



LVRT Update, March 2019

From: Ken Brown, VAST Trails Manager and LVRT Project Manager

Report for Vermont Senate Transportation Committee

Respectfully submitted to Senator Richard Mazza, Committee Chair

1C project in Sheldon

The contractors have finished installing the structural timbers and started decking Bridge 93 over the Missisquoi River. They are also beginning the clearing needed for the trail section and making final orders for materials culverts etc. They are well on track to have the trail and bridge between Sheldon village (Bridge Street) and the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail/Sheldon Junction complete before July 1.

The total cost of this project will be about \$650,000 not including the design engineering. This will use the \$75,000 state allocation, \$40,000 of VAST funds, and \$15,000 in LVRT donations to match federal transportation funds. The remainder of the 1C section, to connect from the MVRT to Swanton, would cost an estimated \$1.2 million (so would need \$240,000 non-federal funding).

Friends of the LVRT

The Friends have had a few meetings with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST), the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and the regional planning commissions. They are working with a grant writer from UVM (paid for with a grant funded VHCB program). Their goal is to increase their capacity, possibly by adding a staff member or supporting a staff member at one of the planning commission offices, to organize fundraising and beautification/amenity efforts between all the LVRT towns, keep a consistent brand across the whole trail, etc.

Hardwick projects

Hardwick has done their own fundraising and found match money for the Northern Border Regional Commission grant VAST had received for the 1C project. The grant has been re-directed to improve two bridges between Hardwick and East Hardwick. Piggy-backing on that effort, the town has applied for a USDA grant to hopefully do some other improvements in the East Hardwick stretch to get that trail passable for most users.

This is \$50,000 of private donations from Hardwick and the \$200,000 NBRC grant. The USDA grant would add an unknown amount and would not require any additional monetary match.

Separate from those two grants, the town and VAST have a grant agreement with VTTrans for bike-pedestrian funding for a 1-mile section of trail from the center of Hardwick west to Route 15. The town has not yet raised all the funds needed for that project, but they do have enough match to hire an engineer and get the design started, which we hope to do as soon as the snow melts.

This project is expected to cost about \$300,000 with the main expense being to repair a bridge over the Lamoille River. The project currently has about \$10,000 of the needed \$60,000 non-federal funds.

Hardwick is also well into the design phase for a small section of trail connecting the above projects which includes a new parking area and trailhead at the town rail depot (which is home to the town historical society).

I'm not sure what the numbers are from this project. Some town funds may be left over from this project to direct to the \$50,000 needed mentioned above.

Maintenance

VAST had hired a contractor in the fall to repair two stone culverts in Cambridge and Johnson, but the early snow delayed that work. We should get that done before the summer season picks up.

I will be putting in an increased effort to re-assess all the LVRT culverts, expecting it to take a couple years. Most of the information we have is now 10 years old. I'll start with the 1B section and work from there. Following on that effort, we will be hiring a VYCC crew for a week in mid to late summer to do hand cleaning of culverts. Depending how that goes, it may become an annual effort to cycle through the entire trail.

Amenities

One town (Morristown) has approached us asking for permission to put benches along the trail. We're still waiting on the Rail division to reply to us on our proposed legal language for the town to get a license from VAST (and avoid them having to get their own lease for each bench from Vtrans), that will hopefully be worked out in time for the summer.

VAST applied to the RTP program to fund a small spur trail in Danville to get trail users down an embankment so they can visit one of the more interesting stone structures (an old carriage road underpass) there. We have not heard yet if we got the funding.