

VAST

Vermont Association of Snow Travelers

Snowmobile VERMONT

VERMONT ASSOCIATION OF SNOW TRAVELERS



Cindy Locke, Executive Director



Agenda

Presentation for Vermont House Transportation Committee 2025



- VAST Brief Overview – Historic Snapshot
- Who We Are
- Snowmobiling in Vermont
- Technological Infrastructure & Marketing
- Funding Sources
- Law Enforcement
- VAST Safety Ambassador Program (VSAP)
- Wants & Needs: Fines and Signs
- Thank You!

About Us – Historic Snapshot



Fifty-Seven Years Old

VAST is celebrating our 57th anniversary this year. In the early 1970s, VAST worked closely with the state of Vermont to become more regulated to better support our needs and the needs of Vermont landowners. This led to many laws being developed about safety, law enforcement, trail development, and insurance, and codified our existence by regulating in statute snowmobiling in Vermont.

Laws regarding snowmobiling in Vermont will be found in

Title 23: Motor Vehicles

Chapter 29: Snowmobiles, Vessels, And Water Sports

Subchapter 1: Snowmobiles

Who We Are



Membership

VAST has 20,000 members. VAST brings approximately \$550,000,000 of economic impact to Vermont annually. Many of our trails are located in economically challenged areas of Vermont, which vastly helps support your communities.

Landowners and Liability

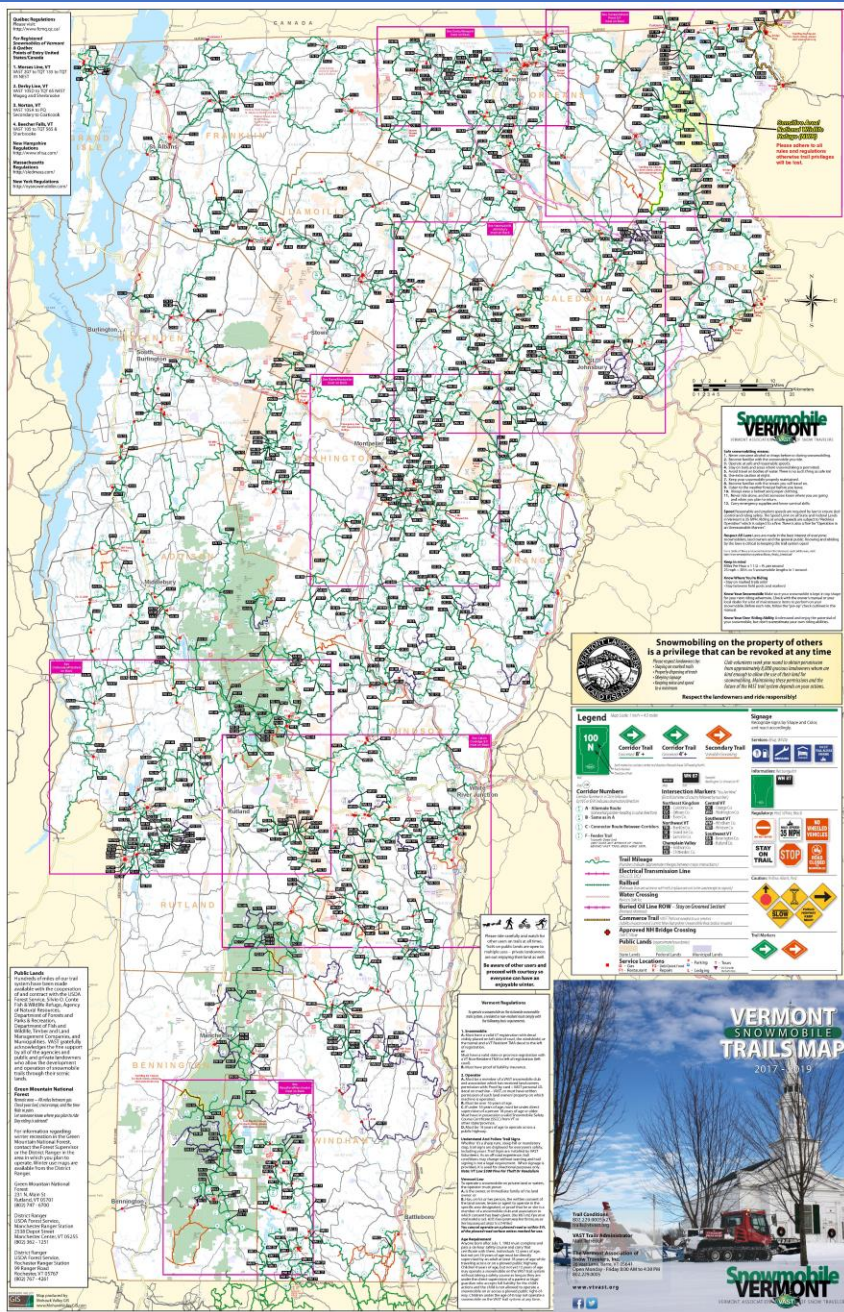
We have more than 9,500 landowners that allow us to have trails on their property. 80% of our trails are on private lands with the remaining residing on state, municipal and federal lands. We have annual contracts with our landowners and spend nearly \$200,000 a year on trail liability insurance, above the state's indemnification policy for the landowners that allow recreation on their property.

