

## PROJECT UNDERSTANDING + SCOPE OF WORK

Rail trails like the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail (MVRT) provide an immense package of benefits to their host communities. They promote healthy lifestyles, provide kids with opportunities to explore nature, help protect our environment, reduce traffic while making travel fun, and most importantly for this project—they help bring people and dollars into our communities.

Many of our team members are fortunate enough to have ridden the MVRT before, either through the Vital Village Project or on our own with our families. We know what a hidden gem it is. With its bucolic setting, quiet river nooks, booming mountain views, and quintessential Vermont villages, we know the MVRT already provides all the benefits listed above and more. However, we also know that the trail hasn't necessarily been as effective as it could be in driving people and dollars into its host communities. Branding, wayfinding, marketing, and trail tourism education and support are all important pathways to correcting this, but they are wholly interdependent and intertwined with one another. With a mix of very immediate needs and longer-term aspirational goals as well as limited funding, a thoughtful and phased strategy where each step builds off those before it will be critical to success. Our proposed process is both strategic and tactile, placing our efforts where there is the greatest need and where they will have the greatest impact.



### TRAIL FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail is an incredible recreation destination with a growing potential to benefit from trail tourism. We understand the importance of the physical and social connections between the Towns and the trail, and that planning must be thoughtful, intentional, and inviting.

Our approach will help the MVRTC, the host communities, and local businesses build upon what you already offer to enhance the appeal of your communities and strengthen the local economy. We will help maximize your ability to tap into, and even augment, the potential trail tourism market within the region.

Specifically, we will help you:

- Attract bicyclists and trail users to your community
- Understand and meet travel needs and desires
- Help guests find the kind of vacation experience they are seeking in the region

## A. PLANNING PHASE

### 1. Project Initiation + Market Assessment

We will start the project with a kick-off meeting with the NRPC and the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail Council (MVRTC) team. The purpose of the meeting will be to review the overall goals of the project, finalize the scope and schedule, establish stakeholder contacts, discuss and confirm the public/business/stakeholder outreach plan, and discuss communication protocols. We look forward to hearing about your expectations for the project, gaining knowledge about the partners and players, and understanding the potential challenges.

We will initiate the process of compiling existing base information on the trail, trailheads, parking areas, transportation network, surrounding towns, businesses, amenities, and services. We will supplement the trail counts we have done in Enosburg Falls with additional trail count data for St. Albans and Richford. We will gather past or current designs or plans that can advise or should be considered in the planning process. We'll also work with you on this transfer of digital files and can supplement with aerial imagery and data from the VT Open Geodata Portal. This will enable us to develop a working basemap for the project and a digital database (Excel or MS Access) of businesses, amenities, and services that might serve rail trail users.

While we have completed numerous projects in Franklin County and Northern Vermont and have a good sense of the region, a solid understanding of the market potential of the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail in specific will be necessary to effectively market the trail, its host communities, and the experiences offered therein. To this end, we will also assess the market conditions of the MVRT to identify:

1. Community and visitor demographics, recreation and travel patterns and trends, and detailed market information specific to Franklin County and Northern Vermont.
2. The depth of visitation potential including locals, destination visitors to the trail, and regional visitors who may be looking for an additional activity to do during their stay in Northern Vermont.
3. The complexion, scale, and characteristics of trail amenities that would be critical for viability in the competitive marketplace.
4. The marketing and market development strategy with the best chances of success, given the MVRT and Northern Vermont's unique circumstances.
5. Critical market development challenges and strategies for addressing those challenges.

We will use census data and available information from other established sources to complete the market assessment. The result will be a thorough and objective assessment of MVRT's potential to become a trail destination within the competitive marketplace, which can be leveraged for the marketing materials developed through this project and to communicate the market potential of the trail to the communities, local businesses, and other potential partners.

