

MISSISQUOI VALLEY RAIL TRAIL

Marketing, Branding
& Wayfinding Project

Submitted for 2023 Vermont Public Places Awards



TRAIL HISTORY & PROJECT GOALS

The Missisquoi Valley Railroad has been connecting our communities since 1883! After a period of disuse, a group of local residents advocated for the creation of a recreational trail along the old railroad bed. Through this citizen advocacy the group was successful in securing funding and support, and the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail officially opened to the public in the 1990s.

Today, the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail is a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts of all ages. The trail passes through scenic countryside, quaint villages, and historic landmarks, and offers a variety of recreational opportunities, including hiking, biking, horseback riding, dog-sledding, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling.

At the onset of the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail Marketing, Branding & Wayfinding Project, the MVRT was already a valuable asset in Northwestern Vermont—providing numerous benefits; including enhanced public health, increased tourism, economic development, and improved quality of life. It was clear, however, the trail hadn't been as effective as it could be in driving people and dollars into its host communities. **Thus, the overarching goals of the project were to increase trail awareness for both local residents and potential visitors, enhance wayfinding and trail information, and better connect trail activity with local businesses and the communities of Franklin County.**



PROJECT PROCESS

Engaging the Community

SE Group worked with the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail Council and the Northwest Regional Planning Commission to help increase the tourism activity and economic impact of the trail through enhanced marketing, wayfinding, branding, and a new trail friendly business program. At the onset of the project SE Group engaged the community to find how the experience of the trail could be improved, and in turn increase visitorship, tourism activity, and economic impact. SE Group hosted a trail ride and a series of community events to provide information about the project and gather input from local residents and business owners. SE Group used public meetings focus groups, social media, and public presentations to gather public sentiment and feedback and ensure the project results were responsive to the communities vision and needs.

Check Out the Project Video!

With our partner, Path Less Pedaled, the project team produced a video to explain the project and highlight this treasured recreational resource. You can see the video here! (tinyurl.com/2w2pwtps)



'Rail Trail Roundup' Public Engagement Poster

Rail Trail Roundup • Come Join The Fun!

Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail Marketing and Wayfinding Project

The Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail Council and Northwest Regional Planning Commission are working with a consultant team to help increase tourism activity and the economic impact of the trail through enhanced marketing, wayfinding, and branding. The project will also create a trail friendly business program and provide technical assistance for local business owners. To kick off this year-long process, we are hosting a trail ride and a series of community events to provide information about the project and gather input from local residents and business owners. Hope to see you on the ride or at one of the community events!!

St. Albans

Itinerary

- 1 Thursday June 6th**
Second Trailhead Design Public Meeting
6:30 PM at the Enosburgh Emergency Service Building
 Presentation of trailhead designs from Conway School of Landscape Design students Greta Moore and Aja Mathews. Designs based on community input from first public meeting held April 30th.
- 2 Friday June 7th**
Breakfast Mixer and Kickoff
8:00 AM at the Maple City Diner, St Albans
 Presentation/display and discussion on project goals and elements and how businesses and other stakeholders can benefit from the rail trail. Breakfast sandwiches, muffins, coffee and juice.
- 3 St. Albans to Abbey Trail Ride**
10:00 AM Departure from St. Albans Trailhead
 11 miles from St. Albans to Pavilion
- 4 Picnic Lunch**
12:30 PM at the Abbey Pavilion, North Sheldon
 Discussion on project goals and elements and how businesses and other stakeholders can benefit from the rail trail. Bag lunches provided.
- 5 Abbey to Enosburg Falls Trail Ride**
1:30 PM Departure from Abbey Pavilion
 6 miles to Enosburg Falls
- 6 Friday June 7th Evening**
Mixer
5:30 - 7:30 PM at the 1906 Carriage Barn, Enosburg Falls
 Presentation/display and discussion on project goals and elements and how businesses and other stakeholders can benefit from the rail trail. Display of Vital Village top 5 priorities. Appetizers and beverages provided. Cash bar.
- 7 Saturday June 8th**
Enosburg to Richford Trail Ride
8:00 AM Departure at the Historical Society, Enosburg Falls
 10 mile ride to Richford
- 8 Picnic Lunch**
12:00 PM at the Missisquoi Overlook Park/Greenwood Deli, Richford
 Discussion on project goals and elements and how businesses and other stakeholders can benefit from the rail trail. Bag lunches provided.
- 9 Richford to Pine Cone Trail Ride**
1:30 PM Departure from Richford
 4 miles from Richford to Pine Cone
- 10 Ice Cream Social**
3:00 PM at the Pine Cone, Richford
 Presentation/display and discussion on project goals and elements and how businesses and other stakeholders can benefit from the rail trail. Ice cream provided.

