

Tunbridge Trails Listening Series

December 8, 2022: Walkers, Bird Watchers and Naturalists

January 12, 2023: Cross country skiers and snowshoers

February 9, 2023: Cyclists

March 9, 2023: Horseback riders (Note: this had the lowest attendance)

Summary

Good overall summary on the common themes from Susan Salster who attended all 4 sessions.

- Love the outdoors
- Committed to preserving the trails
- Peace and Privacy
- Like to use Strava outside of Tunbridge but limited inside of Tunbridge
- Enthusiast bikers/walkers interested in a broader network
- Connecting trails
- Respect landowner permission

Below are the high level notes from each session

Walkers, bird watchers and naturalists

- The walking group started walking the Tunbridge fairgrounds track in the beginning and has expanded to all over Tunbridge and other towns.
- A point person decides on a walk each week and they meet up. Min # is 2 people with the max # of 14

Experience in Tunbridge

- Very grateful for the landowner's permission and they have good communication.
- They do clean up trash along the way sometimes
- Plenty of access to date and variety of routes, but could change if landowners restrict access

Hopes and dreams for the future

- A trail connecting N. Tunbridge and Tunbridge Village to avoid walking on Route 110
- Learn from Stowe bike for river buffer needed for trails
- Wide shoulder on 110 for recreational activity
- Establish important forest blocks that are unfragmented and avoid building trails through
- Apps are bringing recreational users (including hunters) to hot spots, so need to consider ways to protect from overrun. Some have posted due to this.

Cross Country Skiers and Snowshoers

Experience in Tunbridge

- Mostly use groomed or “broken out” trails on fallsway, ordway or trails built by George White
- Mostly ski alone but will also ski with friends and neighbors.
- Walking group will snowshoe and ski on the fairgrounds, but also various locations on the VAST trails or Dodge farm property
- Danny Emerson and Tom Hoyt build out trails
- Baxter is an example of a landowner who allows for parking
- All seems to be word of mouth and who you know
- Very grateful for landowner permission
- One issue is parking in the winter. To have a sufficient place for 4-6 cars

Hopes and dreams for the future

- More parking options. Intentional plowing when there is extra snow. Including the town forest
- Interested in town forest options for every season
- Focus on resourcing the schools and library: give kids access to skis
- What George does is amazing. How can we support him more? Donations? volunteers? What happens when George stops doing it?

Cyclists

Experience in Tunbridge

- Attendees shared of decades of cycling experience. Varied options in Tunbridge and Vermont
- There is interest in town forest trails. George White has worked in the past with Sharon Academy kids to create trails but the steepness of the Drew lot was difficult.
- Most felt it is important to the future of our town to have trails access (e.g. residents and tourists)
- Road biking along route 14 is good but not so much on route 110
- Ton of growth in gravel riding with a couple annual events through Tunbridge: The Ranger and Pedal Power to the People
- Some have 15 years’ experience of riding on legal trails
- Recognize the need to take care of all trails as they are used
- When gravel riding they prefer when there are few cars on the road
- Connected roads for gravel riding is important
- Trails in Randolph were such a good experience it attracted one couple to buy in the area
- Big interest in single track
- Nice to be "in the know" of where trails are, but starting to see more people on the same trails
- Careful not to post on Strava when in Tunbridge (note that Crossroad in Strava is shown to be open)
- Types of "trails" in Tunbridge
 - Gravel/Class 4/Legal Trails
 - Single (unicorn!)
 - Road

Hope and dreams for the future

- Connectivity was mentioned often

- Long history of Tunbridge being an agrarian community with the legal trails being important connectors
- Big events that are on the right path
- Clear communication (website? signs in coffee shops, pubs, library, co-op, kiosks)
 - When is a trail or road open
 - Code of Conduct and Etiquette
 - Signage
- Noted that dogs are scary
- Some landowners do not feel comfortable with bikes coming by their property "don't want to wait for the jerk to come through"
- Volume of people can be unpredictable
- Route 110 connectivity is important between the village and N Tunbridge
- More options for young 4-6th graders access to riding from the library
- Groups to play a role in communication: Upper Valley, VIMBA

Horseback Riders

Experience in Tunbridge

- Mostly class 3 and class 4 roads with safety being the main focus
- Noted that riders have the right of way: Title 23 of motor vehicles
- Avoid riding in mud season to protect the trails and the health of the animals
- A few events to note include Karen Blow's horse event (every 2-3 yrs with 150 horses) and the North Country Hounds (fox hunting)

Hopes and dreams for the future

- Need for education for those being or traveling near a horse rider.
- Public notice for when town events like the Ranger are complete. This allows horse riders and other enthusiasts to venture out.
- Scheduling to make sure events do not conflict. One time an overlander event impacted Karen Blow's horse event
- Close trails during wet weather
- Volunteers that put up signs and ambassadors for trails (woodstock as an example)