

Farmington Valley Trails Council

Greenway News

Dedicated to building, maintaining and beautifying multi-use trails

June, 2015—Volume 15—Issue 1



www.fvgreenway.org

President's Letter

Spring came and went! But during that period we had another successful Clean-Up Day on April 12th, were a sponsor of the Kevin Adorno Memorial Ride in April, had a great turn out for our Ride the Loop event, and a very successful National Trails Day Ride on the 6th. We have had multiple trailside tables set up and pitched the new FVTC tent at a variety of events. We will continue to have a ride a month – keep an eye on the “events” section of www.fvgreenway.org. Thanks as always to all of our great volunteers who make these things happen.

In at least partial answer to all of your questions about the impressive amount of design and construction along the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail,

(cont. page 3)

State of the Trails 2015

Membership

The FVTC is only as strong as its membership.

If you are not a member, please consider becoming one.

Why?

Tireless advocacy for new trails and connections.

Maintenance and beautification of existing trails.

Website, newsletters, folding maps, and informational papers.

Volunteer opportunities like Clean-Up Day.

Monthly rides.

And so much more!!

The CT Dept. of Transportation (CTDOT) is aggressively acting to close the remaining gaps in a variety of trail systems in CT. They have identified “spine” trails, i.e. the East Coast Greenway (ECG), of which the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) is by far the most completed.

Almost all of the multi-use trails in CT have been built with federal Transportation Enhancement (TE) funding. For over 20 years this approximately \$9 million in funding per year has been intermittently doled out to a few of the 169 individual municipalities in the state. For all of that period those municipalities had to raise the 20% of project funding that the TE dollars did not cover. Accordingly, the easier and less expensive pieces of our trail puzzle were the first to be completed. The harder sections, in particular where the railroad right of way (ROW) has been lost, or the railroad itself refuses to make a deal, or there are serious engineering issues, are left. Cheshire, due to costs, voted down the construction of the FCHT gaps in town a number of times. Plainville was a non-starter. It was apparent that past policy in our State was having a chilling effect on completion of our trails.

The FVTC wishes to publicly thank CTDOT for its recent reversal of policy and its willingness to take on increasingly difficult projects. The first change in policy is providing State funding for much of the 20% local construction match. Combined with in-kind work refunds to the town, this creates a situation in which there is no longer a major funding gap for a town to come up with and vote on. Just this policy change has had an enormous impact on trail planning. The second important new idea is CTDOT internally designing certain portions of the trail system itself. An example of this new policy is the design of Sections 1 and 3 of the 4.7-mile Cheshire gap.

We don't have room to write about the whole state so focus will be on more local projects related to the FCHT and the ECG - from north to south:

Farmington – The FCHT extension south will be a standard width paved multi-use trail on the ROW now owned by CTDOT. From Red Oak Hill Rd. it will cross New Britain Ave. and run about 2.2 miles inside Northwest Drive in Plainville. The proposed alignment includes a 135' separately designed prefabricated bridge on new abutments over Route 6, an at-grade crossing of Hyde Road and a parking lot with a pavilion adjacent to Northwest Drive. The Town is at 80% design and will inspect the project while under construction. CTDOT has agreed that funding will be 80% federal and 20% State funds. Farmington is thrilled about the pace of the design process and

(cont. page 4)



Mulched Shoulders

TRAIL AMBASSADORS

The FVTC Trail Ambassador Program will be starting up again in June. We have had about a dozen people express interest in being a Trail Ambassador.

FVTC-approved Ambassadors will act as guides, keepers of historical and modern facts, provide handouts such as rules and etiquette information as well as maps, blinkies, bells and water bottles.

Ambassadors will increase awareness about the FVTC, including funding for construction, maintenance, amenities and encourage volunteerism in our organization.

But most importantly, they will promote the **SAFE** use of the trails through proper trail etiquette.

Look for the green vests!!!!

Kudos to the Town of East Granby for sprucing up their trail “shoulders” with mulch. Not only does it look great, it cuts down on weeds, which decreases the cost of mowing and the need for environmentally unfriendly chemical defoliant. It makes it safer for riders because brush will not grow up and spill over onto the trail, as well as allowing safe areas off the trail to stay out of traffic. **The FVTC would like to see our towns on the trail system adopt this practice.**

-Rich Rowlenon



FVTC Donates Collinsville Improvements

The Town of Canton is revitalizing Collinsville Center with a federal Main Street grant. The beautification includes FVTC donation of a new information kiosk, and in partnership with the Valley YMCA, an American with Disabilities Act compliant drinking

fountain that will be placed near-by LaSalle Market. The FVTC’s share was \$2,300, with the Canton Community Health Fund committing \$4,000. Our special thanks to Brenda Stiegman who headed up the project. Having previously donated the popular Sperry Park fountain, the FVTC Board passed a resolution stating that the Council plans to donate one water fountain a year to one town along the trail system. This initiative comes in conjunction with a generous grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. We look forward to working with our area towns to site these new “hydration stations” in the next few years.



Congratulations!