Volunteers

VAST relies on thousands of volunteers who groom our trails, put up our trail signs in the fall and take them down in the spring, maintain our trails, work with private landowners to get their permissions, host events and fundraisers, and run their own clubs as non-profits while complying with state and federal laws. We have more than 100 clubs.

Staff

VAST has six full time staff members that work tirelessly to manage and run our organization, which often is thought of a quasi-state agency because of what we do because of the laws that govern us, the best practices we follow and how closely we work with state agencies like AOT and ANR.



Trails and Signs

- 4,100 miles of trails in Vermont.
- Share our map for E-911 map.
- Online Map with GPS grooming trackers, plan your ride and POIs.

Online Map

Grooming

- 104 class one groomers in our fleet.
- Groomer fleet value: \$30,000,000
- The average cost of a new class one power unit is \$300,000 each.
- 104 groomers in our fleet.
- 8 feet wide and 20 feet long when hooked up to the drag they pull.
- We spend between \$800,000 to 2 million annually to groom our trails.
- We have equipment grants annually to our clubs of approximately \$400,000.

For example, even though we no longer manage the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, we spend around \$50,000 annually grooming it for all user.

VAST Vermont Association of Snow Trainers, Inc. 28 Vot Lane, Barre, VT 05641

Approved Regulatory, Cautionary & Information Sign Supplement

General Sign Instructions
 Other signage may be necessary, however it should not be placed in the line of sight of any cautionary or regulatory signage. All signs should be placed 3-5 feet above the ground and 2-4 feet to the side of the trail for optimal visibility. This document serves as a supplement to the Guidelines for Snowmobile Trail Signage & Placement. Posting distance for signs is dependent on line of sight and average anticipated speed.

Trail Intersection

***Intersection Sign**
 Signs are to have the following information:
 - Intersection number
 - Contain route number and direction, N, E, S, W accompanied by a directional arrow
 - Near trail intersection number along the unidirectional route of travel accompanied by a directional arrow

Post design on way. Drawings not to scale.



Trails Cost!

The Development of Snowmobile Trails



VAST has thousands of volunteers who work on our trails and receive grants for trail work, bridges, and other important infrastructure.

- Annual regular trail maintenance grants from VAST to our clubs of more than: \$500,000 a year.
- Flood damage in 2023 and 2024 costs VAST \$2,000,000.
- VAST is not FEMA-eligible.
- We build our trails with flood mitigation guidelines.
- VAST has strict [Best Management Practices](#), approved by ANR.
- VAST applies each year for federal and state grants from RTP to USFS.

Snowmobiling in Vermont

We promote snowmobiling at tradeshows and have an online and paper visitor guide.

[Snowmobile Vermont Travelers Guidebook](#)



**BUY YOUR
TRAIL PASS
TODAY!**



In order to snowmobile in Vermont on the Statewide Snowmobile Trail System (SSTS) you must have:

- A snowmobile registered in VT or another state or province (\$28 for a VT resident, plus pay 6% Vermont sales tax (one time). For a nonresident, the cost is \$36 per year.
- Have liability insurance on your snowmobile (Costs: \$100-300 per year)
- Buy a VAST Trail Maintenance Assessment (TMA) or trail pass (Costs: \$90 for a 3-day pass. Annual trail passes are \$155 to \$235)
- Have taken and passed a snowmobile safety course if born after July 1, 1983. Classes are given by Vermont State Police (VSP), or those trained by VSP. Even those that go on snowmobile tours have a class to take and instruction prior to operating a snowmobile.

Technology infrastructure

- Online data portal with the ability for secure transactions and delivery of virtual and tactile results (trail passes and stickers).
- Database access for law enforcement to help with their snowmobile safety checks.
- Online Maps with real-time grooming due to GPS units in our groomers.
- Ability to track your ride, find services and trail conditions.
- Because of our extensive database and the data we have gathered we can run all types of reports to help us to continue to grow how we operate and service our members.