Please RSVP for each event and/or trail ride you would like to participate in by May 29th.
 Greta Brunswick or Amy Adams can be reached at:
 (802) 524-5958
 gbrunswick@nrpcvt.com
 aadams@nrpcvt.com
 Project info: <http://mvrailtrail.org/mvrtproject.php>

Consultant Team: **SE GROUP** PATHLESSPEDALED.COM



It is through experiencing our public places that communities recognize their value and endeavor to protect and improve them. This connection leads to thoughtful decisions in their development and use.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

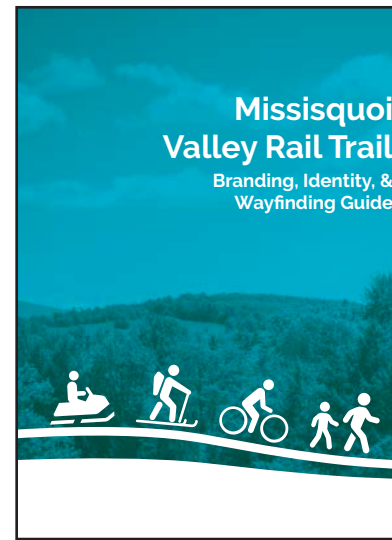
To increase the visibility of the MVRT, the project aimed to develop and implement a comprehensive marketing and communication plan that would leverage a variety of channels—including social media, email newsletters, press releases, strategic partnerships, and outdoor advertising—to inform and entice the public to enjoy the trail.

These project deliverables addressed the overall awareness of the trail as well as the community concerns raised through the project’s public engagement efforts.

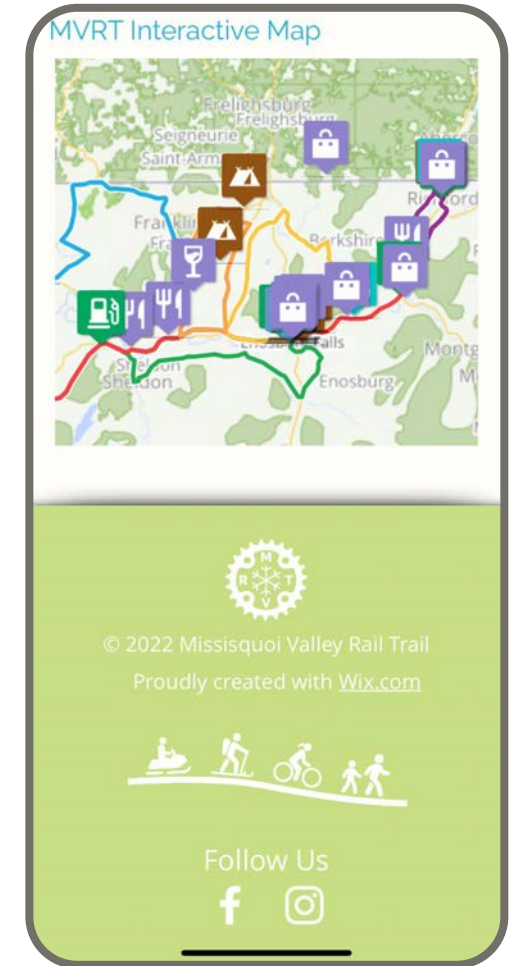
Key project deliverables that highlight these efforts include:

- **New Trail Logo Design and Brand Guide:** To make these initiatives successful SE Group created a new branding strategy and logor to present a cohesive and recognizable visual identity for the MVRT across all platforms.
- **Webiste, Social Media & Public Engagement Templates:** The project concluded with a redesigned trail website (www.MVRailTrail.org) with ready to share templates for communication with the public accross social media platforms.
- **Wayfinding and Signage Master Plan:** SE Group created a detailed Wayfinding and Signage Master Plan that included over 200 individual sign designs with custom wayfinding content on-brand messaging ready for immediate fabrication and installation.
- **Trail Maps & Interactive Mobile Map:** SE Group worked with the project team and stakeholders to create detailed trail maps that are available to visitors both online and in print. These maps provide information about the trail route, potential looping and side trip opportunities, and link users with adjacent communities and businesses.
- **Photography assets:** SE Group provided professional quality photos featuring a variety of trail uses and seasons for use on the MRVT website, social media, and future marketing initiatives.
- **Trail Friendly Business Program:** A marketing initiative to promote local businesses and services that are supportive of the trail and its visitors. Businesses that participate in the program receive a Trail Friendly Business decal to display in their storefront, indicating to trail users that they are a welcoming and supportive establishment.

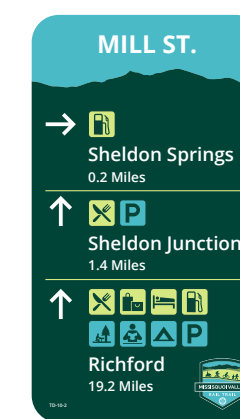
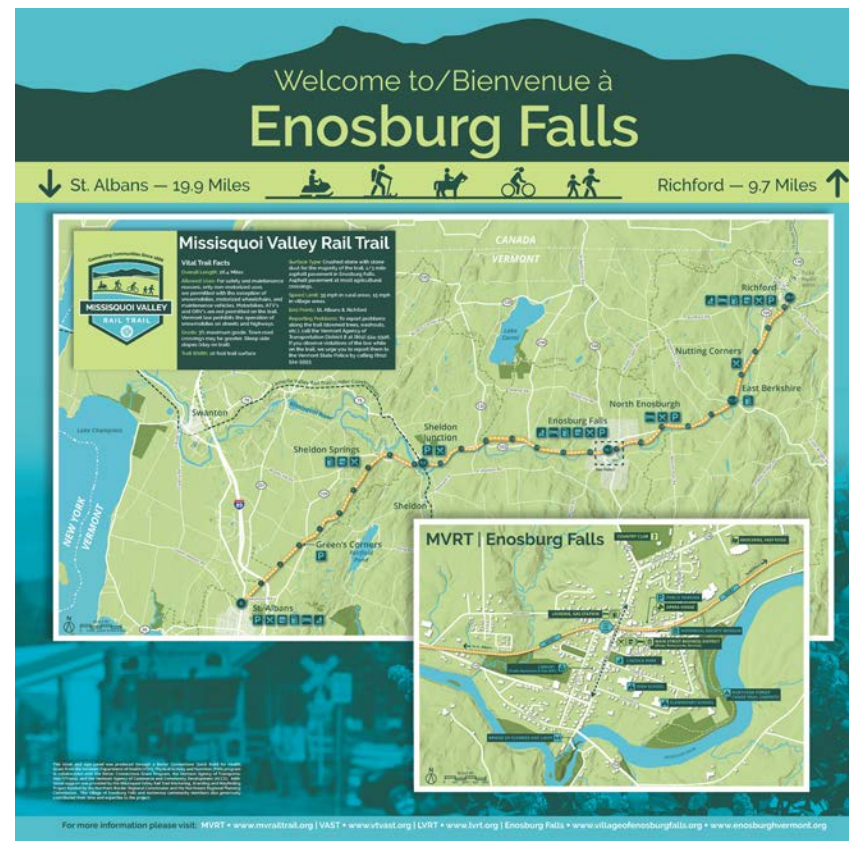
Trail Logo & Branding



