

# Farmington Valley Trails Council *Greenway News*

*Dedicated to building, maintaining and beautifying multi-use trails*

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[www.FCHTrail.org](http://www.FCHTrail.org)

## President's Letter

Summer is here and there's no better time to ride (or for those who ride year-round time to shed all those extra layers of clothing), walk, and skate on the trail. I am honored to be the newest president of the Farmington Valley Trails Council, and humbled by all the work of those who came before me. Although there are many new parts of the trail and more sections still to be created, much of the trail is close to 25 years old and those parts are showing their age and need repairs and upkeep. Technology for designing and creating new trails improves every year, so it is hoped that present-day repairs will last longer than 25 years. Right now, though, there are several stretches of the trail that are in a growing need of immediate repair.

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## Membership

**The FVTC is only as strong as its membership.**

**If you are not a member, please consider joining us today.**

**Why join the Farmington Valley Trails Council? Here are a few reasons:**

- **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.**
- **Regular rides.**
- **And so much more!**

## Construction Begins on Final Section of Cheshire Trail

On April 7, 2017 Connecticut DOT Commissioner James P. Redeker, DEEP Commissioner Robert Klee, Town Manager Michael Milone, and other state and local officials held a ceremonial groundbreaking in Cheshire for the last link in a continuous 23-mile section of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail between New Haven and Southington.

The new section, also part of the East Coast Greenway, runs from Cornwell Avenue to West Main Street. It includes a 12-foot wide pavement and a precast concrete boardwalk style structure to cross over wetlands, as well as pedestrian bridges to cross Willow Brook at two locations. Fencing and landscaping will also be provided along the trail as needed. Other amenities will include a restroom, bike lockers, park benches and picnic tables to provide rest areas for trail users. There will also be a 10-space parking lot off Railroad Avenue.

The \$4.48 million project is being undertaken by Richards Corporation of Terryville, Connecticut, and is expected to be completed in the fall of 2018.

"It is exciting to get the final link done," said Commissioner Redeker. "We are committed to completing the East Coast Greenway through Connecticut and this beautiful trail in Cheshire is an excellent illustration of that commitment. Projects like these enhance the quality of life in our state and help ensure a strong transportation and economic future."

"DEEP is pleased to add this final section in Cheshire to Connecticut's growing and appealing trail system. It marks the end of decades of negotiations and the continuation of our successful partnerships with both the Town of Cheshire and the CT DOT," said Commissioner Klee. "Importantly, this section will greatly enhance our trail user's experience taking them off roads and through a safe, unique natural environment that we hope will inspire stewardship."

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## Alert When Passing

As our trails become more popular, the increased number of users—walkers, runners, and cyclists alike—make it even more important to remember a key rule of multi-use trails: **alert when passing.**

Signs along the trail remind users of this guideline. In Farmington, Simsbury, and other towns, green and white signs announce “Cyclists Must Alert When Passing.”



This rule applies to *all* trail users, but is especially important for faster-moving cyclists when passing slower-moving walkers or runners. Cyclists can use a bell or call out words to the effect of “I’m passing on your left.”

Slower-moving trail users also have a responsibility to remain alert and responsive while on the trail. If wearing headphones, volume should be low enough to allow the user to hear voices and bells of approaching cyclists. And all trail users should stay to the right side of the trail. If walking, running, or bicycling side-by-side (when conditions allow), if another user announces the intention to pass, users should move into single file formation.

A bicycle bell is a friendly and non-threatening method of communicating. A variety of bells are available, including models suitable for mounting on thicker handlebars of road bicycles with plastic ratchet straps and models that mount on the stem post. Check your local bicycle shop or online retailers for this inexpensive but essential safety option for your bicycle.

—Doug Gerlach, LCI

## Cheshire Trail Construction, Continued

“We are extremely excited at the near completion of this trail link and especially grateful to Commissioner Redeker and his great staff at the DOT for making this a reality,” said Town Manager Milone. “Without their intervention, this trail section, which was expected to be extended in 1995, might never have materialized due to the confluence of major obstacles that we encountered.”