❖ ***Deliverables: Approved public/business/stakeholder outreach plan, summary of kick-off meeting and protocols, identified design and plans to be considered, draft basemap, and initial/draft services database, trail count data, market assessment***

## 2. Community Visit and Trail Ride/Audit

SE Group and Path Less Pedaled will conduct a two-day trail ride and familiarization tour along the MVRT to understand the trail user experience and how to best market the trail. We will use this time to audit the existing experience in terms of trail wayfinding, the ease of finding businesses, services, and amenities, and to document existing conditions. We will add to our asset inventory of services for cyclists and potential trail users and will speak with local businesses to assess trail awareness and business opportunities along the trail. The ride may be publicized and some of these drop-ins on local businesses could be pre-scheduled, but we have also found that simply rolling into local businesses with our bikes, panniers, and cycling clothes can be enlightening for both us and them. We will also begin to formulate potential trip itineraries for various user groups to be used in later marketing material.

During the trail ride, we will also capture preliminary photography assets to be used to create marketing material. Russ Roca, from The Path Less Pedaled will create a Youtube influencer video of the familiarization tour to be hosted on their channel (38k subscribers) to highlight the user experience and bring attention to the trail. Examples of Russ' influencer videos can be viewed here <https://youtu.be/ZU1zmuEHPxw> for the Tanglefoot Trail and here [https://youtu.be/Zu1una78\\_6E](https://youtu.be/Zu1una78_6E) for Trail of the Hiawatha.

After the trail ride, we will stay in town for a third day to travel the corridor by car, follow up with local business owners or stakeholders we may have missed along the way, and to gather additional photo or video content that we weren't able to capture on the ride itself. We will also conduct a check in meeting with key NRPC staff and MVRTC members.

❖ ***Deliverables: Influencer video, ride and audit summary, photography assets.***

## 3. Concept Development

Following the community visit and trail ride, the project team will move into the concept development phase and will begin to develop options and elements of the visual brand, the wayfinding system, and the marketing strategy so it may be effectively communicated to the project team and public at the Brand and Trail Business Summit. We will coordinate with you throughout this work and envision an iterative and collaborative concept development process.

❖ ***Deliverables: Draft visual brand elements, draft wayfinding plan elements, draft trailhead kiosk panel elements, draft marking strategy.***

## 4. Brand and Trail Business Summit

Building upon the contacts we made during the trail ride, SE Group will convene residents, municipal representatives, chambers of commerce, local businesses, and other stakeholders for a Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail Brand and Trail Business Summit. At this event, we will present our analysis of existing conditions and the market assessment and tourism potential information we have developed to help frame the discussion. We will be sure to discuss the potential benefits of the trail and its future visitors to help sway members of the community who may be on the fence about trail tourism. We will also present the options and elements of the visual brand, the wayfinding system, and the marketing strategy for review and comment.

❖ ***Deliverables: Concept presentation, meeting notes***

## TRAILS MEAN BUSINESS

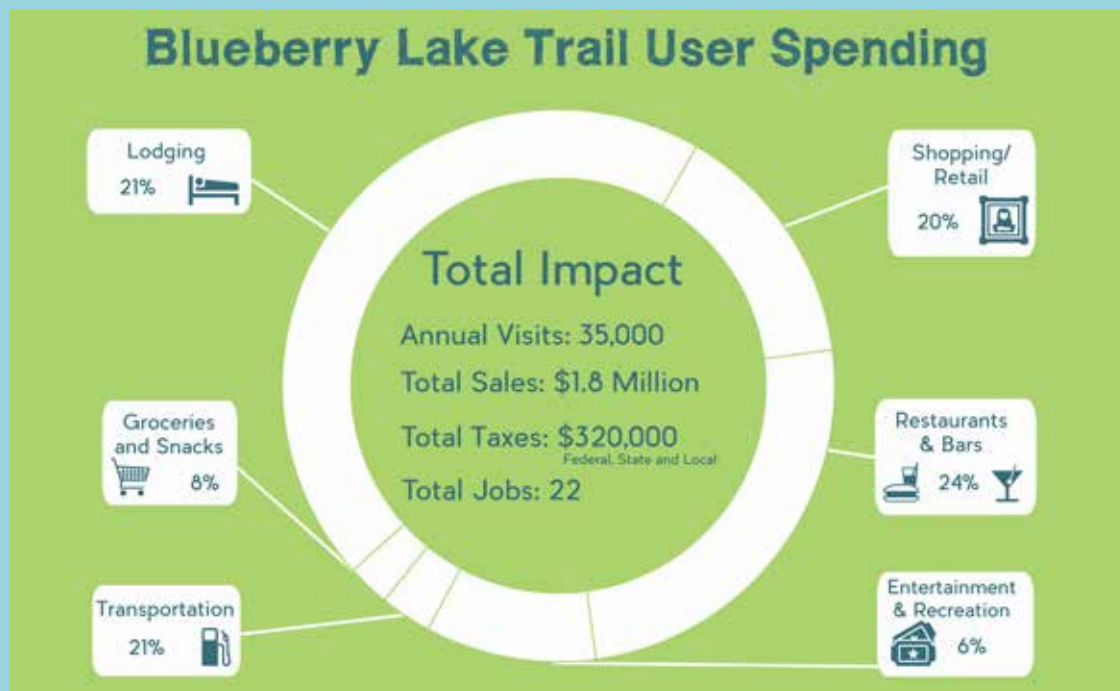
Our team believes the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail can be an economic engine in the region, but that the economic implications of trail tourism must be well understood in order to properly leverage these assets for the greatest benefit to the region and the host communities. To this end, we propose conducting an economic impact analysis of the trail.

