

Farmington Valley Trails Council

Greenway News



President's Letter

This issue I'd like to talk about the funding for construction of multi-use trails. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), reauthorized in 1998 as part of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), and reauthorized again in 2005 through the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), has provided 80% of the construction costs for most of our trail system. This program is plagued by very long time lines to get the funding, ConnDOT controlling the process, and extremely difficult hoops for town engineers to jump through. As many of you know, in Connecticut we had a bill passed last year that allows \$6 million a year (until June of this year) in special bonding for trail building that has never made it to the Bonding Commission for a vote, and I doubt that it will. Our area towns now are forced to look elsewhere for funds. Currently, there has been some luck with the "shovel ready" program.

One funding source that has been very successful is the federal Recreational Trails Program (originally a part of ISTEA). This program brings about \$1 million annually to (See page 3)



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Founding Fathers

The Farmington Valley Greenway (now known as it is in Southern Connecticut as the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail) is at long last almost completed, so it seems a good time to look back over the years leading up to this success and review how we finally got to this point. We sat down recently with Preston Reed of Farmington and Len Tulisano of Simsbury, the "founding fathers" of our Greenway.

It all began in 1991 when Len, who was the Town Planner in Simsbury, attended a meeting of planners in Washington DC. At that meeting he learned of a transportation bill just passed which included federal dollars in the U.S. Transportation Act known as ICETEA, available for constructing bikeways along abandoned railroad corridors. As Connecticut already had been buying up these railroad right-of-ways, the idea seemed exciting and plausible to Len.

Len and the planners of the other valley towns of Farmington, Burlington, Avon, Suffield, and Granby formed a "six-town committee" to apply for the federal funds and to start the push for construction of a 26-mile bikeway which would link the towns. (cont. page 2)

Factoids:

The U.S. exported just under 60,000 bikes total in 2008.

We imported over 17.5 million in the same period from China.

Source: bicycleretailer.com

This photo of Preston Reed (seated) and Len Tulisano was taken last month when they got together to swap memories about the origin of the FVTC, and the Farmington Valley Greenway and River Trail.





12th Annual Trails-in-Motion 2009

This year's Trails-in-Motion will start and finish from Iron Horse Blvd. in Simsbury, CT, on Saturday June 6th, 2009, which is also National Trails Day. This year we are proud to announce our new sponsor: REI.

The premier events are the 10/30/50-mile bicycle tours utilizing the trails and allowing participants to enjoy some of the most spectacular scenery in the Farmington Valley. Light breakfast is provided at the start. There are rest stops along the way, with food, water, and energy boosters. All the registrants should finish at roughly the same time due to staggered starts. **Door prizes include a \$1,100 Novara Strada road bike or equivalent value merchandise at REI.** Check our website at www.fvgreenway.org for more information and on-line sign-up.



The 18th annual **Antique and Classic Bicycle Auction** was held on April 18th in Copake, NY.

Listed as a "Desirable 1886 Singer Xtraordinary All Bright "50" full nickel finish, as seen in "Collecting and Restoring Antique Bicycles" Adams, page 93. One of the rarest of safety high-wheel bicycles, exc. cond." It made \$19,800!



Founding Fathers, Cont.

Around the same time, Preston Reed of Farmington, who retired from the Hartford Graduate Center in 1991, was getting enthusiastic about the construction of a bikeway. Preston initiated the formation of a citizens' advocacy group, the Farmington Valley Trails Council, and the Council was incorporated and received its 501-(c)3 status in 1992. Some of the original key members of that group included Steve Noble, Bob Thompson, Mike Schloss, and Deb and Ron Lilly. Steve and Bob still serve on the Board. The pairing was critical: a group of municipal employees to champion the concept and move the paperwork through the proper channels, and a citizen group to develop a public awareness of the desirability of the idea, and keep reminding the public officials of the support of their constituents.

As Preston and Len recall, most of the town councils were supportive of the idea of constructing the Greenway; however, not everyone was in favor of the trail. Most of the objections came from property abutters. Many public meetings were held, especially in the early years, at which both supporters and those opposed to the trail aired their opinions, sometimes with heated emotion.

Len related that once Simsbury had received the ICETEA funds, the town was eager to get one section of trail completed to serve as an example. With the help of a \$25,000 memorial donation from a citizen, the one-mile section from Ironhorse Boulevard to Route 315 was completed in less than one week, and it was enthusiastically received by the public. Len describes it as "the power of a good idea."

When asked if he's been surprised or disappointed concerning the trail system, Preston commented that he takes great satisfaction in the coming completion of the trail; that it has succeeded even beyond his expectations; and it continually surprises him with the wide range of uses it is put to. He's impressed by the tenacity of the long-term members of the Trails Council through the years, in spite of the fact that the twenty-six miles of the Greenway have taken much longer to complete than the construction in the 1820s of the entire Farmington Canal from New Haven to Massachusetts!