Bruce Donald, Tri-State Trails Coordinator for the East Coast Greenway Alliance stated, “We are once more proud to announce the closing of another gap in the 200-mile spine trail in Connecticut. This last piece in Cheshire is historic as one of the more difficult in the state, and as such represents years of planning, the tenacity of the Town of Cheshire, tireless volunteer advocacy, and a huge commitment from CT DOT.”

The East Coast Greenway (ECG) winds some 198 miles through Connecticut, of which 55 percent – more than 100 miles – has been completed. The state is in the middle of a five-year Statewide Trail Program to fill the gaps along the ECG. The entire ECG runs 3,000 miles from Key West, Florida, to Calais, Maine. More on the ECG can be found at [www.greenway.org](http://www.greenway.org). The Farmington Canal Heritage Trail runs 84 miles, from New Haven to Northampton, Massachusetts.

## President’s Letter, Continued

Many trail users assume that maintenance is the responsibility of the towns through which the trail travels. Town employees, in fact, do the repaving, repairing, tree cutting, and the like. Unfortunately, this means that repair and maintenance is an issue subject to fiscal constraints just like everything else in a town’s budget.



When a town has to cut costs, an obvious choice is to cut trail maintenance. This is why the Farmington Valley Trails Council and its members play such a crucial role. We use your membership dues and donations to offer support to towns for specific maintenance problems. For example, we raised more than \$80,000 to help East Granby finish the Salmon Brook Bridge.

We presently have no similar large project on the docket, but instead face many small maintenance issues that need your support. We do not have the money to fund them all, but one of my goals as president is to build up our maintenance account so that we have funds readily available to help keep the trails in as good shape as possible.

When you see an FVTC table on the Trail (usually once or twice a month in the summer and fall) always stop by and talk to us about the Trail. We love getting your input and insights.

Our web site ([www.FCHTrail.org](http://www.FCHTrail.org)) is also a wealth of information that you should check regularly.

—Barbara Collins, [president@fvgreenway.org](mailto:president@fvgreenway.org)

## What Does the Trails Council Do?

Many people have heard of the Farmington Valley Trails Council, but what does it do? A lot!

FVTC promotes rails to trails “linear parks” throughout Connecticut. Founded in 1992, FVTC advocates for trails in towns throughout central Connecticut. In the 1960s, many local railroads ceased operating as the interstate highway system took away rail passengers and freight. As the rail rights of way were abandoned, portions were converted into trails for biking, walking, running, rollerblading, and dog walking. FVTC advocated for these trails, and today, there are only three gaps in a trail that runs from Long Wharf in New Haven to the Massachusetts border and beyond into Westfield, MA. FVTC is working to get local towns and the State of Connecticut to plan and build trails to fill these remaining gaps. The New Haven gap is about to go out to bid. The Plainville gap is currently the subject of a \$300,000 feasibility study.

FVTC interacts with local towns to make sure the trails are properly maintained and cleared of trash and overgrown weeds and trees. Every year, FVTC holds a Trail Cleanup event which clears trash and weeds from 38 miles of trails in Central and Northern Connecticut. This April,



more than 200 volunteers participated and enjoyed an appreciation cookout at Flamig Farm in West Simsbury. Additionally this year, the Cleanup went statewide. FVTC partnered with the Farmington Canal Rails To Trails Association to extend the cleanup range from New Haven all the way north to the Massachusetts border.

FVTC advocates for repairs to damaged and worn out trail sections. FVTC worked for a number of years to get repairs made to the portion of the River Trail in Burlington. Completed more than a year ago, it is now one of the most scenic areas of the trails in Connecticut.

FVTC also works to add amenities to the trails. We have installed dozens of benches along the trails over the years, with a goal of having one bench on each quarter-mile of trail. FVTC has a goal of funding one trail water fountain and at least one bicycle repair station per year for the trails. Repair stations in Collinsville, East Granby, and Suffield have already been installed.

