over 200 acres within the corridor

214,000 acres of **strategic total conservation opportunity**

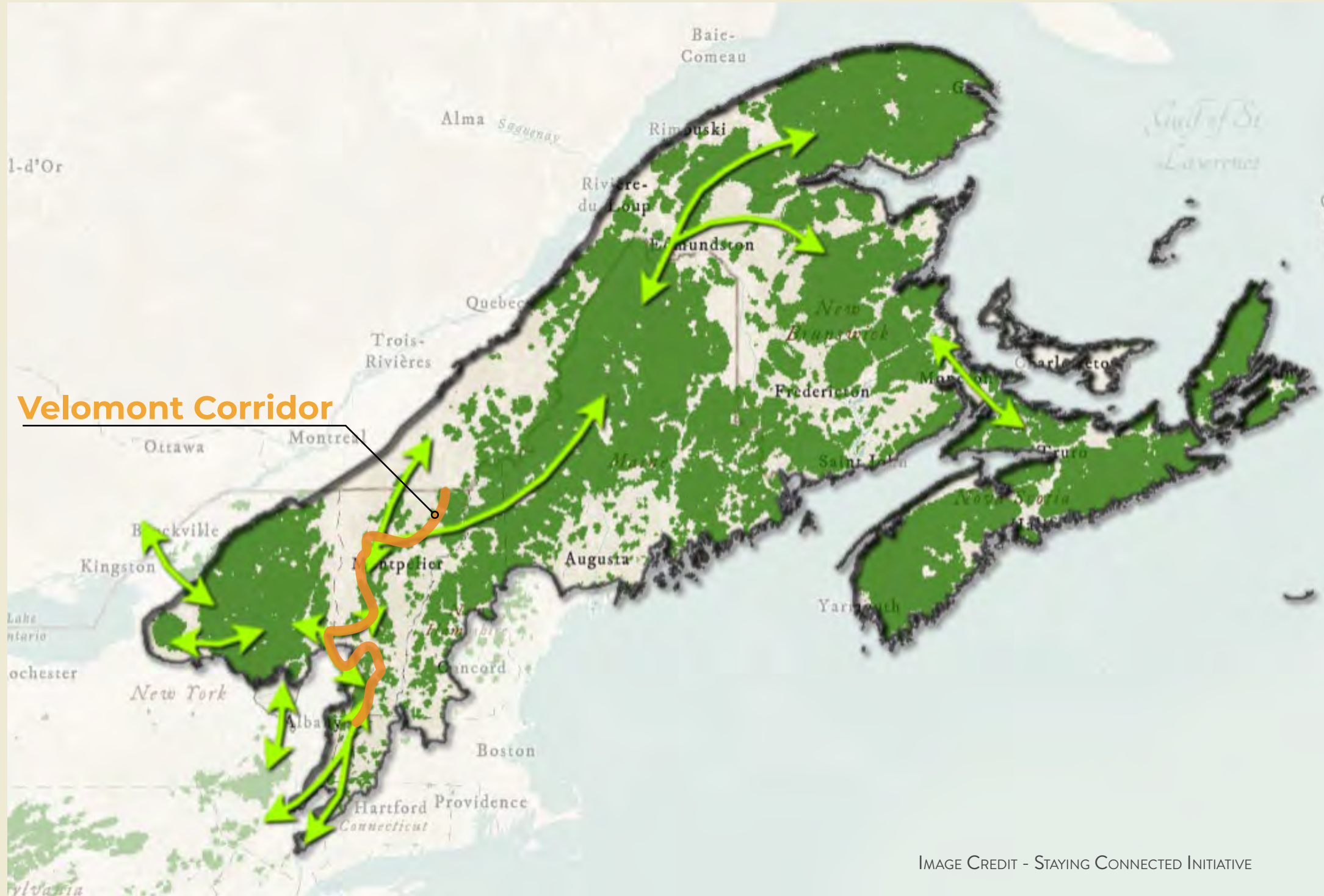


Recreation is a Conservation Tool

For generations, recreation and conservation have worked together in Vermont to support the state's economy and way of life. The Long Trail, built between 1910 and 1930, is a key reason that the spine of the Green Mountains has been conserved. This historic recreational trail played a part in the foundation of Green Mountain National Forest, Camel's Hump State Park and Mt. Mansfield State Forest, among many other public land units. Public access recreation is already designated as a land conservation purpose in Vermont Statute – so what if a state-wide trail could be the tool to conserve more land in Vermont? The need for conservation is recognized not just in Vermont, but in Washington, DC as well. In 2021, President Biden signed into law the Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home

