

PRESS RELEASE -- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Cross Vermont Trail Association is \$20,000 closer to its goal of raising the funds needed for a new bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the Winooski River in East Montpelier, thanks to a handful of towns and supportive voters on Town Meeting Day.

The Towns of Calais, Plainfield and Worcester each approved a contribution of \$1 per resident toward the \$1.6 million cost of the 200 foot-long bridge and 2.75 miles of trail on either side. East Montpelier, home to the bridge, upped the ante by voting in \$3 per resident. And the Berlin Selectboard approved a \$3,000 donation in the fall using dedicated recreation funds.

But it was the City of Montpelier that started the chain reaction by creating a challenge match to surrounding towns that would benefit from the bridge. The City Council pledged a donation of \$1 per resident, a little over \$8,000, if other towns did likewise. The City also approved a \$5,000 contribution using dedicated bicycle/pedestrian funds, but wanted to create a sense of "all in" with the challenge match to Central Vermont towns.

The Cross Vermont Trail Association will seek additional challenge match funds from the towns of Middlesex and Marshfield at Town Meeting in 2018. This year the Association will begin its keystone project by starting construction of a new section of trail that will provide a safe pathway between Route 2 and the Winooski River and construction will take several summers. The bridge over the river will be built by 2019.

As part of this project, trails will be improved from U-32 School to the Cross Vermont Trail so that students and the public can safely travel an off-road path from the school to the Trail and destinations such as downtown Montpelier. The City of Montpelier will be extending its bicycle path to the Civic Center on Gallison Hill Road this summer, and from there the Cross Vermont Trail will extend to the Winooski River bridge and beyond. The Towns of Worcester, Middlesex, Calais, East Montpelier and Berlin send their middle and high school students to U-32 School.

"Most of our trail building is done with volunteers and youth groups using pickaxes and shovels" said Greg Western, Executive Director of the Association. "But this area along Route 2 in East Montpelier is too challenging and technical to be built by volunteers." The project has been designed by engineers and will be bid out to construction firms, Western explained.

"There is still plenty of opportunity for volunteers to help build the approaches to the bridge in the woods," Western added, "as well as trail building and maintenance that we'll be doing on the trail in other towns." The Association is also looking for donations to help close the \$70,000 gap in funding that remains.

Those interested in volunteering and donating to the trail project can check out the website at www.crossvermont.org. The mission of the Cross Vermont Trail is to build a multi-use, four season path across the width of Vermont following the Winooski River and Wells River valleys. The trail is connecting together communities, their schools, and the natural areas between.