Economic impact analyses allow us to understand the role the trail plays in the regional economy by describing the effect these resources have in drawing additional visitors and tourism revenues into the broader community. Even when trail users don't pay a fee to use trails, they typically buy goods, gas, food, and lodging when visiting trails. The economic impact analysis tracks this visitor spending.

An understanding of the economic impact of trails will allow the NRPC and MVRTC to strategically position themselves to implement the plan while generating support from the local community. With a complete economic model, the project team would be able to provide specialized insight into implementation and phasing strategies. We have also found that economic modeling can greatly increase the competitiveness of trail projects for grants and other funding opportunities by demonstrating the immense return on investment these projects can provide.

The project team proposes to use a powerful computer-based model—the Money Generation Model (MGM2)—to accurately describe the economic impact of the plan and provide insight. Our analysis will demonstrate the economic benefits of trail tourism in terms of changes in jobs, labor income, tax impacts, sales and gross regional product.

❖ **Deliverables:** *Findings of the economic analysis, infographics for social and traditional media distribution.*



## 5. Funding and Implementation Action Plan

As a follow up to the Brand and Trail Business Summit, we will develop funding and implementation action plans based on the market assessment, existing conditions assessment, and the feedback we heard at the event. The funding and implementation action plans will finalize the specific projects and materials developed and carried forward in the implementation phase. They will also provide a comprehensive implementation and phasing strategy for those actions and projects that are not able to be completed under the current funding.

❖ ***Deliverables: Wayfinding Funding and Implementation Action Plan, Trailhead Kiosk Funding and Implementation Action Plan, Promotional Materials Funding and Implementation Action Plan, and Trail Tourism Education Implementation Action Plan***

## 6. Branding and Identity Guide

Effective marketing campaigns and wayfinding systems must be built upon a strong brand. Through the wayfinding system, a trail's brand gives users the visual cues they need to connect parts of the trail in one community with parts of the trail in another. A trail's brand is also critical for marketing recreational assets in today's world. User-generated content—whether it be on twitter or on TripAdvisor—is more important to marketing recreational assets than almost any other industry and user-generated content has never been more abundant and thriving in marketing than it is today. With social media, everyone is a publisher; everyone is a photographer; and everyone has an opinion. A cohesive and recognizable brand—coupled with a thoughtful online presence—will enable the MVRT to leverage this low-cost marketing effectively and present itself consistently across all platforms.

To facilitate implementation of the brand elements across all mediums in this project and beyond, SE Group and Path Less Pedaled will develop a branding and identity guide for the MVRT that will include a logo; primary, secondary, and tertiary brand colors; primary and secondary fonts; key messaging and attributes, and marketing design examples. The branding and identity guide will ensure the MVRT presents a cohesive and thoughtful identity in the trail design, in its physical signage, online presence, and relationship and partnerships with local communities and businesses.

We will coordinate with you throughout this work and once again envision an iterative and collaborative process for its development.

