



VERMONT MOUNTAIN BIKE ASSOC.  
SINCE  1997

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## VMBA – VDTM End Year Report, FY '19

On behalf of an entire state of riders, chapters and the VMBA Board of Directors, thank you for your department's ongoing support of mountain biking in Vermont. Together, we have accomplished some impressive benchmarks. There's still more work to do! In the meantime, we are excited to share this final report with you.

There are two items that we wish to bring to ACCD's attention in particular. First, VMBA introduces updates to the VOICe program. Businesses of all types are now partnered with chapters and can play a measurable role in Vermont's outdoor recreation infrastructure. These changes are meant to ensure that recreation remains an impactful part of our economy. Secondly, a long list of statistics from our member survey helps to shed some light on purchasing behaviors among riders living and visiting Vermont.

### Build Awareness and Participation

- Our end goal was to add 800 members – we grew by 1320. Our goal for additions was 1500 and we're presently at 1670
- The goal was to keep the renewal rate above 70% - we hit 76% this year
- The Association has held steady at 20% out of state membership. We believe this is a strong performance given an overall increase in memberships. This expansion is the result of our partnership in the following ways:
  - This grant was a major part of our ability to streamline the membership portions of the website. These changes were meaningful for chapters using membership reports to design membership drives and for members seeking a more user-friendly experience online
    - This process was considerably more expensive than anticipated (more than 10 times what we budgeted). This grant enabled us to address this critical part of VMBA's capacity and to engage a region of riders looking to VT for destination riding opportunities

- The Association exceeded the benchmark for the number of shops participating in this program – goal was 18 and we worked with 20, which is still tightly coupled with the Plan Your Ride platform on vmba.org. VT bikes shops remain a tremendous opportunity for our partnership.
- The Plan Your Ride platform remains one of our most popular and is the definitive source of content for out of state riders.
  - VMBA presence in shops reaches a lot of riders. We know that nearly every rider spends time in VT bike shops. The collateral present in key locations brought much needed attention to the work of the Association on riders' (and shops') behalf
- As an alternative to supporting chapters at trailheads, VMBA ramped up our chapter event support and performed, with chapters, effective new member campaigns. The capacity to extend this level of administrative support has created more members, but also better working relationships with chapters

### Strengthening Key Partnerships

- VMBA and chapters participated in three Stay to Stay MTB oriented weekends in '19
- The "DH in VT" has evolved some due to Vail's presence. In '19 we had them all in the program and proudly played a role in their marketing. We drove thousands of riders to VT resorts in '19. Okemo and Mt. Snow will be challenging to secure in '20 due to Vail's presence
- As shared previously, bike shops are an important part of reaching an evolving and growing riding audience
- Participation in the Regional Alliance has not developed as anticipated. The platform will be stewarded one more season. VMBA's alliance with VSAA will likely become our primary communication channel to nonresidents

\*\*\*\*The VOICe platform realized significant shifts and impact in '19. Starting this season, we partnered with eight outdoor-minded businesses and asked them establish trail grant criteria with their employees that mountain bike. VMBA helped establish grant specifics and asked chapters to apply for funding.

Each business received proposals from chapters that were interested in their grant. The partner's employees reassembled and chose which projects to fund. The goal is to keep outdoor-minded businesses and their employees (often VMBA members) connected to the decisions made about Vermont's outdoor infrastructure as part of encouraging an atmosphere of authentic stewardship.

This kind of partnership is an illustration of how outdoor-minded businesses' are evolving relative to how outdoor recreation happens in Vermont. On a basic level, businesses want to know they are actively/impactfully engaged in authentic stewardship in a way their employees can feel, be proud of and experience.

VMBA believes that without a community-oriented process, driven by experiences, businesses will miss a tremendous opportunity for their bottom line, their people and natural spaces.

