

To: Town of Middlebury, Vt. Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation
Re: Support of VOREC grant, Nov. 27, 2018
From: Angelo Lynn, president Moosalamoo Association

To those concerned,

A group of Middlebury-area residents has applied for a VOREC grant that would create a new trail connection from Middlebury to East Middlebury, allowing safer commuter access to and from those two village centers and access just to the Moosalamoo National Recreation Area — starting at the Oak Ridge Trail on Route 125.

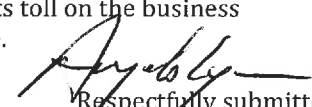
Besides being family-friendly — as well as being fun and accessible for hikers, bikers, runners and walkers — this trail is important for a variety of reasons. It would:

- Create a multi-purpose trail that connects existing trails in Middlebury to the sidewalk system in East Middlebury;
- Creates a (mostly) flat gravel path as an easier trail option (compared to steeper existing trails) that would be good for children and families, as well as older patrons;
- Increase the attractiveness of both Middlebury and East Middlebury to young families as a place to live;
- Provide a key connection from recreation trails in Middlebury to trail resources in Moosalamoo National Recreation Area;
- Promote healthy activities and lifestyles;
- Provide another opportunity for recreation minded tourists visiting our community, and to Middlebury College students to enjoy the broader community.

The VOREC (Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative) grants aim to help outdoor-focused Vermont communities leverage outdoor recreation assets to improve the local quality of life and to strengthen our economy. I can't think of a better project for Middlebury.

To that end, earning this grant would strengthen our local economy by:

- Creating an accessible, bikeway within the heart of the community that is not only scenic but offers a broad pathway that is largely absent of vehicles.
 - Given enough time and foresight, the trail could also replicate the Stowe Bike Path and the Burlington Bike Path in terms of the economic boost it provides those towns, and the tourist draw it creates. This path, after all, would connect to the 16-mile TAM (Trail Around Middlebury) and tie into a system of trails from the TAM, to East Middlebury, and reaching out to the 16,000 acres and 30-plus miles of trails within the Moosalamoo NRA. With Branbury State Park at Lake Dunmore, and hundreds of commercial camping spots around that lake, plus camping sites at Silver Lake and the Moosalamoo Campground — among numerous other local sites — this area could become a focal point for hiking, road and mountain biking and camping. And as president of the Moosalamoo Association, which represents the MNRA, our board fully supports efforts that bring more usage of the MNRA and economic boost to the area.
 - Plans are also underway to bring the North Country National Scenic Trail from its current terminus at Crown Point, NY., across Addison County into Middlebury, to East Middlebury and up to the Long Trail — a route that this proposed trail connector could serve as an important link. The N.C.T. is a footpath stretching 4,600 miles from Crown Point to North Dakota. The goal is to continue the trail to the Eastern coast.
 - Addison County is already a hub for some of the best road biking in the state. With the area's four gaps (Brandon, Middlebury, Lincoln and Appalachian) recognized throughout the state and East as some of the best riding in this part of the country — as are the farm lands of western Addison County — adding off-road biking as we've done on the TAM, Chipman Hill, and now the MNRA, creates an even better and more diverse selection to bikers of all kinds. And because Fat Biking is also a growing sport, this trail will mesh well with that group of bike enthusiasts as well.
- In sum, this trail connector is a small — but important — piece of what is already a growing and diverse economic driver for this area. Earning this grant would help this group and the town move this project ahead — and in the process, kick-start that final push to bring all the pieces of a really unique and dynamic multi-town trail system together. And, on the heels of a three-year downtown road project that will have taken its toll on the business community, this project and grant would be a bright spot reflecting better times to come.



Respectfully submitted,
Angelo Lynn, Moosalamoo Association president
Editor/publisher Addison County Independent