❖ ***Deliverables: Draft and final branding and identity guide***



## B. IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

### 1. Wayfinding

With a solid brand in place, we will move into developing a comprehensive wayfinding and signage plan for the trail. The wayfinding and signage plan will include final designs and locations of all signs in the wayfinding system, but we know that the available funding will simply not support complete implementation of such a system (even if we didn't want to leave room for other actions, which we do). We also know there is an immediate need to improve some route marking and wayfinding aspects of the trail from a functional standpoint. For example, just in the Village of Enosburg Falls there are at least two locations that are confusing and uninviting without route marking—the intersection of the trail with Bismark “Street” and where the trail passes by Franklin Foods and through the agricultural loading zones on Depot Street. Signage in such areas needs to be added before any real progress can be achieved on the other fronts. For this reason, we propose to create a wayfinding plan that includes not only the locations and sign designs, but also a “quick build” strategy for the immediate wayfinding needs. This may include route markers, directional signage, business/service icons etc. that can be delivered through semi-permanent or cheaper (and less durable) options such as simple route marking discs, routed wood signs, pavement markings, or laminated/vinyl options. These quick build options will inevitably be oriented toward smaller, more tactile wayfinding and routing signs than towards parking, trailhead kiosk, vehicle wayfinding, or other more substantial wayfinding signs we will likely recommend for the full system. These quick-build options will, however, fix the immediate wayfinding needs and begin a soft launch of the complete and cohesive wayfinding system. They will also be tied into the “Trail Friendly Business” signage system we will discuss later.



*Confusing intersection of MVRT and Bismark Street—without the Google Streetview label there's no way to tell which is which.”*

This approach to wayfinding allows for the logical progression of steps and aligns with how wayfinding systems are typically implemented on other trail systems. With relatively low levels of non-local visitation, implementation of the complete wayfinding system isn't as important today as it will be in the future when there are more tourists on the trail, but functional wayfinding fixes are needed now to move the needle at all. So, our proposed approach is to do some tactile wayfinding first, drive people to the trail through marketing and business education, and to then use some of the revenues from the additional economic activity to fund the complete wayfinding and signage system—including installation of the fully-designed trailhead kiosk panels—as non-local visitation ramps up and warrants it.

The final wayfinding and signage plan will create a family of signs for various uses, likely including town/village information kiosk panels, town/village gateway signs, mile and route markers, amenity/business/service signs (icons), trailhead kiosk panels, trailhead parking signs, and vehicular wayfinding signs, among others. The plan will include the final designs and locations of all signs in the wayfinding system—ready to be taken to a shop or contractor for production and installation. We will also include cost estimates for the signs that allow you cost individual signs and sum across a group of signs. We will review the wayfinding plan with you before finalizing.

The wayfinding funding and implementation action plan developed at the tail end of the planning phase will determine which signs are implemented under this project, but at a minimum some quick build wayfinding and route marking signs will be installed.

❖ ***Deliverables: Draft and final wayfinding plan***

## 2. Trailhead Kiosk Panels

In conjunction with the development of the wayfinding plan, SE Group and Path Less Pedaled will develop final designs for the trailhead kiosk panels. We see these as part and parcel of the wayfinding plan, which will include final designs for these panels and all signs in the wayfinding system. We will likely develop a kiosk panel template for use across the system that also allows for unique info for specific locations and their attractions. Given the amount of available funding, stated priorities in the RFP answers, and our initial sense of the implementation needs, we do not anticipate installing these kiosk panels as part of this project, but may consider it if new information or preferences are uncovered during the process.

❖ ***Deliverables: Draft and final trailhead kiosk panel designs.***

## 3. Promotional Materials

Concurrent with the development of the wayfinding plan and trailhead kiosk panels, SE Group and Path Less Pedaled will also develop a suite of marketing materials that may be used to promote the trail. We believe this should include a mix of digital and print assets, which could include a wide range of products depending on the outcomes of the market analysis and planning process. One element we feel is completely critical and have already included in our cost proposal is an updated website for the trail that utilizes a user-friendly, “build your own website” format such as Weebly or Wordpress. With some training from us, this will allow the website to be easily updated by the MVRTC and/or its partners. It will ensure the website has regular functional updates and is continually optimized for both desktop and mobile devices, which is a huge benefit of using one of these services. The website updates the trail's online presence and will serve as a home for a searchable database of trail business, amenities, and services. It will also house photos, videos, maps, trip itineraries, cue sheets, business stories, calendar and event information, and other materials—all of which will be developed by SE Group and Path Less Pedaled as part of this project. We will conduct search engine

optimization for the website and will recommend a Google Ad Words scheme or other web advertising strategy for the site. We will develop all marketing materials and copy for the website, but will coordinate closely with the MVRTC on management oriented sections and the any updates to the existing copy.

