

Tunbridge Planning Commission

Legal Trails Meeting – 3/10/21

Submitted testimony (unedited)

- Anita Abbot
 - Just wanted you to know I celebrate Carin Pratt and her husband John Echeverria for their kindness and generosity in sharing their beautiful Orchard Road property with all of us. I have walked the road to their land, and the pond (where Paul Harwood now rents) hundreds of times in the past 20 years, and now the trails and forests. The silence and healing presence of the land is unmeasurable. It is historic and rare.

I agree with John's letter wholeheartedly, and do not want day-tripping out of town people with gravel/electric/mountain bicycles on his or John O'Brien's land if at all possible. What cyclist looks up at the beauty of the land around him/her when they are focused on getting wherever they are supposed to end up -and monitoring their health monitors and GPS devices? I think it is good that they "ride for a cause" and pay to do so. The causes are good. The local craft beers, food and music are as well.

But...Tunbridge has over 70 miles of exquisite hilly and flat dirt roads available, and I live on one. No one will be offended by the bicyclists on these roads. In lieu of a rail trail, or utilizing Vermont's state park trails, our back roads are there for the riding.

- Ellen Hosford/Tunbridge Walking Group
 - I am writing on behalf of the Tunbridge Walking Group. We have been walking in Tunbridge since November, 2011. We enjoy walking on dirt roads, snowmobile trails and on the town designated legal trails in all seasons. We also appreciate landowners allowing us to walk, snowshoe and ski on their trails and think their wishes need to be respected.
- Carol Hall
 - My husband and I live in Chelsea and have been riding local trails and dirt roads by bicycle since 1995. The legal trail from the Dodge farm to the O'Brien farm provides a safe route for bicycles, eliminating the need to be on long sections of paved roads which can be hazardous to bicyclists. This legal trail provides access to a number of other trails and roads and is a wonderful asset to the town.

Excluding one form of human powered transportation, namely bicycles, is discrimination since bicycles are no more destructive to trails than hiking.

I propose that the town be inclusive in allowing all forms of human powered transportation on legal trails.

The fear and discrimination of bicycle travel by the current owners of the Dodge farm is disturbing and though I can't participate in the Zoom meeting today, I hope that others can calm the fears that John & Carin have about bicycle travel on the legal trail by the Dodge farm. In all my years of bicycling on the legal trail past the Dodge farm I've only met 2 other bicyclists on one day and they were part of an organized ride that day. There was not a trace of their tracks on the trail. Bicycles are not very scary. Bicycles are good. Please be inclusive and allow them on the legal trails.

I would be happy to help open up the Crossroad trail as well as Baptist Hill trail so if that is an option in the future please reach out to me.

- Anne Linehan

- I am writing about the use of Legal Trails in Tunbridge. I have lived in town for 21 years, the last 14 of those years on Brocklebank Road. I frequently hike and snowshoe on the roads and trails near our home, including on the Chester trails, the O'Brien/Howe trails, the Hayden trails, and the Dodge Farm trails, as well as on Legal Trail #3 at the end of Orchard Road.

I understand that some in town want to allow bicycles on Legal Trails, and that some of the landowners whose property includes the Legal Trails are opposed to allowing bikes. I share the landowners' concerns that bicycle use can damage the trails and lead to erosion. I am also concerned that opening the trails to bicycle use may unreasonably affect landowners' peace and quiet, especially where the legal trails pass next to or through private home sites.

I do not hate bicycles. I own a mountain bike and enjoy riding it on the roads and trails where bikes are legal and welcomed. We are extremely fortunate in Tunbridge to have access to many miles of Class 3 and 4 roads for bicycling, without the need to open the Legal Trails to bicycles. We are also fortunate to have neighbors who generously allow the public to enjoy their beautiful lands. We should show these neighbors our appreciation, not try to force activities on them that they do not want. I worry that some landowners will decide to restrict public access to their lands if the Legal Trails are open to bicycle use.

I urge the Planning Committee to recommend to the Selectboard that they should not allow bicycles on the Legal Trails of Tunbridge.

Thank you for your consideration, and thank you all for your service to the town.

- Matt Frost
 - Here's some more material for the ongoing discussion around Legal Trails. This is a .pdf of a map that the Vermont Mountain Bike Alliance developed in 2001. The map was partly funded by VAST, and it rates the bikeability of Class 4 roads and Legal Trails in the Upper Valley (bikeability in this case meaning enjoyability). As you'll see, it shows Moody, Orchard, and Baptist Hill Roads and the Crossroads. This was one of the resources that introduced me to new trails in the Upper Valley.
 - File referenced is the VMBA map