

Farmington Valley Trails Council Greenway News

Dedicated to building, maintaining and beautifying multi-use trails

March, 2013—Volume 13—Issue 1

President's Letter



www.fvgreenway.org

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Did You Know?

It has been proven in Europe that as cycling and walking increase, motorist initiated accidents and injuries decline, creating an *inverse relationship*.

With spring on the horizon, I write of just a few of the many initiatives either underway or brewing here at the FVTC. Firstly, to finish off 2012, our \$7,500 matching grant to Farmington for fencing repair was used in the late fall to great effect on the Canal Heritage Trail. We also granted \$3,000 to Bike/Walk CT to help them with their lobbying (on behalf of our trail system) and educational efforts.

For 2013, it is critical that **Burlington** repaves their section of the River Trail. They have most of the money needed and await ConnDOT and Town approvals as well as designs for root abatement and shoulder clearing. We stand ready to help the town if covering the inevitable shortfall in funding is needed. Also critical is the Canal Heritage Trail south in Farmington (underway at the Town level). In **Plainville**, it is five years and counting for the state to buy the right of way into the Town Center. With that uncertainty, the part of trail slated for Norton Park will be focused on instead to provide the Town with its first piece of multi-use trail to showcase things to come. Other news:

- Another 20,000 fully updated folding maps have been printed and are ready for distribution.
- Save the date for the 16th annual **Trails in Motion** taking place on June 1st, National Trails Day. See the Website for more information and registration.
- The 20th Anniversary FVTC greeting center in downtown Collinsville will be constructed, providing a new information kiosk and seating.
- The parking lot at Phelps Road in Suffield will be constructed in 2013. It will include an information kiosk and a separate granite state-line border crossing monument.

Our Website continues to be very popular, averaging over 8,000 visitors per month, and we actively rotate and create content. Note the **Frequently Asked Questions** to the right on the Home Page. Our Website hand-held application is complete for both i-Phones and Droids. It has mapping with a "you are here" feature built in and a great section for reporting trail problems and hazards for each town the trail goes through. Very soon we will have an new **e-commerce section** set up and you can get hats, water bottles and the very popular FVTC Bike Jersey online. Let me know if you feel we should offer some other useful items.

(cont.)

The New Trail Map is Out

The Farmington Canal Heritage Trail & Farmington River Trail folding map and guide has just been revised. The 2013-2014 edition incorporates the latest proposed route through New Haven to Long Wharf as well as identifying trail sections which have been completed since the last map was published. Please note our "Helmets Save Lives" motto on the back. We are pleased to partner once again with our sister organization the Farmington Canal Rail-to-Trail Association on all aspects of the production.

The Map & Guide is available at local bike and sport shops for a donation of \$1.00. The map is also free with your membership in the Farmington Valley Trails Council. Membership applications may be found in the map or at www.fvgreenway.org. You will also be able to purchase the maps on our new e-commerce section very soon.



CT Bike Walk Summit



Bike/Walk CT is once again hosting the Summit at Yale University's Linsly-Chittenden Hall, 63 High Street, New Haven, CT on Saturday, April 27th. The object is to bring people from all over the state to talk about improving bicycling and walking. The FVTC has attended for a number of years now and it has always taught us a thing or two and helped us interact with fellow advocates.

The event starts at 9:00 am and runs until 2:30 pm with an optional walking or biking tour and a social hour to follow. There are three plenary sessions, two breakout sessions, continental breakfast and lunch. Advance registration is required. Bill Nesper, Vice President of the League of American Bicyclists will speak on the Bike Friendly America Program, and keynote speaker Jeff Olson, Principal of Alta Planning & Design (one of the largest bicycling facilities planners in the country) and author of "The Third Mode: Towards a Green Society" will speak as well.

Other program highlights include how to attack the application process for Bike Firendly Communities, Businesses and Universities. There is a session on Complete Streets Engineering which is a key component of bike and walk friendly communities. The ins and outs of project funding will be discussed.

Further information and registration can be found at www.bikewalkct.org or contact Kelly Kennedy at bikewalkct@bikewalkct.org.

Trail-Wide Clean-Up Day

Our 4th annual Trail-Wide Clean-Up Day is on **Sunday, April 7th** from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. (The rain date is Sunday, April 14th). The 2012 Clean-Up Day drew nearly 175 volunteers last year at four staging areas across the eight towns in the Farmington Valley that encompass the 22.4-mile northern part of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. Volunteers will also clean up the Farmington River Trail, which has almost 10.2 miles of paved trail.

FVTC President R. Bruce Donald noted: *"Last year, we expanded the trail cleanup to cover the newly completed trail section in Canton. Our volunteers worked hard to clear 12 cubic yards of trash and prepare the trails for use by bike riders, walkers, runners and the public at large."*

Volunteers will cover a specific 1-mile stretch of the trail from one of four staging areas: The Brickyard Trail Shelter on Brickyard Road in Farmington; Iron Horse Blvd. in Simsbury; the River Trail Pavilion at RT 4 in Unionville and Copper Hill Road in Granby. Based on last year's feedback, we are asking volunteers to bring brooms, rakes and clippers.

We will host a thank-you barbeque after the event at Flamig Farm for the day's volunteers. See you there!

Please see www.fvgreenway.org for information and volunteer registration.