Beyond the website and associated digital marketing materials, the ultimate marketing materials produced as part of this project will be decided upon in the promotional materials funding and implementation action plan developed at the tail end of the planning phase. Other likely marketing materials may include a social media and user-generated content strategy, a printed brochure and a list of identified locations to put in it, and a suite of PDF flyers and other collateral that have standard images and graphics alongside “fillable form fields” that can be updated by the MVRTC and its partners to promote the trail and the events along it over time.

❖ ***Deliverables: Draft and final website and other digital and print marketing materials (specific materials and quantities TBD)***

#### 4. Trailside Business Technical Assistance

To round out our process, SE Group and the Path Less Pedaled will complete our business and community trail tourism education and roll out our MVRT Trail Friendly Business Program. Both Drew Pollak-Bruce and Russ Roca have led similar business education programs in the past. While working for Parks and Trails New York, Drew led numerous “Bicyclists Bring Business” workshops in trail communities all along the Erie Canalway Trail. The goal of these workshops was to help local businesses, elected officials, tourism professionals, and community members discover what services and amenities are important to trail users so they can better attract and profit from the growing trail tourism market. Russ was involved in the Oregon Bike Tourism Studio Series, which was a community planning program designed to transform Oregon’s regions into premier bicycling destinations and to help local businesses benefit from visiting bicyclists. The Bike Tourism Studios encouraged all lodging establishments, restaurants, cafés, brew pubs, bike shops, tour operators, retail shops and attractions, as well as public land managers, trail advocates, planners, communication specialists, community leaders and of course cyclists, to partake in a region-wide workshop where a regional vision and goals were identified. Follow-up action planning meetings were then conducted in each county in the region so local communities could prioritize short-term projects to begin collaboration and execution on. In conjunction with the Bike Tourism Studio Series, Russ was also involved with creating a bicycle friendly business recognition program for Travel Oregon with the goal of attracting cyclists to businesses as well as educating businesses about cyclists. Path Less Pedaled helped design the signs which include informative service icons for traveling cyclists. They also created a series of outreach training videos for participating businesses to educate them about the benefits of bicycle tourism.



**Bicyclists Bring Business** | A Guide for Attracting Bicyclists to New York's Canal Communities

**Northeastern Oregon Bicycle Tourism Studio**

The Northeastern Oregon Bicycle Tourism Studio is a community planning program designed to make northeastern Oregon a premier bicycling destination and to help local businesses benefit from visiting bicyclists.

Anyone in Union, Baker and Wallowa County that is interested in capitalizing on the growing travel trend and looking to increase this market in northeastern Oregon, is invited to participate!

We encourage all lodging establishments, restaurants, cafés, brew pubs, bike shops, tour operators, retail shops and attractions, as well as public land managers, trail advocates, planners, communication specialists, community leaders and of course cyclists of to take part.

We ask all participants to attend both the region-wide workshop and at least one of the follow-up action planning meetings.

**Registration is required. Cost is free!**  
**Industry.TravelOregon.com/northeastBTS**

**Region-Wide Workshop:**  
 Thursday, October 22, 2015 | 9:00a.m.-4:30p.m.  
 Cook Memorial Library | 2006 Fourth St, La Grande, OR

**Follow-Up Action Planning Meetings:**

**Union County**  
 Tuesday, November 17, 2015 | 8:00a.m.-12:00p.m.  
 Cook Memorial Library | 2006 Fourth St La Grande, OR

**Wallowa County**  
 Wednesday, November 18, 2015 | 8:00a.m.-12:00p.m.  
 Wallowa County Chamber | 309 S River St, Enterprise, OR

**Baker County**  
 Thursday, November 19, 2015 | 8:00a.m.-12:00p.m.  
 Always Welcome Inn | 175 Campbell St, Baker City, OR