**VMBA is very interested in partnering with ACCD to develop this program statewide.**

This program has tremendous potential to inspire a movement among VT based businesses and to be a huge win for ACCD locally and nationally. \*\*\*\*

### Measuring Impact

- Trail counter data was not obtained in '19 due to staff time restrictions and resources absorbed by the website
- State Park data - we also endeavored to learn more about use statistics in Little River State Park. After months of asking FPR for numbers we have received the following: "Anecdotally, the staff from Little River estimates that roughly one third of the campers they are seeing have mountain bikes with them. About \$290,000 was received for camping so it's not too big a stretch to assume that \$100,000 came from people going mountain biking."
  - It would be valuable for VTDM and VMBA to partner on helping State Parks track MTBers in Ascutney and Little River State Parks in '20
- Redemption rates remain a very tough layer of data to obtain due to challenges of tracking among our partners – however, VMBA is excited to share the following data taken from our member survey, which describes purchasing behaviors among riders:
  - 51% of VMBA's membership has joined within the last four or less years. This is a direct result of this grant helping us to promote what we do effectively through a variety of channels
  - 93% of respondents rated the member benefits as "somewhat important" or "very important" – liking riders to Vermont based businesses is a key part of how VMBA helps VT's economy among businesses of all types. We wouldn't have this profound impact without this grant
  - 97% feels as though VMBA communicates enough about events
  - 70% feels "informed enough about VMBA's advocacy efforts." This is an exciting survey discovery and is a central part of keeping our community committed to the cause

- As a broad-reaching economic driver, VMBA is also tracking the purchasing patterns/influences among members. When asked about what plays a role in determining mountain bike-oriented purchases, the following were revealed about where riders are likely to spend money before and after rides:
  - Country store – 81%
  - Grocery store – 71%
  - Restaurant – 78%
  - Bike shop – 60%
  - Bar/pub – 79%
  - Coffee shop – 61%
- The following help illustrate to what extent loyalty, online prices and access to expert advice impacts purchasing decisions:
  - 53% were significantly influenced by loyalty to a local bike shop (another 38% were “somewhat” influenced by loyalty to local shop)
  - Interestingly, 60% were significantly influenced by online process vs. local bike shop prices when making MTB-oriented purchases
  - 50% were significantly influenced by access to expert advice when making MTB-oriented purchases
- The following shows how much VMBA membership spends on MTB-oriented items each year (these totals do not include travel expenses, lodging or food purchases)
  - 33% spends a \$1000 or less a year on MTBing
  - 47% spends between \$1001-\$3000 annually on MTBing
  - 20% spends more than \$3000 annually on MTBing (7% of these spend more than \$6000 annually)
- 54% are interested in trying bike-packing next year. This is a great opportunity for ACCD to partner with bike shops that offer guided opportunities – especially among out of state members. VMBA would be interested in helping this happen
  - Membership participation held at 20% in 2019
  - Collaborate with VDTM to survey bike-centric business. This did not take place in '19 due to staffing transitions both for VMBA and VDTM

## Outreach & Promotions

- The new website was an expensive endeavor in '19. The membership backend was in dire need of updates. The elements of the grant were all met

- This was our most impactful year every as an Association. The work and impact of VMBA and chapters was featured in a number of well-known national publications and podcasts
- The Plan Your Ride page remains the most visited page on our website and is the primary mechanism through which nonresidents plan for destination riding on Vermont
- The Diversity initiative has launched and includes:
  - Blogs dedicated to “what does a rider look like?” This will include videos, interviews, images and messaging about diversity – these are being processed as I type this and will be pushed a bunch over the winter
  - A diversity tool kit is also being developed for chapters to assist with messaging, event types, imagery and website verbiage

I am eager to sit and discuss our partnership moving forward and to learn more about how we can better align our efforts to ensure that outdoor recreation continues to be an asset to Vermont’s economy. The confluence of VDTM, Cabot, VSAA and VMBA is a special opportunity. Please let me know when we can meet.

Thank for VDTM’s ongoing support and partnership.

Gratefully,

Tom Stuessy  
VMBA, Executive Director