Simsbury was named a Silver “Bicycle Friendly Community” by the *League of American Bicyclists*.



New Parking Lot and Kiosk in Suffield



Back a few years ago, the FVTC was able to secure a grant of \$55,000 from Coca-Cola North America through the auspices of the Rails to Trails Conservancy. This grant has helped to build the new parking lot at Phelps Road in Suffield. An additional donation of an information kiosk from the FVTC has added substantially to the project. The grant will include a granite marker at the State line with Massachusetts with “Suffield” and “Southwick” on its respective sides. Our thanks go to FVTC board member and Suffield resident Al Ryan and Suffield Town Engineer Gerry Turbet, along with the Town for their critical involvement in making this project a success.

President's Letter, Cont.

please see “State of the Trails 2015” in this edition.

I'm sure that all of you will be pleased that the River Trail in Burlington has been reconstructed. Our thanks to CTDOT, the Town, and the contractor, who worked hard to make the completion date. It is once again one of the most spectacular trails in New England. The next most asked question is what's going on with Plainville. It is with great pleasure that I report that the hunt for a qualified consultant to pick the FINAL trail alignment is on. The FVTC and Plainville Greenway Alliance have seats at the table to not only help pick that consultant but to help oversee the project. We will keep you all apprised of any events in the months ahead for this important study.

Trail improvement projects continue onward. Our Maintenance Fund is approaching area towns that have a need for replacement fencing with an offer of matching grants. We will be initiating a program to install “A Water Fountain a Year” along the trail system. We are installing four benches as we speak. The transformation of downtown Collinsville has been exciting to watch...our information kiosk has gone up, and soon the new water fountain will too. Suffield's parking lot at Phelps Road is also complete. Please note the articles on the pages nearby on those initiatives.

Many of you are aware that I spend time around the state on bicycle and pedestrian issues. I continue on as the Chairman of the Connecticut Greenways Council, the Chair of the CT Committee of the East Coast Greenway Alliance, and a member of many area boards. Many of those contacts have provided useful insights and ideas that distill directly into the works of the FVTC. As always, look to our Website for current information (and a new front-page update). What a great time to be a Member of the FVTC! So many things are coming to fruition and so many remain to be done. It couldn't be better.

FRIENDS



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State of the Trails 2015

estimates that the project will go to bid in December of this year. Cost estimates including the bridge are running in the \$5 million range.

Plainville –The FCHT in Plainville is the last piece in the State that does not have a defined route. Much of the rail line is still in use and is owned and operated by Pan Am Southern Railway (Pan Am). Pan Am currently will only allow a deal for the least desirable portion of its ROW. The Plainville Greenway Alliance and the FVTC have been an integral part of the writing of the request for proposals for a Planning Study for a final trail alignment through town. The planning study will be administered by CROCOG and the RFQ for the selection of the consultant has been released, due back in mid-June. The study is due to be completed in late 2016.

Southington – Construction in the south is complete to Cheshire. In process is a smaller project running from Hart/Curtiss St. to Lazy Lane. This includes the brownfield SRS parcel in part. Arcadis Engineering has been hired by SRS to complete the trail design. Construction is funded and will complete in 2015.

The larger remaining project will be standard width paved, multi-use trail of approximately 1.3 miles along the former railroad ROW. The CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) owns 0.6 miles and Pan Am Railways owns 0.7 miles of the total project ROW. DEEP has just completed a bridge rehabilitation on its land. Pan Am is willing to sell its piece at fair market value. The alignment will be from Lazy Lane in the south, crossing the Quinnipiac River. It will then cross streets at their existing intersections via at-grade facilities. It will end at the north side of West Queen Street, connecting to existing sidewalks. Good news may be coming regarding abutting landowners to the north along a proposed route which could allow an extension all the way to Town Line Road.

Like Farmington, the Town will be designing the project under an agreement with CTDOT that includes advertising and inspecting the construction phase. The project should go to bid in November with an estimated cost of \$1.8 million.

Cheshire – This 4.7 mile gap is to be completed in three sections starting in 2015 with the middle Section #2, West Main to Jarvis St. in the center of the gap. This section is 2.23 miles. Next is Section 1, 2.5 miles in 2016; and finally a very difficult .66 miles in 2017. Design is complete for the first two sections.

Section 2. The project is located along a DEEP owned railroad grade between RT 68 and RT70 to just north of Jarvis Street. Design elements include a stone dust shoulder, culvert repair/installation, benches, lighting, landscaping, signage, parking lot, prefabricated bridge and crosswalks including a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon system (the first of its kind in CT allowing pedestrian activated red lights) for the West Main Street crossing. Milone & McBroom was hired by the town to design the project paid for with DEEP Recreational Trails Grant funds. The construction of this project was awarded to H.I. Stone & Sons, Inc. for \$2,571,616. Construction began in April 2015.