**Questions? Contact:** Alice Trindle, Eastern Oregon Visitors Association  
 Eova@eoni.com | 541-856-3272

**Bicycle travelers in Oregon contribute \$400 million annually to the state's economy, and they tend to spend \$124 more per trip.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> The Economic Significance of Bicycle-Related Travel in Oregon: 2012, Dean Ryan Associates

**EASTERN OREGON** **TRAVEL OREGON**

We will build upon these previous experiences to develop a MVRT Trail Friendly Business Program, guide, and tools for the region. This program will include a similar studio or workshop component, a trail-friendly business guide, a trail-friendly business checklist, and background information on the potential market and economic impact information to help bring businesses into the fold and support their individual marketing efforts. Our proposed approach to this will be to focus on “training the trainers,” such as the MVRTC, Chamber of Commerce, community economic development organizations, and the Northwest Regional Planning Commission so new and turning over businesses can receive similar support and training into the future. We will also run the full studio and workshop with the trainers and any local businesses or community members who wish to attend and will develop a plan to distribute the guide and checklist to as many businesses as possible.

The MVRT Trail Friendly Business Program will also include a business recognition component that highlights things businesses should be thinking about relative to trail tourism and establishes a signage and information system for communicating with trail users about the business and the services they offer. This signage and information system will be fully integrated into the wayfinding plan and brand identity, but the signage will be placed at businesses rather than on the trail. It will be designed to be fully customizable with businesses names and services allowing the NRPC, MVRTC, and its partners to produce the individual business signs on the fly.

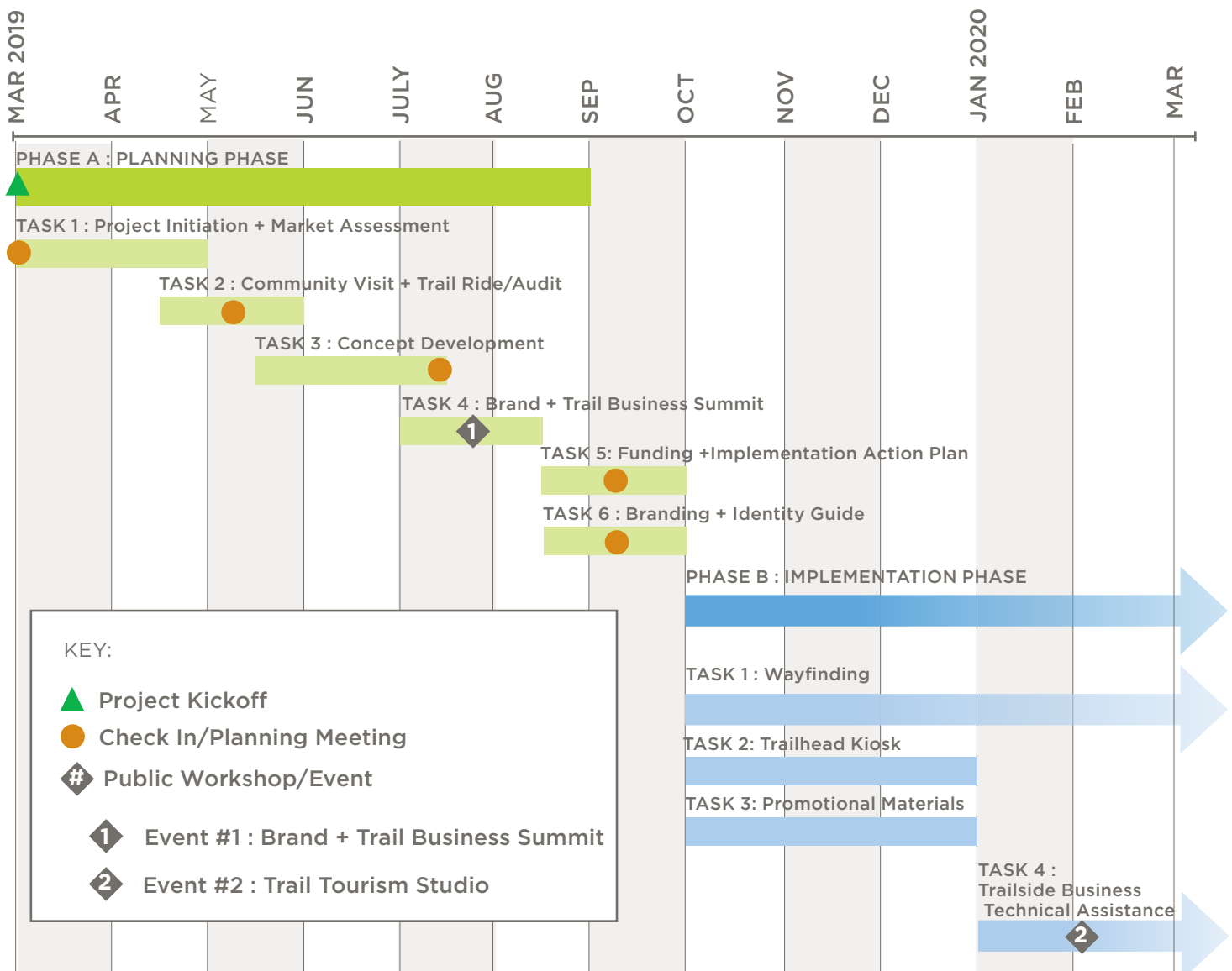
- ❖ ***Deliverables: Draft and final trail-friendly business guide, trail-friendly business checklist, and background information on the potential market and economic impact information. Draft and final trail-friendly business signage system***



