



December 30, 2019

Friend,

On behalf of chapters in all corners of Vermont, we hope that '19 was a fantastic year for you and your business. I am excited to share some changes to the Retailer's Alliance Program with you all.

Chris and I have heard from a handful of you about the nuances of the existing program, each with a different disposition to the details. VMBA's intention was to provide the space to discuss the details, along with clarifying long-standing misconceptions about how the chapter model works as a central part of the summits Chris hosted earlier in '19.

We're all busy. However, summit attendance being what it was has left us attempting to piece together a program that reflects your wishes.

Moving forward, we are hoping to unite shops around two goals:

1. Increase mountain biking participation in Vermont
2. Encouraging Vermonters to shop local

I am hoping you all will be willing to enthusiastically support the following:

VMBA will provide access to:

- The Member Benefits program
- The Plan Your Ride platform
- Three free shop tech memberships (after filling out the annual "quiz" online). This is intended to help shop techs know a bit about VMBA in the event they are asked questions by the public. It's voluntary.

Your shop is being asked to:

- Offer a compelling benefit that encourages someone to stop by your shop and/or try riding. For example, a free or 50% off demo or 15% off accessories, or discount on a particular kind of service. Or think about owning a product category. For example, a steep discount just on shoes, or just on tires, or free shock service with a purchase of \$X. Think about what would inspire you to make an out of the way stop at a shop like yours and consider all that you would learn if you did.
- Place VMBA signage in your shop in a prominent location and display the VMBA sticker on your door.

**Your shop may choose to support chapter memberships. If so, please reach out to Chris.**

**There is one other thing.** VMBA is a central part of the VT Trails and Greenways Council. This body has a statutory obligation to advise Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) on trail matters. Over the past 18-months, the Council has been working with the Forest Partnership (FP), which is comprised of multiple conservation groups in Montpelier.

The Council and FP was asked to author an alternative to Act 250 – a permitting system designed to keep large scale development in check in VT. Inherently, Act 250 is a good thing. The problem is that its jurisdiction reaches trail work, which could have a seriously negative impact on private landowners interested in partnering with chapters.

The Council and FP has put forth an alternative to Act 250 for trails. The latest insight being shared is that the Natural Resources Board (NRB) is *adding* trail regulation, not refining it to better reflect our type of work.

VMBA work in tandem with the Council is a crucial element in the success of your businesses – Here's why. Over 80% of VT's outdoor infrastructure is on private land. If NRB is successful and expands jurisdiction to also include more control of private landowners, crucial partnerships between landowners and chapters will become exceedingly difficult, and may end altogether in many cases. Less trails = less people riding, which means fewer people buying/breaking bikes.

Our collective long-term success as an outdoor community will be secured by trail-based nonprofits working towards a better relationship with FPR and educating legislators on the value of protecting private landowners from undue regulation.

As an illustration, what's about to happen to Village Sports on Darling Hill? KT isn't facing an Act 250 problem, but the situation does illustrate how quickly a few decisions can seriously negatively impact access and your customers. If NRB and its jurisdiction gains access to private land, the loss of trail will be unimaginable. This will rip through VMBA, your shop, and every local near trail networks.

We need shops to work with us on this legislative effort. There may be a time in the near future where we need to rally around some messaging. I will keep everyone fully updated on this issue as things play out. Thanks everyone.

Thank you.

Tom