

## **DISCONTINUANCE OF CLASS 4 HIGHWAYS AND TRAILS**

### **Philosophy:**

Class 4 town highways often provide some of the best opportunities in Vermont for public right-of-way uses, including recreation opportunities, access for forest management activities and firefighting, and access to agricultural lands. They often serve as important links to more developed trail systems, such as snowmobile corridor trails and long-distance horseback riding trails. They may also provide important access to public lands, such as state forests. Finally, they could lay the foundation for multi-purpose “greenways” for towns and regions.

As the state becomes more developed, these rights-of-way will become ever more valuable as multi-use public corridors.

### **Policy:**

It is the policy of the Department to encourage municipalities, where appropriate, to continue class 4 town roads as public rights-of-way, serving a variety of important public uses such as recreation, access for forest management, access to agricultural lands, and travel-ways for private property protection.

### **Procedure for Implementation:**

Pursuant to 19 V.S.A. §775, town selectmen must notify the Department when they have filed a petition to discontinue a highway.

When the Department receives notice this way or otherwise, the Commissioner will coordinate a response with the appropriate central office and District/Regional staffs. If necessary, District/Regional staff may be requested to attend the public hearing.

Depending on the highway’s relationship to state lands, the procedure will then take one of two courses:

- 1) **Class 4 highways directly connecting to or traveling through state-owned lands.** The Department will work actively with the towns to encourage and support them in retaining Class 4 highway status or, where such roads are discontinued, in reclassifying them to “trails”, thereby maintaining the right-of-way for public use.
- 2) **Class 4 highways not directly connecting to or traveling through state lands.** The Department will work with appropriate groups to encourage retention of these rights-of-way; the groups, in turn, can work with the towns (for example, where there is a recreation trail issue, the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council might be involved). In such cases, the Commissioner will task the staff to notify the appropriate interest group(s), for further action on their part.

The Department will encourage towns to notify and involve interested parties in the process, including adjacent landowners.

*Jonathan L. Wood, Commissioner*

Effective Date of Second Revision: August 24, 2007

Effective Date of First Revision: November 16, 1992

Original Effective Date: May 15, 1991.