Photo Credit : [andreaonvacation.com](http://andreaonvacation.com)

## PROPOSED SCHEDULE

The schedule below represents our 1st cut on how we would move this process forward. As the graphic images suggest, we are anticipating a series of regular check in meetings throughout the planning phase as well as two public and business engagement workshops. We anticipate the promotional materials to be either produced digitally or printed in the winter of 2019/2020, ready for use in advance of the 2020 spring and summer trail tourism season. We anticipate that the wayfinding installation and trailside business technical assistance produced with this project funding will be completed in the late winter and early spring—once again in advance of the 2020 spring and summer trail tourism season—but that these processes will also continue into the future. We do not anticipate you needing additional funds to continue the trailside business technical assistance program into the future—just staff or volunteer time from the NRPC, the MVRTC, or other partners to conduct the established program with businesses in future years. We do, however, anticipate that additional funding will be needed to implement the complete wayfinding system and trail head kiosks and these will be implemented over time as funding allows.



## FEE PROPOSAL

Based on the above scope of work and approach, SE Group and the Path Less Pedaled anticipates that the total professional fees will be as follows. We have provided personnel hours and cost details for the planning phase and some areas of the implementation phase we know will require staff time. We have also generally allocated the remaining funds for printing and distribution of marketing materials, fabrication and installation of some wayfinding signage, and other implementation actions, but expect that these implementation costs will be further refined and finalized during the Funding and Implementation Action Plan task of the planning phase.

PHASE/TASK		SEG						PLP	FEE
		MK \$170	DPB \$118	PO \$118	LG \$85	RL \$82	EW \$82	RR \$85	
A	PLANNING PHASE								
1	Project Initiation + Market Assessment	2	8				16	2	\$2,800
2	Community Visit + Trail Ride/Audit		40		24			40	\$10,200
3	Concept Development	2	16	8	40	8	16	16	\$10,000
4	Branding + Trail Business Summit		12		16		8		\$3,500
5	Funding + Implementation Action Plan	2	4	4	4		16	4	\$3,300
6	Branding + Identity Guide	2	4		24		2	4	\$3,800
PLANNING PHASE TOTAL									\$33,600
B	IMPLEMENTATION PHASE								
1	Wayfinding	2	6	30	60	6	6	6	\$15,000
2	Trailhead Kiosk	0	8	8	40	0	0	4	\$4,000
3	Promotional Materials	2	8	0	64	0	2	80	\$15,000
4	Trailside Business Technical Assistance	2	40	0	0	0	40	0	\$8,400
IMPLEMENTATION PHASE TOTAL									\$42,400
TOTAL PROFESSIONAL FEES									\$76,000
TOTAL EXPENSES (includes travel, reprographics)									\$2,000
TOTAL PROJECT COST OF SERVICES									\$78,000