

Tunbridge Legal Trails Fact Sheet

DRAFT 7-28-21

What is a Legal Trail?

Below is the current definition in the latest [Town Plan draft](#). [Add page number of this definition.]

“A public right of way which are not highways and are generally used for recreational purposes. They may have previously been a town highway or may be newly laid out. There is no minimum width required and the municipality has no maintenance obligations to the road, its bridges or its culverts.”

Legal Trails are considered a Town right-of-way until the Town relinquishes it as a thoroughfare. The right-of-way is 3 rods wide ~49ft. Legal Trails are owned by landowners. [Need the source of this info.]

The Town Mileage Certificate submitted by the Selectboard to the Vermont Agency of Transportation establishes the roads and legal trails, which then displays them on [an official Town Highway Map](#) (ACT 178). Tunbridge has 4 legal trails including: Cross Road (Legal Trail 1, 0.73 miles), Baptist Hill (Legal Trail 2, 0.7 miles), Orchard (Legal Trail 3, 0.72 miles), and Falls Hill (Legal Trail 4, 0.3 miles).

The town is responsible for regulation of town rights-of-way, including trails. Note that towns generally are not required to perform any specific maintenance or upkeep on trails.

The current Town Plan has contradictory language regarding which recreational uses are allowed on Legal Trails.

[Add link to current Town Plan, with page numbers of relevant language.]

The Selectboard can control use of a trail to protect the trail - for example, restrict traffic during mud season or restrict the weight allowed. In the case of use for logging, the town could allow use by heavy equipment with the written agreement that any damage would be repaired by the user. It could also make agreements with loggers that they would have to make certain improvements (grading, ditching, etc.) up to town standards to prevent damage. Trail usage can be limited during sensitive times of year (like mud season or if vernal pools exist) most effectively by ordinance.

Why was a Trails Committee Formed?

It is important to note that outdoor activity trends and the communication power of social platforms increase the chances of trail use and potentially overuse. A Trails Committee has been formed for the following purpose:

- Understand seasonal issues and environmental impacts on the four trails
- Explore types and amount of current use of the four trails
- Develop communication strategies that support landowners and trail users (e.g., trail markers to keep users on trails and increasing pre-event dialogue/signage)
- Develop any trail re-routes that would ameliorate landowner and/or environmental impacts
- Identify sources of funding that can support recreational opportunities, including volunteer labor
- Work with trails experts who can assist in whatever way is appropriate for committee needs