railroads were once the arterial network of switches and feeder lines that served as conduits for the lifeblood of a growing nation. These roads of steel and stone stretched across rivers, through vast forests, and even through the very mountains themselves, redefining what was possible. Most importantly they brought communities, businesses and people together.

The birth of the Interstate Highway System saw the rise of personalized transportation and the decline of America’s rail system. Over time, this symbol of modernity and engineering triumph was relegated to the background of our consciousness. Still, we ride the rails as nostalgic passengers secretly yearning for the sense of wonder and interconnectedness that only a rail line can bring.

Over the past 140 years, the Lamoille Valley Railroad sought to make its living on one of the rarest occurrences in Vermont; an “East to West Passage.”

History: It all began as an attempt to capitalize on the commercial development that neighboring railways were bringing into the area. In 1864 a charter was obtained from the State of Vermont to construct a railroad from St. Johnsbury to New Hampshire. An additional charter for a line from St. Johnsbury to Montpelier was obtained two years later. While this gained little traction, in 1867 the Fairbanks family purchased a sizable interest in the venture and began to drum up support. As more towns joined in and pledged credit to the proposed rail line, the route began to evolve into the path that we know today.

Local traffic was never thought to be able to sustain the rail line, so the ultimate goal was to join with larger rail companies and connect Portland, Maine on the coast to Ogdensburg, New York on Lake Ontario. The plan was successful and the line was incorporated to the Portland
Following a Heritage Rail Trail to Community Resilience
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By Shane Prisby
VAST Trails Manager
LVRT Project Manager

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FREDERICK LYMAN CHURCHILL, 50
JEFFERSONVILLE, VT
NELSON HENRY NOLAN, 54
JEFFERSONVILLE, VT
WALTER IRVING BURNOR, 36
CAMBRIDGE, VT
OCTOBER 10, 1949
ON THIS SITE THE LIVES OF THESE MEN WERE TRAGICALLY
CUT SHORT WHEN THEIR HANDCAR WAS STRUCK BY AN
OFF SCHEDULE FREIGHT TRAIN ON A BLIND CORNER.
MAY THIS PLAQUE SERVE TO HONOR THEIR MEMORIES
AND THE FAMILIES THAT THEY LEFT BEHIND.
LVRT being built near Danville, Vermont.
New bridge over the LVRT built by VTAOT.
$500 million of economic impact every year!
$500 million of economic impact every year!
LVRT Groundbreaking
Cost to VAST = 10 years of halted rail to trail conversion and $500,000.
Visitors Growing the Economy

- Restaurants
- Breweries
- Outdoor Outfitter Shops
- Bike Shops
- Lodging Stays
- Novelty Shops
This STORYWALK is sponsored by:

Read, sing, talk, write and play every day to get your little ones ready to read!
BIKE RAFFLE WINNER

In our last issue, we were just soliciting ticket sales for our bike raffle to raise money for the LVRT. (Yep, we’re trying everything!) With this issue, we’re pleased to reveal the lucky winner of a pair of hybrid bicycles that were generously donated by Ertel’s Cyclery in South Burlington. Christine Pepe bought the winning ticket—and that means she and her husband, Chuck, owners of a local family banking establishment in Morrisville colorfully known as the “Muddy Moose,” will be wheelin’ in style!

TALES FROM THE LVRT

EARLY MORNING ALONG THE TRAIL
By Jenn Clattick

It’s 6:30 a.m. and the sun is barely peaking over the tree line. It’s a bit chilly, but I know as soon as I start moving I’ll warm up, so I dress in layers. I put coffee in my to go mug, slide it in my wrist bottle holder, double check that I have my keys, sling my work bag over my shoulder, and set off. I wear bike shorts under my dress for work. This is my favorite kind of morning commute. This is my time...

I bought my home in Johnson last summer, and its proximity to the LVRT was a huge selling point for me. I had recently changed jobs and went from commuting 37 miles (one way) down to 9 miles along a rail trail that will pretty much take me from my front door to my desk. I’ve figured out the logistics of dressing for the day and can take my time while soaking in the freedom the trail gives me. I’m usually the only one on the path that early.

I recently purchased a 1971 Schwinn Collegiate from a lovely 82-year-old woman who stopped riding it about five years ago. After tuning it up and buffing off the rust, I’ve retired my road bike and now use this one to travel to my job in Morrisville. The 5 speeds seem to be all I need to tackle the slight grades of the trail and the laid-back look and feel of this bike match my attitude as I breathe in the morning air, soak in the sounds of the river, and watch the sun rise higher in the sky.

It’s the ride I that I appreciate the most because I feel like I’m in on a secret that few know. There are parts of the ride where I can see Route 15, and even though the morning commuters are traveling the same way I am, I feel invisible to them, like I’m on the inside looking out. Oh, there are plenty of days when I’m an active participant in their world; driving to work, picking kids up from practice, planning a trip to the grocery store. The hiatus between work and home. But the days when I’m able to bike to or from the LVRT...ahh, those are the days my soul is recharged.

(Note — The full version of Jenn’s story appeared in the August issue of Vermont Sports magazine.)

MILE MARKER POST: YOUR NAME HERE?

One of the sponsorship opportunities for the expansion of the LVRT is a mile marker post along the route with the sponsor’s name, whether individual or business, posted permanently on a marker plaque. It’s a great way to honor a family member or friend. Your sponsorship will signal your support for the trail in a way that will also encourage others to contribute as well! There are 93 of these mile markers along the trail, and 73 are still available for sponsorship. Interested? Please contact LVRT Coordinator Director Don Rolfe at 802-498-8356 or email him at drolfe@vtvt.org.

ONLINE INTERACTIVE MAP

One of the projects we’ve been working hard on is a service to trail users in an Interactive Trail Map on our website that will show not only the trail itself but also zoom views of important places along the trail: trailheads, parking, rest rooms, and places to eat and other businesses on or near the trail. We’re pleased to be able to announce that this feature is now “live” on our website at lvrtn.org/trail-maps. Take a virtual ride on the LVRT in preparation for your next actual visit.

COUPLE FINDS FUN & FITNESS ON THE LVRT

The LVRT recently received a delightful note along with a donation from Claire and Russell Snow of Waterbury Center.

“We love the LVRT and have clocked 120 miles this year. We are in our 80s!”

Now, doesn’t that just make us want to be just like them when we grow up?
WELCOME TO NEW ENGLAND'S
LONGEST RAIL TRAIL!