and Abroad which set the ambitious goal of conserving 30 percent of the nation's land by 2030. Known as 30x30, this executive order was echoed by Vermont Legislature in 2023 as the Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act. This bill adopted the 30% by 2030 goal of its federal precedent and extended the goal to conserve 50% of Vermont's landmass by 2050.

The Velomont is designed to support these conservation objectives. Each segment of trail corridor carries with it the potential to conserve the parcel of land surrounding it. Conservation that builds a trail network can pull from conservation and recreation funding resources alike. The Velomont vision is to build a trail corridor that links communities through broad corridors of conserved land, preserving landscapes for wildlife migration and biodiversity while supporting statewide recreation.



Velomont Corridor

Velomont Alignment Supports Climate Resilience

As the climate changes, plant and animal species will migrate to adapt. Multiple wildlife conservation groups, including the [Nature Conservancy](#), Open Space Institute, [Staying Connected Initiative](#), and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, have identified lands within and surrounding the Green Mountains as crucial wildlife migration corridors. Conservation of corridors of forest to facilitate these movements is crucial for the long-term survival of many species. The planned Velomont Trail offers an opportunity to coordinate recreation and conservation efforts and preserve land along these crucial migration corridors.

IMAGE CREDIT - STAYING CONNECTED INITIATIVE

Coordinated Trails Create Less Landscape Disruption

The state has numerous small trail networks which are developed and maintained independently. Each small community has been planning, building, and maintaining trails independent of its neighbors, creating localized impacts on either side of invisible town lines. This approach has resulted in incredible local trail networks. The Velomont provides an opportunity to expand beyond local boundaries into a statewide trail project whose design offers an opportunity to leverage existing resources while supporting conservation and recreation goals.

Instead of multiple communities working on dense networks of trails on singular parcels, the Velomont offers an opportunity for trail advocates to work collaboratively across property and town boundaries. This approach creates improved recreational and conservation outcomes by building long distance trails that leave more portions of land undisturbed wildlife and ecological processes.

This approach will be realized by utilizing existing trails wherever possible. The Velomont is not a 'whole new trail' across the state, but rather a creative and thoughtful assemblage of existing resources, linked by strategic connectors to create a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

**UNCOORDINATED
TRAIL DEVELOPMENT**



**VELOMONT TRAIL
DEVELOPMENT**

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Health Benefits

Velomont is designed to provide more trail access close to home that are accessible to all ages and abilities - creating health and wellness benefits for everyone. Through excellent trail design and integrated community programming, the Velomont can serve as a catalyst for encouraging more active lifestyles for nearby residents.

It is estimated that well over 100,000 Vermonters live within 15 minutes of the proposed Velomont corridor. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has found that nearly one-in-five (19.6%) of the Vermont adult population reports being inactive for more than a week at a time, and additional CDC research has shown that active lifestyles reduce a person's annual healthcare costs by approximately \$1,600 annually. If even 1% of the inactive adult residents living near the corridor were to adopt a more active lifestyle, this could result in reduced healthcare costs of around \$550,000 annually for this population. A more ambitious 5% target could result in up to \$2.8 million in annual healthcare savings.

A Statewide Quality of Life Amenity

The Velomont is anticipated to connect through 27 Vermont communities, intersecting with major travel corridors and connecting to downtowns once complete. Bringing a well-designed trail into this number of communities represents an unprecedented opportunity and investment in recreation access for Vermont residents and an enviable quality of life amenity.

