

Dear Chair Westman and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

We hope this email finds you well. We are writing to urge you to take up and support [S.4](#), a bill that would clarify that towns and municipalities have explicit authority, but not obligation, to maintain Legal Trails. This authority has been historically understood across Vermont, but a recent court case in Tunbridge, in which a private landowner is suing the municipality, could have significant impacts on all 500+ miles of Legal Trails and connectivity throughout the State of Vermont.

My family and I benefit greatly from Legal Trails and Class IV roads in our town and beyond. One of our favorite ways to enjoy Vermont's natural beauty is by trail running and biking. On almost every ride or run, there is at least 1 section of Class IV road required to connect two dirt roads.

Allowing these sections of trail to be closed by private landowners would not only drastically reduce connectivity, but it would be antithetical to Vermont's long standing values of openness and community stewardship of our beloved natural areas. More and more land in Vermont gets posted every year, and keeping these Legal Trails open for public benefit feels like an existential question: Do we want to live in a state where land is closed off for the benefits of a few, or open for the benefits of the many?

Allowing public use (within reason) is good for community health. It builds trust and fosters gratitude. Closing off these access points does the opposite.

Over 70 percent of Vermont's public access trails, which include Legal Trails, are on private land. While previously there has been an understanding that municipalities have the right to maintain and determine the use of Legal Trails the outcome of the Tunbridge case puts all use at risk.

Please support S.4 so that we can continue to enjoy Vermont's scenic beauty.

Thank you so much,

Jane Farrell & Jonathan Battat

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