Interactive Mobile Map



Wayfinding & Signage Designs



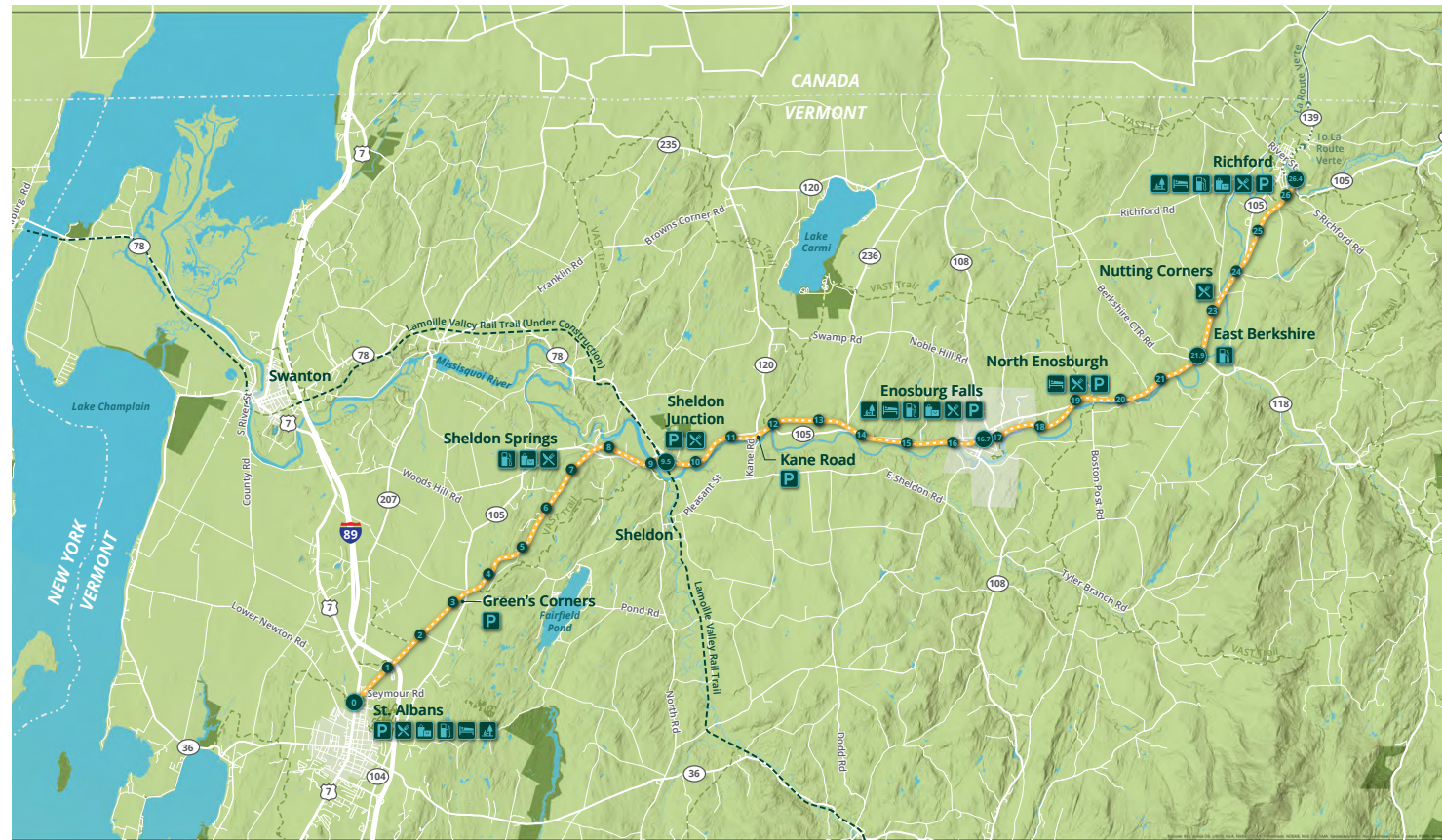
Socail Media Templates



A VISION REALIZED

The project deliverables from the Missisquoi Marketing, Branding & Wayfinding project provided the client with the roadmap and tools to improve the visibility of the trail throughout the region. At the completion of the project, the trail was awarded a VT Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Grant to install all the signs, and trailhead improvements SE Group designed. The completed project is a perfect example of what thoughtful planning and design can do to help preserve and promote our most treasured public places.

Maps & Trail Information Available Throughout!

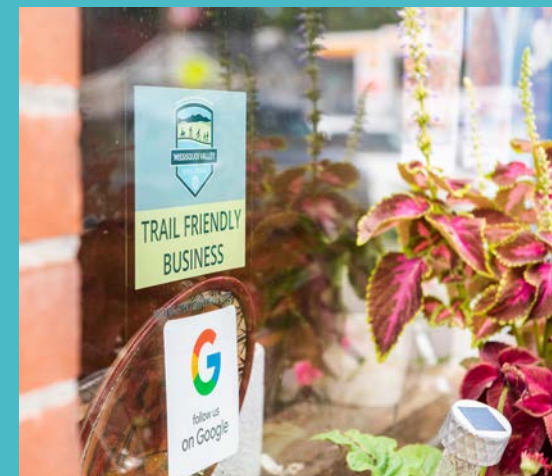


Installed Trail Kiosks and Signage!



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT : THE MVRT TRAIL FRIENDLY BUSINESS PROGRAM

Since the launch of the The Missisquoi Valley Trail Friendly Business Program over 100 neighboring businesses have signed up as participants. These businesses work hard to create a trail friendly atmosphere that welcomes outdoor enthusiasts. These businesses understand what trail users need and take extra steps to make sure you have a great experience. While on the trail, users can find these local business directories at the trail kiosks in each town and identify participating businesses by the Trail Friendly Business Logo posted in the window.



Additional project details that embody the project’s vision and encourage public use of the trail by making the experience **fun, safe and easy**.



Installed Bike Racks & Repair Stations!

The repair stations installed on the MVRT are designed to be easy to use, and are intended for minor repairs and adjustments, such as fixing a flat tire, tightening loose bolts, or adjusting the brakes or gears. These new features provide cyclists with a convenient and accessible resource that can help them maintain their bikes and ensure a safe and enjoyable ride.