Vermont is home to a [VT Youth Cycling](#), a club comprised of 15 local cycling teams serving middle and highschool ages. These locally led groups build fitness and confidence through interscholastic races, group rides, and trail stewardship. The Velomont's design to bring trails to town centers will only further support the physical and mental health and wellness of youth and communities across the state.

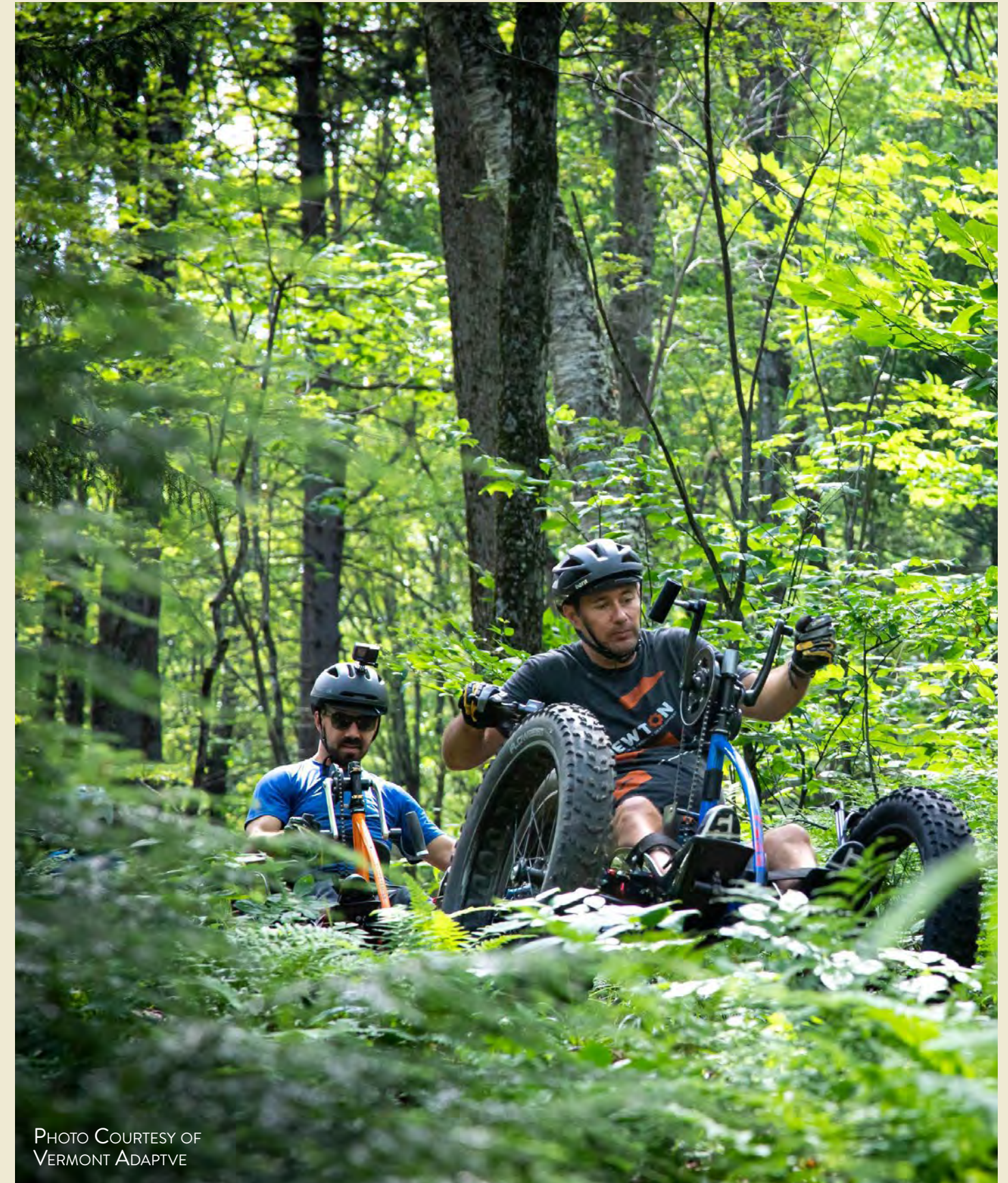


PHOTO COURTESY OF
VERMONT ADAPTIVE

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Long distance hiking trails, like the Long Trail, have been proven to attract adventurers from around the globe to Vermont. The Velomont will continue this trend and will also support small-town economies on and adjacent to the trail corridor. The Velomont route will connect travelers with the local cafes, outfitters, huts and hostels that will support an incredible backcountry trail experience. These trail users will directly support existing (and future) lodging, dining, and service industries in each Velomont town.