Connecticut residents and outside guests use the trail hundreds of thousands of times each year, as evidenced by data collected by FVTC using laser counters along the trails. Consider joining FVTC as a member and support the trails. Go to our website at [www.FCHTrail.org](http://www.FCHTrail.org) and join or renew your membership today!

## FVTC FRIENDS



## FVTC DIRECTORS

**Barbara Collins, President**  
**Bill Matousek, Vice-President**  
**Robert Kazior, Treasurer**  
**Doug Gerlach, LCI, Secretary**

**Nancy Weiner-Anstey**  
**Bruce Donald**  
**Lisa Fernandez**  
**Joy Himmelfarb**  
**Gary Miller**  
**Diana Moody**  
**Rich Rowleson**  
**Laura Russotto**  
**Dwight Weed**



## FVTC Events

**September 9,  
Farm-to-Farm  
Ride**

**September 11,  
FVTC Board  
Meeting**

**October 16,  
FVTC Board  
Meeting**

**November 17,  
Annual Meeting  
of FVTC &  
FCRTTA**

Check the FVTC  
website for more  
events and details.



## State of the Trails 2017

**New Haven** (1.6/3.4 miles; 47% complete). The bridges at Hillhouse Ave., Temple, and Prospect Street are done. Section IV to Long Wharf is designed and funded. Abutting landowners have finally signed and the project is scheduled to go to bid this year. There is concern that the funding provided five years ago may not now cover the project, but the new cycle track just completed will be stripped out, so there may not be a shortfall.

**Hamden** (9.5 miles 100% complete). The tunnel under Skiff St. is done and farther north, the construction at the West Woods Road/Mt. Carmel Avenue intersection is now complete. The trail now runs farther to the west, away from Whitney Avenue.

**Cheshire** (6.8/7.5 miles; 91% complete). Cornwall to W. Main: CT DOT has completed preliminary design internally. Part of this work around Dalton Industries (.67 miles) will be built on an elevated boardwalk through the abutting swamp. Construction on this project is estimated to start in 2017 and end in early 2019. The West Main St. to Jarvis section, 1.5 miles in length, was completed in 2016. It includes a pedestrian crossing with a "HAWK" beacon (pedestrian activated red light) instead of a conventional traffic signal for safe passage across West Main St. Funding is in place for the Southington to Jarvis section, with design by DOT completed internally and featuring a 77-space parking lot and restrooms at the terminus.

**Southington** (4.0/6.6 miles; 61% complete). Hart/Curtiss St. to Lazy Lane (SRS parcel in part): Arcadis Engineering was hired by Solvent Recovery Services to complete trail design from pavement to pavement on this "brownfield" land. Funding is in place. Expected completion in 2017. A new bridge to the south has been constructed on DEEP land. What was two sections have been made into one from West Queen St. across Townline Road ending 1,500 feet into Plainville. The Town has completed design of this section of trail. At Center Street, demolition of the Ideal Forging site has commenced. A mixed use residential, retail and parking complex is in the works, to occupy both sides of the trail. The selected consultant will also develop a preliminary design for this segment.

**Plainville** (5.0; 0% Completed). The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) hired VHB last year to help finalize the route from the Southington border to the new

parking lot at the end of the Farmington project at Northwest Drive. Since the railroad right-of-way, the traditional route of the trail along most of the way from New Haven to Enfield, is still actively used by PanAm Railways, the planning team has been studying other options. It was finally agreed that at least 75% of the gap closure route should be off-road, and one proposed alignment has been selected and is being refined. Initial reactions from townspeople have not been encouraging, but the team hopes for better days ahead. This project also includes looking at how to connect to the CTFastrak station in downtown New Britain and to the 4.5 mile multi-use trail already alongside the busway into Newington and Elmwood.



