

Farmington Valley Trails Council Greenway News

Dedicated to building, maintaining and beautifying multi-use trails

May, 2014—Volume 14—Issue 1

President's Letter



www.fvgreenway.org

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Happy spring! We had a successful Clean-Up Day on April 6th. Kudos to Diana Moody who ran the event again, along with over 160 volunteers who picked up about 10 yards of trash on a glorious day. Stop 'n Shop provided volunteers and products for the great barbeque held at Flamig Farm. Thanks everyone!

The Maintenance Fund has already made a \$2,000 matching grant to the Town of Avon for replacement fencing, and the water fountain that we installed at Sperry Park has been repainted by the Town and the Avon Water Company is fixing the buttons. We expect matching grant requests from Farmington and Simsbury soon to continue fencing repairs. As we have in the past, we are helping an expanded Simsbury Free Bike with a substantial grant of \$1,750.

I'm sure that all of you will be pleased that the River Trail in Burlington will be re-paved soon. The project is a complete re-construction and CT DOT has bumped the price to around \$830,000. The money has been found and we await the RFP this spring with the help of the Central CT Regional Planning Authority. Expect the trail to be closed for at least three months at some point this year. In the mean time we have put up a warning on fvgreenway.org to be extremely careful or actually avoid that area entirely by using the wide shoulder on Route 4.

The next most asked question is what's going on with Plainville. Our Vice President, Jim Cassidy has a story in this issue, but I would add that negotiations for Pan Am RR's ROW in Plainville are now through their sixth year. The current "deal" is for a detached corridor that must go through the swamp, thereby raising construction cost through the roof. I have never seen negotiations with a more recalcitrant company. The FVTC is pleased to support Plainville and the Hole in the Trail Gang. We have pledged our support to showcase the public/not-for-profit/private cooperative effort to fund the local

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Trail Usage Study

This study seeks to offer a local and regional count of the users of the multi-use paved trail system in the Farmington Valley, which currently runs contiguously from Red Oak Hill Road in southern Farmington, CT north to the Massachusetts border in Suffield, CT. It is critically important to quantify usage of bicycle and pedestrian facilities to measure the positive benefits of investments in these modes. The system encompasses the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) and the Farmington River (Loop) Trail (FRT) all told, over 32 miles of paved off-road facilities in the towns of Farmington, Avon, Simsbury, East Granby, Granby, Suffield, Canton and Burlington. These heavily used facilities are essentially linear parks and repurposed rail corridors retained as improved community open space. They are used as recreational facilities for physical activity and health, as tourist destinations and sources of economic development, as an abatement of pollution and noise by replacing automobile trips, as significant regional amenities where people congregate and interact, and as a growing form of alternative transportation through commutation. Intermodal opportunities through connections with bus lines and other mass transportation are expanding and are slowly and steadily increasing in use.

(cont. page 2)

Check it Out

Articles on the trails,
Clean-Up Day and our
communities in the
Valley Press

<http://turleyct.com/archives/vp041014.pdf>

<http://turleyct.com/flipbooks/vp042414/>



Trail Usage Study, Cont.

TRAIL AMBASSADORS

The FVTC Trail Ambassador Program will be starting up again in May. 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 info as well as maps, blinkies, bells and water bottles that have real value as well as acting as branding aids and importantly, to generation of new members.

They 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!!!!

Extrapolated Summary Data 2013:

Annual Farmington Total	97,636
Annual Canton Total	99,999
Annual Suffield Total	117,634
Annual Regional Trail System Total	252,215
Weekday Peak Hour	11:00 AM
Weekend Peak Hour	1:00 PM
Month with Highest Activity	August
Month with Lowest Activity	January
Weekday Peak Day Volume (Farmington)	565
Weekend Peak Day Volume (Suffield)	1,066

Methodology:

Regarding the Summary Data shown above, the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project has developed a method to estimate annual trail usage from raw counter data. The use of expansion factors is common in transportation planning. In this case, they are a tool for taking the 2013 season of counts and using them to develop conservative estimates of bicycle and pedestrian activity in familiar and comparable units, such as daily, weekly, monthly and yearly activity. This method uses one week of data and multiplies it by a monthly adjustment factor derived from analysis of trail counts from across the country. Given the variability of bicycle and pedestrian activity, these estimates are based on the average of three counts during the same time period and week. The counts were from 1-3 PM on Sunday, Tuesday and Friday during the same week in June. Please see www.fvgreenway.org/resources for more detail regarding the spreadsheet inputs in the form of a sample worksheet.

The Hole in the Trail Gang

Jim Cassidy, V.P. FVTC

I'm a touring cyclist, and I have a dream. My dream is to be able to bike from my house into the center of Plainville, turn left to go to Florida, or right to go to Maine. I would be able to do that because Plainville is part of the East Coast Greenway, a 3,000-mile long urban trail from Key West to Calais. Or maybe, as my touring days grow fewer, I can take a left to go to New Haven, or right to go to Northampton, because Plainville is also part of the 84 mile trail between those two cities.