There is good reason for Vermont to continue to invest in outdoor recreation. The Bureau of Economic Analysis estimates that Vermont's outdoor recreation economy contributes 4.6% of the state's economy – generating \$666M in lodging, close to \$400M in retail sales and \$106M in manufacturing. This 2022 data does not account for the broader benefits realized by outdoor recreation communities when quality of life acts as a magnet for remote work as employees seek out locations that offer an escape from urban commutes and traffic into forest bathing and trail networks from their back door.

Economic Impact of Building The Velomont

The planning, design, and construction of the Velomont is specifically estimated to generate a one-time economic impact resulting in 112 new jobs, \$2M contributed to state taxes, and \$31M generated in total one time spending across the state.

Visitor Spending Along The Velomont

Once complete, visitor spending associated with use of the Velomont is estimated to be as high as \$3.2 million annually, supporting up to 48 full-time equivalent jobs. Non-local trail users and overnight users are projected to spend approximately \$80 – 90 per person per day as part of their visit to the trail. Efforts to connect the Velomont to downtown areas and community centers will be critical to realizing this economic potential by providing trail users with convenient options to purchase food, supplies, and overnight stays.

The Velomont will offer a recreational opportunity unlike anything else in the Northeast. The combined visitor spending associated with visitation to future huts along the Velomont is estimated to be as high as \$6.4 million per year, supporting up to 91 full-time equivalent jobs.



IN 2022, OUTDOOR RECREATION MADE UP 4.6% OF VERMONT'S ECONOMY, RANKING THE STATE 2ND TO HAWAII IN OUTDOOR RECREATION'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STATE GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

Direct Community Benefits

In addition to receiving sales dollars and tax revenues associated with trail user spending, communities along the Velomont corridor stand to benefit economically in ways that are harder to quantify. The quality of life afforded by convenient access to a high-quality and well-known recreational amenity can help communities attract and retain residents and businesses, increase property values, and put other community amenities and businesses on the map for visitors. Efforts to enhance and activate these linkages, such as wayfinding signage, local outing programs, and trail-friendly business programs will help bolster the benefits that communities see from the trail.

More broadly, the completion of the Velomont will bolster Vermont's established reputation as an outdoor recreation destination by providing a unique outdoor recreation

amenity that stands alone in the United States. The 2024 passage of the Biking On Long Distance Trails (BOLT) Act by Congress recognizes unique long distance mountain bike trails across the Western United States, and the Velomont will create the only long distance hut supported mountain bike trail in the eastern United States.

The Velomont is Vermont's chance to invest in summer recreation during a time when climate change is reducing the volume and duration of snowfall across the state. The completion of the Velomont can maintain Vermont as a premier four-season recreation destination on par with anywhere out west, with far-reaching impacts for Vermont's tourism and outdoor recreation economies.

Four-Season Recreation

The Velomont includes connection to 11 ski areas and resorts including Burke, Stowe, Bolton, Cochran's, Mad River Glen, Sugarbush, Killington, Mt Snow, Haystack and Berkshire East. This project will support the local ski industry and the communities they support adapt to a changing climate with a non-snow dependent sport that can attract visitors and revenue.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARTHA HOWE

THE PRINCIPLES

The Velomont, as it stands today, still has many more miles of new trail to plan, permit, and build. For each trail project that remains ahead of the Velomont reaching its full potential - three key questions guide The Velomont Collective when planning a trail:

- ▶ What is the best route for the land?
- ▶ What is the best route for the communities?
- ▶ What is the best route for the user experience?

Although it may be rare to find the perfect alignment that satisfies each question, The Velomont Collective seeks to find the best alignments possible through careful planning and following the trail planning principles outlined below.