## State of the Trails 2017, Continued

**Farmington** (5.0; 50% Completed). The 2.5-mile section south from Red Oak Hill Rd. past Northwest Dr. into Plainville is nearly complete, with only a 125-foot bridge over Rt. 6 in need of finishing touches. Plans include a terminus with 40 parking spaces and pavilion. Funding for this section came via a CT bonding initiative for the total cost of \$5.1 million, the first time in state history that the state has completely funded a section of trail without using federal money. Completion is estimated for September 2017.

**Avon** (4.7; 100% Completed). The town is in design process for a new “Town Center” through which the trail will run, avoiding the police station and providing a safer route.

**Simsbury** (7.5; 100% Completed). Funding has been approved for the western piece of the East Coast Greenway spur from the intersection of Rt10/Rt315 to Curtis Park, and completion is targeted for 2019. The section of trail from Tariffville to Bloomfield is in design.

**East Granby 5.3 & Granby 1.1** (FCHT 6.4; 100% Completed).

**Suffield** (1.2; 100% Completed).

### State of the Trails: June 2017

44.2 completed miles of the multi-use Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) bisect Connecticut from New Haven to Suffield. This is the spine of the East Coast Greenway in the state. It attracts hundreds of thousands of users per year, and only 22% remains to be built in Connecticut.

#### Farmington Canal Heritage Trail

Town	Distance	Completed	Remaining	Designed	Done
Northampton	3.5	3.5	0.0		100
Easthampton	3.7	3.7	0.0		100
Southampton	3.9	0.0	3.9	0.0	0
Westfield	7.4	2.6	4.8	0.9	35
Southwick	6.2	6.1	0.0		100
<b>Total (MA)</b>	<b>24.6</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>58.5%</b>
New Haven	3.4	1.8	1.6	0.3	47
Hamden	9.5	9.5	0.0		100
Cheshire	7.5	6.8	0.7	0.7	91
Southington	6.6	4.0	2.6	0.6	61
Plainville	5.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	0
Farmington	4.8	2.3	2.5	2.5	48
Avon	4.7	4.7	0.0		100
Simsbury	7.5	7.5	0.0		100
East Granby	5.3	5.3	0.0		100
Granby	1.1	1.1	0.0		100
Suffield	1.2	1.2	0.0		100
<b>Total (CT)</b>	<b>56.6</b>	<b>44.2</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>Total (MA/CT)</b>	<b>81.3</b>	<b>60.1</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>74%</b>

#### Farmington River Trail

Farmington	3.7	3.7	0.0		100
Burlington	2.3	2.3	0.0		100
Canton	4.3	3.1	1.2	0.2	72
Simsbury	5.8	1.7	3.1		29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>67%</b>

### New Trail Bridge over Route 6

A key feature of the stretch of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail currently under construction from Red Oak Hill Rd. in Farmington south to Northwest Dr. in Plainville is a bridge over US Rt. 6 near the New Britain Ave. intersection. This bridge will allow trail users to avoid crossing the very busy Rt. 6 on the road.

The bridge makes use of abutments that supported the railroad bridge that previously was in place at that location. The bridge itself was fabricated off-site in four components, which were delivered to the location, connected, and then raised into place by crane one night in July. Traffic was re-routed during the installation.



Crews are still working on the final details of the bridge and the connecting trail sections. Once complete, the new stretch of the FCH trail will be dedicated and opened to users, hopefully in September 2017.

## GREENWAY NEWS

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 for, education about, beautification of, and building multi-use trails in Connecticut's Farmington Valley. 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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**On your handheld device:  
[www.fchtrail.org](http://www.fchtrail.org)**

## Become a Member!



Check desired box(es) and enclose membership fee:

- ☐ \$20 Senior 65+ / Junior under 18
- ☐ \$25 Single
- ☐ \$40 Family
- ☐ \$100 Friend
- ☐ \$250 Corporate
- ☐ \$500 Sustaining Member
- ☐ \$1,000 Lifetime Benefactor
- ☐ Corporate Matching Donation

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to be contacted for volunteer opportunities? Yes / No

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