But it remains just a dream, because there is not one iota of trail built in Plainville. The biggest reason for this has been the active freight rail along the corridor which, in other trail towns, has been used to build the trail sections we enjoy today. There is little incentive for the Pan Am Railroad to cooperate in planning a rail-with-trail or even to seriously negotiate the sale of underused right-of-way for trail use. There are, however, other factors beyond the railroad. One is a lack of visionary leadership and political will at the local level. Another is that the degree of town involvement in this project is not at all the same as neighboring Farmington and Southington.

The Plainville Greenway Alliance (PGA) was formed 10 years ago to address these factors. With the eager participation of trail advocacy groups like the FVTC, PGA has succeeded in getting the trail on local radar screens. But, little else has happened, most

FVTC FUN RIDE

**Saturday, May 17
10:00 am**

**Iron Horse Blvd.
Simsbury, CT**

**Join us for a fun, 30-
mile loop on the trail
system.**

**See the Website for
more information.**

Hole in the Trail Gang, Cont.

importantly that first bit of trail in town that would act as proof of concept, pushing final completion. There is a glimmer of hope that funds from CT DEEP can be used for a preliminary design for Plainville and the northern part of Southington. However, we are at a time when reduced town staffs can barely deal with basic issues. So, PGA has formed an initiative known as the "Hole-in-the-Trail Gang" to assemble a volunteer force to do whatever we can to assist town staffs during this process. The goal is to find a workspace in the center of town where we can host project conferences, display graphics, and generate media content to build support for the eventual solution that emerges from the design process. To assemble this gang, we posted a "help wanted" notice through various media, and, to date we have 20 volunteers with various skills, ranging from social media manager and land use lawyer to retired folks, with some spare time willing to do whatever it takes. We are still seeking help and if you are interested, please contact us through the FVTC Website with your skills and availability. It's a small start, but it will lead to the realization of a big dream.

President's Letter, Cont.

CONNECTICUT



GREENWAYS

20%+ match of the federal construction grants and we have made our view of its importance plain in support letters to the officials involved, including the Governor.

The 20th Anniversary FVTC greeting center in downtown Collinsville will be sited and constructed as part of the federal Main Street Grant that the Town received. It will provide a new information kiosk and more bike racks. The parking lot at Phelps Road in Suffield will be constructed in 2014. The design is completed and it will go out to bid soon. It will include an FVTC information kiosk and has been expanded to 36 spaces. Our new Trail Usage Study (in this issue) is being used by CT DOT and many municipalities including Cheshire and Plainville to justify expansion funding of this and other trail systems.

If you are a business owner in the Valley or further afield, look for our Business Appeal letter which will be sent out soon. Also, if you are interested in a substantial donation to the FVTC ask us about the Lifetime Member Program.

On a personal note I have been appointed to the Connecticut Greenways Council by Speaker of the House Brendan Sharkey and was voted in as the Chairman. The CGC is charged with advising and assisting in the coordination of state agencies, municipalities, regional planning organizations and private citizens in voluntarily planning and implementing a system of greenways in Connecticut. Their mission is to enhance the quality of life and well being of our residents through a statewide Greenways system that provides quality multi-use trails, water trails (blue ways), and open spaces that meet statewide needs. These needs include leisure and recreation, off-road linkages, and alternative transportation and education on behalf of the diverse user groups of the community. Greenways are recognized as a cost-effective infrastructure mode contributing to the economic vitality of the State.

We will continue to staff booths at the various town festival days in the Valley. We are expanding the "Trail Tables" to every two weeks on various parts of the trail system staffed by our Board members. Stop by for a handlebar bell, a blinkie, some water and a map or just a talk. Look for our Trail Ambassadors in their FVTC green vests and hats on the trails too.

As always, click onto our Website for current information. I continue to be in awe of our Members, volunteers and friends. Thanks you so much. Bruce Donald, President

FRIENDS



East Coast Greenway

THE FARMINGTON CANAL HERITAGE TRAIL



FVTC DIRECTORS*

Bruce Donald, President
Jim Cassidy, Vice President
Steve Noble, Treasurer
Mary-Jane Gately, Secretary
Nancy Weiner-Anstey
 Steve Cole
 Barb Collins
 Joy Himmelfarb
 Gary Miller
 Susan Mitchell
 Scott Myrick
 Rich Rowlenson
 Allen Ryan
 Dwight Weed

* All positions expire in 2015



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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**On your handheld device:
www.fvgreenway.org**

Become a Member!



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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (home) _____ (cell) _____

E-mail _____

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

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