Marketing

- We produce four magazines a year, which we put in welcome centers, bring to trade shows, have in Cabela's, and send to our membership. Distribution is about 40K pieces per run.
- Social Media: Weekly E-News, Facebook and Instagram.
- Paid Advertising promoting Vermont as a snowmobile destination.



Annual Budgets – Income - Expenses

VAST has three main budgets. Two of the budgets have revenue made up for our TMA (trail pass sales).

- **General Fund:** Administration, marketing, insurance, technology, salaries, benefits, our building and fleet costs, etc. **(27%)**
- **Trails Fund:** All trail costs, including grooming, which again costs VAST between 1.3 million and 2 million each winter. **(73%)**
- **Statewide Snowmobile Trails Program (SSTP):** The SSTP budget is funded from snowmobile registrations and a capped percentage of the gas tax collected by the State of Vermont.

SSTP Income

- Income from law enforcement fines all snowmobile registrations and a percentage of the gas tax capped at \$148,000 annually (\$11,500 to FPR Admin fees, and the rest split between VAST and VASA).
- Expenses: Plowing Parking Lots, Administration %, Insurance safety programs, equipment grants to clubs, law enforcement patrolling payments, and law enforcement equipment grants. \$400,000
- VAST's annual operations have an overall combined budget of 4 million dollars each year.

Law Enforcement – Governor’s Snowmobile Council

VAST contracts with and funds the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife (F&W), Vermont State Police (VSP), and local sheriff agencies and police departments to patrol our trails and perform safety checks.

In addition, the Southern Vermont Wilderness Search & Rescue, USDA Forest Service Law Enforcement, and the Silvio O Conte Fish & Wildlife Refuge Law Enforcement also provide law enforcement on snowmobile trails.

Last winter, law enforcement performed:

- Performed 4,660 Patrol Hours
- 17,559 Snowmobile Inspections
- Wrote 543 Tickets and Warnings



Vermont Governor's Snowmobile Council meets the first Wed of each month at 3 pm on Zoom from September to July. Appointments of VAST, legislative (House and Senate), ANR, FPR, VSP, SVWTF, VT Sherriff's Assoc.

VAST Safety Ambassador Program (VSAP)



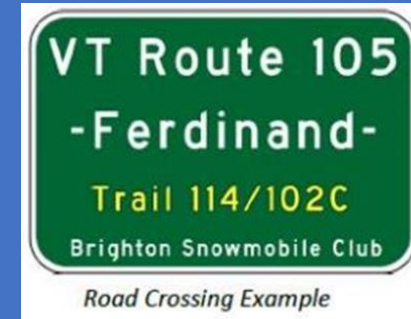
VAST has more than 40 safety ambassadors around the state.

The VAST Safety Ambassador Program (VSAP) was started with two distinct goals. First to make our trails safer and second to assist riders and first responders when needed. Currently, we have forty safety ambassadors statewide. Some of the team members ride close to home and some travel to different parts of Vermont as well.

While out riding our volunteer team performs the following tasks:

- Look for hazards in or near the trail and clear or mark them, as well as let the local club know if more needs to be done to fix a problem.
- Fix damaged or missing signs, or let the local club know so they can be fixed right away.
- Help riders on the trails who may need assistance or directions.
- Be available if law enforcement needs assistance at an accident scene or help transport first responders to a scene.
- Ride with folks not familiar with our trails to show them around (they are not guides though) and give them some company.
- VSAP members are not law enforcement officers in their role with VAST. They are trained to know that their role is simply to be helpful. Each team member goes through an annual orientation, has a manual to follow, and carries tools to assist them, as well as some extra trail signs.

Wants? Needs?



1) Fines Raised. Over the years, we have not asked for fines for illegal snowmobile-related activities to be raised. We may work on that this summer and offer suggestions to encourage folks to follow the laws.

Currently: No TMA: Fines up to \$392.

- Failure to display TMA: Fines up to \$203.
- Failure to carry current liability insurance: Fines start at \$162 and can be higher.
- Failure of a functioning headlight and brake light: Fines starting at \$88
- Failure to comply with having an SCC Certified Muffler System: Fines starting at \$622

2) Sign Shop through AOT. Contract with AOT to produce some or all of our trail signs. We spend about \$40K a year purchasing signs, and this may be a revenue generator for AOT. We believe they used to print signs for nonprofits and municipalities. It could really add up for them.





Cindy Locke
VAST Executive Director
802-730-2461 (cell)
cindy@vtvast.org



Thank you