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RE: VT ATV Sportsman's Association (VASA) Official Public Comments on **Revised Proposed Management Plan** for Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT)

Dear Jessi:

VASA commends the Vermont Transportation Agency (VTRANS), the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST), and all other parties who have worked to update and improve the contents of the above plan.

The LVRT has been the subject of many, many planning and revised planning documents covering all aspects of this ambitious effort. By and large, at each step of the way, each round of revisions brought improvements to the overall Plan. One of the most difficult aspects of this planning journey has been to balance the multitude of interests that will be affected by the Final Plan and the design of the actual footprint of the project on the ground. VASA, the statewide umbrella organization charged with construction, maintenance, and management of a statewide ATV trail system, is one of those interest groups.

VASA, naturally, would like as much ATV access as possible to the LVRT, for all the same reasons that any trail group wants access to this remarkable proposed trail. The LVRT will bisect the state from its St. Johnsbury area Eastern Border to its Highgate Area Northwestern Border. If VASA cannot get reasonable limited access to this trail, VASA's ability to construct and manage its own private trails in the LVRT region would be successfully blocked. This good group of Vermonters would be victimized by a diagonal "wall" across the state that serves as a barrier to ATV trail development and growth.

The parameters of VASA's LVRT access were thoroughly debated for many years during the various Management Plan related processes. In February 2008, the Federal Highway Administration, in close coordination with the wide variety of interests involved, decided to take the middle ground. FHWA issued the *Framework for Considering Motorized Use on Non-motorized Trails and Pedestrian Walkways*.

In summary, the policy allowed doglegs along the LVRT, perpendicular crossings, and LVRT bridge access pursuant to a intricate policy set forth in the Memorandum. Since early in this process, despite VASA's limited crossing rights to the LVRT, VASA

Executive Director, Danny Hale has faithfully served as a member of the LVRTC. He has not liked every detail of the Proposed Management Plan nor every detail relating to ATV use of this trail.

However, VASA recognizes that there are many, many hurdles involved before getting the LVRT Trail on the ground. Therefore, VASA is willing to try the plan "as is" and see how it goes.

Accordingly, it was somewhat disturbing to VASA to see the Friends of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail issue an exhortation to its members in a recent Newsletter that the Friends of the LVRT members should oppose all ATV access to the LVRT except a limited number or perpendicular crossings. The ATV access issue was argued in detail in 2004-2006 in many different forums. Friends of LVRT, has suggested that its members advocate for significant additional restrictions to LVRT ATV trail access, currently authorized by the Plan. VASA suggests, that all groups, including VASA, try to make the situation work, as is. It's time to move forward rather than re-visit old issues again and again.

I would have gotten you these Comments last week, but an unexpected emergency appendectomy last Wednesday disabled me until the above date. Your tolerance is requested.

Sincerely,

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