Section 1. Beginning at Jarvis Street, this project will meet the current construction and extend north to the Southington Town Line, a total distance of 2.5 miles. The trail will be constructed over the abandoned railroad corridor where it will pass over three existing bridges, including the bridge over I-691. The estimated construction cost for this project is \$4.5 million. The project is being advertised in May 2015 and its construction is scheduled to begin late summer 2015 and to be completed in the fall of 2016.

Section 3. Beginning at Cornwall Avenue, this will be the last gap to be completed in Cheshire creating a 25-mile continuous trail almost to Plainville to a parking lot at West Main Street, .66 miles in total. This section of the trail has proven to be one of the most difficult to design. Dalton Industries has claimed rights to the ROW, and rather than attempt to build within their compound, an alignment is envisioned that will cross



The horizontal bar on a men's bike is there for structural integrity.

Early on, frame materials could be sketchy at best, and men were much heavier than women....

State of the Trails 2015

Willow Brook, curving around within the swamp on an elevated precast concrete boardwalk. Design is being completed within CTDOT, and permitting issues remain. CTDOT estimated cost is \$6.7 million, going to bid in late 2016 for completion in the fall of 2017.

New Haven – The FCHT Phase IV project is the southernmost portion ending at mile 0 at Long Wharf. The project is unique in the trail system in that it traverses below grade through tunnels in an urban environment. CTDOT and the City of New Haven want this project to be world-class. It begins at the completed trail at Yale University, below grade until it ramps up at the intersection of Orange and Grove Streets. The trail then becomes an on-road facility. A cycle track will separate bicycle traffic from pedestrians along Water Street. The awarded contract will help construct an independent multi-use path and a cycle track along Brewery Street, Sargents Drive and Canal Dock Road. Construction has been held up as the City finalizes easement negotiations. Current estimates are that it will go to bid this August, 2015 at a cost of \$6.9 million.

More to come in the next edition—Bruce Donald

Chart I. June, 2015

41.7 completed miles of the multi-use Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) bisect Connecticut from New Haven to Suffield. This is the spine of the ECG in CT. It attracts hundreds of thousands of users per year, and only 28% remains to be built

Farmington Canal Heritage Trail

| <u>Town</u> | <u>Distance</u> | <u>Completed</u> | <u>Remaining</u> | <u>Designed</u> | <u>Done</u> |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Northampton | 3.5 | 3.5 | 0 | | 100 |
| Easthampton | 3.7 | 3.7 | 0 | | 100 |
| Southampton | 3.9 | 0 | 3.9 | | 0 |
| Westfield | 7.4 | 1.1 | 6.3 | 0.9 | 15 |
| Southwick | 6.1 | 6.1 | 0 | | 100 |
| Total (MA) | 24.6 | 14.4 | 10.2 | 0.9 | 58.5% |
| New Haven | 3.4 | 1.8 | 1.6 | 0.3 | 47 |
| Hamden | 9.5 | 9.5 | 0 | | 100 |
| Cheshire | 7.1 | 2.4 | 4.7 | 4.0 | 34 |
| Southington | 6.6 | 4.0 | 2.6 | 0.6 | 61 |
| Plainville | 4.3 | 0 | 4.3 | 0 | 0 |
| Farmington | 4.8 | 2.3 | 2.5 | 1.9 | 48 |
| Avon | 4.7 | 4.7 | 0 | | 100 |
| Simsbury | 7.5 | 7.5 | 0 | | 100 |
| East Granby | 5.3 | 5.3 | 0 | | 100 |
| Granby | 1.1 | 1.1 | 0 | | 100 |
| Suffield | 1.2 | 1.2 | 0 | | 100 |
| Total (CT) | 55.5 | 39.8 | 15.7 | 6.8 | 72% |
| TOTAL | 80.1 | 54.2 | 25.9 | 7.7 | 68% |

Farmington River Trail

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Farmington | 3.7 | 3.7 | 0 | | 100 |
| Burlington | 2.3 | 2.3 | 0 | | 100 |
| Canton | 4.3 | 3.1 | 1.2 | 0.2 | 72 |
| Simsbury | 5.8 | 1.7 | 3.1 | | 29 |
| TOTAL | 16.1 | 10.8 | 4.3 | 0.2 | 67% |



Women wore dresses in the dawn of cycling. No pants! They could not lift their leg over a bar (risking scandalous displays) hence the slanted bar protecting their virtue— if not their hems.

GREENWAY NEWS

Become a Member!

This publication is written and formatted by volunteers. The Farmington Valley Trails Council is a 501 (c)(3) CT not-for-profit corporation dedicated to advocacy, education, beautification and building multi-use trails in the Farmington Valley of Connecticut. Contributions to the FVTC are generally tax-deductible. This newsletter is available electronically, or printed and distributed by our friends at FAVARH.

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Check desired box(s) and enclose membership fee:

- ☐ \$15 Senior 65+ / Junior under 18
- ☐ \$20 Single
- ☐ \$30 Family
- ☐ \$100 Friend
- ☐ \$500 Sustaining Member
- ☐ \$1,000 Lifetime Benefactor
- ☐ Corporate Matching Donation

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Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Would you like to be contacted for volunteer opportunities? Y / N

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