



## National Life Trail Project Underway

Thanks to a successful collaboration of public, private, and community-based organizations, a safe and accessible pedestrian connection between downtown Montpelier and the National Life complex and adjacent residential neighborhood will soon become a reality.

On Tuesday, July 26th, the commencement of this much-awaited project was celebrated at a ceremonial groundbreaking ceremony, co-hosted by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC), the City of Montpelier and the National Life Group.

Until now, employees at the National Life complex and residents of the adjacent Northfield Street neighborhood wanting to walk into Montpelier's downtown had to choose between following a mile-long route along the side of Northfield Street, or taking a makeshift path straight down the hill, fondly known as the "Goat Path." Neither choice provided safe or accessible passage. The new trail will transform this tiny, treacherous path into a beautiful, woodchip covered trail and connect the city's largest office building and the Northfield Street neighborhood with the downtown area.

This project meets an important community need and falls squarely within the VTrans mission. VTrans is committed to supporting innovative projects that encourage alternative modes of transportation for Vermonters, and encouraging pedestrian travel is one way that VTrans can help to discourage sprawl, reduce fossil fuel emissions, and encourage a healthy lifestyle. VTrans is sponsoring a VYCC crew that started work last week at the intersection of Route 2 and Northfield Street with the construction of safe and long-lasting stone steps. It is anticipated that the trail will be completed in 2012.

Now celebrating its 15th season, the VTrans Youth Corps is a youth training, education and paid employment program, that is co-sponsored by VTrans and FHWA, in partnership with the VYCC. Each year, the program employs more than 50 youth who complete more than one dozen community-based projects all over the state on rail trails, community recreation areas, and other high visibility transportation enhancement projects. VTrans welcomes this chance to introduce young people to the value of community service and the many rewarding careers in the transportation industry.