Merritt Parkway Trail Update

While it could be said that the proposed Merritt Parkway Trail is not in our bailiwick, it does directly affect us as the eventual connecting portion of the East Coast Greenway and the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (at Long Wharf in New Haven). Most importantly however, it is a major undertaking that would cement Connecticut's status as bike-friendly if constructed. This is of course a major acid test for political consensus and a lot to ask from a state that has only rarely designated funds to build trails.

Much hay was made of the 2011 Scenic Byways grant award received by ConnDOT to study the feasibility of the trail from Greenwich to Stratford. Last year ConnDOT conducted a series of workshops in towns along the corridor, walked through much of it, and identified some of the topographic challenges that this project faces. They have returned to their Berlin Turnpike offices to analyze their findings and prepare for more meetings in 2013 to propose initial findings.

The rumors that the original design of the Merritt Parkway included a bridle path are true, but that element of the design was eliminated prior to construction. Yet a bridle path did exist: Shorter stretches were linked with logging trails, informal footpaths, and old woods roads to create a 37-mile bridle path. It was used year-round in the 1930s and early 1940s. In 1946, the State of Connecticut Merritt Parkway Commission, in its 1946 booklet, "Rules and Regulations Governing the Use of the Merritt Parkway", codified the use of these trails by clearly stating "Rule 11: Equestrians are permitted on the bridle paths of the Merritt Parkway."

We here have the luxury of a finished multi-use trail connecting communities. The Merritt Parkway Trail will be a wonderful active-transportation resource in Southern Connecticut and we urge our readers to support the project by checking out the Merritt Parkway Trail Alliance. The website: www.merrittparkwaytrail.org where you can subscribe to their newsletter, or on Facebook: www.facebook.com/merrittparkwaytrailalliance and "like" it so that you can get updates.

The Martin Neib Memorial

If you've been on Copper Hill Road in East Granby you might have seen a bright yellow bike sculpture catch your attention as you approached the Canal Trail crossing. The bike sculpture is not just whimsical art – it's a functional bike rack, an ad for the trail, and a tribute to Martin Nieb.

A Granby resident, Martin was an avid user of the trail from the days when the greenway was still a dirt path through the woods, fields and marshes of Suffield and East Granby. Year round, Martin would begin his day walking the trail with his dog, becoming friends with others who shared this early morning ritual. Once the trail was paved, Martin logged thousands of miles on the Farmington Valley Greenway, waving or shouting a "Hello!" to others he passed on his bike.

As much as Martin benefited from the trail, the trail benefited from him. He routinely picked up trash or moved aside a fallen limb to keep the trail clear. Martin nurtured a spirit of community by introducing frequent trail-goers to each other. After 2011's freak Halloween storm littered the trail with fallen trees, Martin rallied a small team armed with ropes and chainsaws to clear a path from Phelps Road to Copper Hill Road.

Not long after that snowstorm cleanup day, Martin was diagnosed with Stage 4 Melanoma. Just 6 months later in May 2012, Martin passed away. Since the trail was such a large part of Martin's life, it was natural that his co-workers, friends, and fellow trail-goers decided to honor his life with a memorial along the trail. After contacting the FVTC, the group decided on an installation in East Granby. Raising close to \$2000, Martin's friends purchased the bike sculpture, a granite bench, and made a donation to the Melanoma Foundation.

Nancy Lawton, East Granby's Town & Recreation director, was a tireless ally in making the memorial a reality. The town donated the installation services and Nancy coordinated with other town staff to ensure that the work proceeded smoothly and swiftly. On a beautiful Sunday afternoon in September, more than 30 of Martin's friends and family gathered along the trail to dedicate the memorials to Martin.

The next time you walk or ride this section of the trail, stop by the bike rack and then head north .5 mile into the marsh. Along the west side of the trail, near a culvert where turtles like rest on logs to soak up the sun, you'll see Martin Nieb's bench inscribed with his friends' sentiment – "*His spirit rides on in our hearts*".

President's Letter, Cont.

New initiatives include the purchase of at least two new laser counters to monitor trail usage. We look forward to producing an advanced usage/economic study for our area towns. And although the idea is in its early stages, we are proposing to create a **Trail Ambassador Program**, where trained volunteers (along with your board of directors and myself) would rove around the trails armed with a package of information including a training manual, maps, and other giveaways. We would provide a reflective vest, FVTC hat and ID. Look for more information on the Website if you wish to become an Ambassador.

You may have noticed that a major portion of the FVTC's Business Plan is to engage our membership and the public at large in volunteer projects like Clean-Up Day, Trails in Motion, and the new Ambassador Program. We will continue to initiate such programs and we urge your support on one of our Committees or in any other way you think you can help us. Please see the "FAQ's" on the home page or the Website for details on our Committees and their needs.

We are only the sum of our parts, and I deeply appreciate the dedication of our members, volunteers and friends. Email me at president@fvgreenway.org.

MORE STUFF

We're a proud sponsor of:
Simsbury Free Bike

Opens May 1 - (860) 841-2611
simsburyfreebike@gmail.com

Ride the 6.3 miles of the Southwick, MA Rail Trail and the 1 mile of the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail in Westfield, MA. that extend north from the CT line in Suffield. Parking in Westfield is on Shaker Rd.

The East Coast Greenway Spring Meeting is taking place on April 27th in Baltimore, MD this year. See www.greenway.org for info.

Check out the Shoreline Greenway Trail at www.railstotrails.org/news/features/

FVTC DIRECTORS**

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*New Board Members

** All positions expire in 2013



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

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