

PRESS RELEASE -- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Trail bridge installed over Winooski River in East Montpelier

The Cross Vermont Trail Association has announced completion on Friday of the first stage of a new trail bridge over the Winooski River. The 205-foot long steel bridge in East Montpelier is a vital link in the 90-mile trail between Lake Champlain and the Connecticut River.

Onlookers cheered from Route 2 as the bridge settled onto new riverbank abutments after contractors gently eased it across the river. CCS Constructors of Morrisville installed the steel framework of the bridge using a floating river barge and two tall cranes.

When completed the new Winooski River bridge will allow recreationists and commuters to safely travel a wooded trail near the river and avoid using the shoulder of busy Route 2. The bridge will be open to the public later this fall after decking is installed and approaches are built on either side. The Association is planning a public ribbon cutting ceremony for October.

"Safety and accessibility are always on our minds as we build the trail," said CVTA Executive Director Greg Western. "The Siboinebi Path gets a ton of use, and I'm excited to think that folks will be able to continue past the Montpelier Civic Center and keep going," he said, referring to the recent extension of the Montpelier bike path. Western is currently working with an AmeriCorps crew from the National Civilian Conservation Corps to begin construction of a new path beginning at Gallison Hill Road and east to the new bridge.

The bridge is the centerpiece of a three-year project to build 3.3 miles of the Cross Vermont Trail off-road in East Montpelier, plus several side trails connecting to the U-32 School and also providing access to natural lands along the river. The entire project spans from Gallison Hill Road to a planned crossing of Route 2 and east to join a current trailhead on the east side of Route 14. The project is being built and opened in phases, and trail users can go to crossvermont.org for regular updates and maps.

As well as the bridge installation, people will see two more contractor-built projects later this season. A new guardrail along Route 2 will accommodate a fully separate bike path for 650 feet at a narrow place where the highway is very close the river. And a new trailhead parking area on Route 2 will be built upstream of the new bridge.

The remainder of the new trails between Gallison Hill Road and the new Route 2 trailhead plus the connectors to U-32 school will be built fall 2021 through summer 2022 by CVTA, and the Association invites volunteers to help with this work.

"Much of our trail building is done with volunteers and youth groups using pickaxes and shovels" explained Western. "There is plenty of opportunity for volunteers to help build important parts of the project in East Montpelier," Western added, "as well as joining ongoing smaller trail building and maintenance that we do statewide every year. "

The Association is seeking donations to fund the final section of the project between the new Route 2 trailhead and Route 14 in East Montpelier. Construction on this section will happen incrementally as money is available, starting in 2022 with a goal of completion in 2023, at which point there will be a continuous off-road bike path across East Montpelier, connecting the Barre-Montpelier Path to the west, the East Montpelier Trail to the north, and the Montpelier & Wells River Rail Trail to the east.

Funding for the \$1.75 million project between Gallison Hill Road and Route 14 comes from multiple sources: a large federal grant managed by the Vermont Agency of Transportation, plus state and private foundation grants, as well as donations from hundreds of private individuals and local businesses. All of the towns in the U-32 School District as well as Montpelier and Plainfield have contributed.

"We are deeply appreciative of the broad community support this project has had over many years," says Western. "For me, the real story here is that a significant piece of regional transportation infrastructure is being built in a truly grassroots way, by ordinary people all coming together."

Those wishing to volunteer and donate to the trail project can visit www.crossvermont.org where trail maps are available.

The mission of the Cross Vermont Trail Association is to create and maintain a multi-use trail across Vermont through the Winooski and Wells River Valleys between Lake Champlain and the Connecticut River.