From initial conceptual proposals to final trail or hut construction, these principles are intended to serve as guidelines to support sound planning and decision making. These principles have been developed through a review of trail planning and design best practices, summary of public feedback received through the statewide Velomont planning process, and established The Velomont Collective Trail User Objectives.





SUPPORT COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

In order to facilitate this connectivity, the Velomont should be marked and signed to connect to community centers even when they are not directly on the trail itself. Wayfinding towards comfortable and safe bicycle and pedestrian friendly linkages between Velomont trails and nearby town centers will be established throughout completed sections of the trail.



BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

The Velomont’s success will rely on partnerships. These partnerships will be built through long-term relationships between Federal and State land managers, members of The Velomont Collective, VT Huts, and other partners. Commitment to understanding each partner’s unique contributions, perspectives, and goals in the process of developing a state-wide trail is an important starting point. Every voice in the process will have something to contribute and getting to ‘yes’ may not always be a straightforward process – but working together will be the only way forward.



VELOMONT TRAIL SYSTEM

This plan highlights portions of the Velomont Trail built and under permitting by early 2024, and portions of the trail corridor that are anticipated next steps. The Velomont will become more than the built corridors and known opportunities in these pages. The establishment of this regional trail will create unique opportunities for linkages to village centers, state parks, and community trail networks, and should be looked to as an opportunity to coordinate and collaborate on connections to and from the Velomont to support outdoor recreation and local economies across the state.



BUILD AN INCLUSIVE RESOURCE

Trails, amenities, and communications materials will be designed for all users and all abilities. This includes those with adaptive needs. This means that the majority of the Velomont will not incorporate high-risk features with maneuvers that require significant skill to navigate.

Adaptive optimized segments of the Velomont should be prioritized near community centers and trailhead access points. Further away from access points, the design of trails should be adaptive friendly where possible. This principle does not mean that the entirety of the Velomont will become an all-abilities trail, as many segments will be designed to different standards due to existing conditions, cost, terrain, or other limitations.



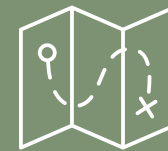
REMOTE, FOUR-SEASON OPPORTUNITIES

The trail will offer opportunities to escape the built environment of buildings, paved roads, and the daily grind. Long stretches of isolation from humans and human activity are the design intent, and built environment elements within the trail itself should be minimized. In addition, the trail will be built to standards that promote four-season access, so that the Velomont value is year-round, and an ‘off-season’ is minimized.



MITIGATE USER CONFLICTS THROUGH DESIGN

Trails will be designed to minimize user conflict. Trail corridors adopted as part of the Velomont will be selected based on alignments that do not introduce significant user conflict. Steeper grades which can create high downhill speeds will ensure sight lines are ample and integrate technical challenges or directional change to moderate speeds. Informational signage will be incorporated where feasible to educate visitors on a multi-use trail system, and widths and intersection design will encourage proper multi-use trail etiquette.



PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES THROUGH LOW IMPACT PLANNING & DESIGN

The Velomont Trail will be located in resilient landscapes and ecosystems in order to reduce impacts from the creation and use of trail. When less resilient systems must be crossed to provide connectivity, the route will be designed to reduce impact as much as possible. All relevant GIS datasets regarding soil, forest, cultural resources, and sensitive species habitat should be referenced in the planning process, and best-practice buffers, setbacks, and avoidance measures should be adhered to. The full Vision Plan’s Appendix provides a preliminary list of best-practice guidelines for environmentally sensitive planning, design, and construction of future segments of the Velomont. In addition, it is anticipated that in 2024 VMBA will be producing Vermont-specific best management practices for trails in the state. Velomont will follow these guidelines throughout the design, construction, and maintenance processes.



ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Velomont will coordinate with state agencies, municipal governments, and individual businesses to leverage the potential for recreation to support local economies. Trail access points and wayfinding should highlight opportunities to connect trail users to goods and service centers wherever possible, and online wayfinding tools established to further this economic support as the network evolves.



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