

To: Members of the House Transportation Committee
Date: 05/14/2025
From: Jonathan Bicknell

Dear Members of the House Transportation Committee,

I am writing as a resident of Tunbridge, Vermont. I am also the chair of the Tunbridge Trails Committee. I hope you will consider a verbal or written testimony from me. I personally have had a front row seat of the controversy for the past 4 years. Sadly trails that have been available for decades were closed while under review and the lack of maintenance on these trails is having a real impact.

I am proud of the Town of Tunbridge and the Selectboard for taking action on this topic as well as the Senate in bringing clarity to trail maintenance. I urge the House to do the same. This will clarify a law and a practice that has been in place for decades. Given this history, the Selectboard in Tunbridge is moving forward with conviction and is allowing maintenance on the trails this summer, after hiring a trail expert for review. This maintenance is desperately needed to stop the decline in the trail and prepare for public recreational use before losing the trail system. Though Tunbridge is moving forward, I am worried a lack of action by the House will cause concerns in other towns. Locals who maintain trails may be hesitant this season out of fear for the outcome without legislation and statutory support.

There is a vested interest in towns across the state given the value of these rights, but officially it is only one town legally fighting for the cause. Tunbridge taxpayers are feeling the brunt of this as we proceed through years of litigation that likely will continue for many years forward.

I urge you to keep the course in clarifying maintenance rights this session rather than waiting. I believe it is important right now before the taxpayers of Tunbridge run out of steam to see this through.

Thank you again for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,
Jonathan