Improved Trail Access Points!

The new kiosks, wayfinding, and signage located at major trail crossings and improved trail parking areas raise the visibility of the trail to the general public as well as provide important wayfinding information and guides trail users to local amenities and businesses.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT : THE TRAIL PASSPORT

The Trail Passport system created for the MVRT encourages the public to explore and experience the trail’s natural beauty, cultural sites, and historical landmarks. The program involves issuing a passport booklet to trail users, which they use to record their visits to various points of interest along the trail.

The Trail Passport booklet includes a map of the MVRT and a list of 6 designated “passport stops” found at each trail kiosk along the trail. At each passport stop, visitors find a unique rubbing plate that they use to mark their visit in their passport booklet.

The Trail Passport system is designed to encourage visitors to explore all the MVRT has to offer and to learn more about the history and culture of the surrounding communities. It also serves as a marketing tool for the MVRT, promoting it as a destination for recreational activities, tourism, and education.



PROJECT SUCCESS

Through the efforts of the project team and partners the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail has grown in both popularity and notoriety. Since the completion of the project, many of the recommendations have been implemented allowing visitors and communities better access to the outdoors and enjoy the economic growth fueled by the outdoor recreation economy. In addition, the recently completed connection of the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail joins it to the largest rail trail network in New England, surely to become a gem in the collection of treasured outdoor recreation assets in Vermont.