Concerning future aspirations for the trail, Len looks forward to implementation of a plan whereby the towns can share the major maintenance equipment that is needed, such as brush-cutting machines. Preston, who often rides his three-wheel recumbent bicycle on the roads as well as on the trail, sees a need for better and safer accesses to the trail. They both are excited about the possibility that now, with the framework established, each town can begin to develop a network of access trails to make for walkable and bikeable neighborhoods, and that the Greenway can be extended to the south to connect to Plainville, New Haven and beyond.

As we enjoy the linear park which enhances our lives and our community, let's remember the concerted efforts through the years of the many people who have brought it to this point today. The great success of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail is due in no small measure to Preston Reed and Len Tulisano. We offer our thanks for their vision and hard work.

NEWS!

The gap in the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail of .37 miles in Suffield to the MA border went to bid and came in much lower than estimated. Expect work to begin this year!

Keep your eyes open for the announcement of the grand opening and ribbon cutting for the Salmon Brook Bridge in East Granby. A bronze donors plaque from the FVTC will be unveiled.

Welcome Plainville Greenway Alliance!

By Dwight Weed

The FVTC Board of Directors is pleased to announce the addition of three new board members: Jim Cassidy, Kathy Cole and Steve Cole – and a new town – Plainville.

In 2005, Steve, Kathy and Jim formed the Plainville Greenway Alliance with the goal of completing the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail through their town of Plainville. One of their earliest efforts was dedicated to saving the abandoned railroad trestle crossing Northwest Drive near the Farmington/Plainville border from demolition at the hands of ConnDOT. Although ultimately unsuccessful, their effort awakened the community to the recreational and commercial opportunities presented by a local multi-use trail. With the dogged determination required of any grass-roots advocacy group, Jim, Kathy and Steve forced the PGA onto the radar of the Plainville Town Council and other community leaders, as well as other like minded organizations like the FVTC.

While working alone has its rewards, the PGA recognizes the power of numbers. With that in mind Jim, Kathy and Steve corresponded with FVTC president, Bruce Donald and following a full and frank discussion of the merits of formal association, the FVTC Board of Directors extended an invitation to the PGA to merge with the FVTC adding Plainville to the list of towns the Trails Council works with to facilitate completion of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail.

The proposed route through Plainville presents a unique set of challenges, most notably negotiating the active rail line through town. The Board believes that by focusing the energy of our 600 member organization on the challenges in Plainville we can bring the 85 mile Farmington Canal Heritage Trail closer to completion.

\$45,000 from the State of Connecticut will allow Plainville to commence a Multi-Use Trail Design Study in June. The plan will map out the desired route for the trail keeping in mind feasibility and the ability to apply for construction funding. A consultant will be on the job by the time this newsletter is out.

When not engaged in the business of trail building, Steve and Kathy own and operate Renaissance Bike Shop in Plainville. Jim is the facility manager at the Lewis Walpole Library in Farmington.

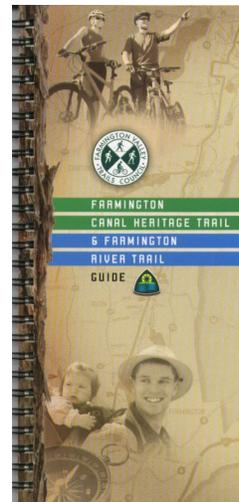
President’s Letter, Cont.

Connecticut for trail projects. Without these funds, much of trail related construction and maintenance in the state would be severely limited. The Coalition for Recreational Trails reported in March that this legislation for the new Surface Transportation Act is due to expire and **the Recreational Trails Program will not be included in new legislation unless a member of Congress writes it in.** This program is somewhat unique in that it applies the “user-pay/user-benefit” philosophy of the Highway Trust Fund to return monies paid on fuel used for non-highway recreation to the states for trail projects. Eligible projects include almost all elements of trail building and maintenance, with state administrative and educational program costs capped at 7% and 5% respectively.

Please take a moment to visit the American Trails website link, where action alerts and items are available and continuously updated at: <http://www.americantrails.org/NewsAction/CRTltr4-08.html> where there is a sample letter to send to our Senators and Representatives. Please take the time today to contact Chris Murphy (who is receptive) or another Congressman or woman and ask them to return the RTP funding to the Surface Transportation Act (TEA-4). Many of our peer organizations like the CT Greenways Council are sending letters, but our members can certainly be heard as well.

I hope to see you on the new Salmon Brook Bridge, which should be done as you read this. As always you can find me at rbdl414@hotmail.com. Happy Trails! — Bruce.

New Trail Guide



Free to Members and new Members.

FVTC DIRECTORS

- Bruce Donald - President
- Dennis Mayer, Vice President
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- Dwight Weed
- Preston Reed - Founder
- Bob Thompson - Emeritus

**FARMINGTON VALLEY
GREENWAY NEWS**

This publication is written and formatted by board members. We thank IMG Professional Services, LLC for printing this publication. The Farmington Valley Trails Council is a 501 (c) (3) 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.

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We're on the Web!

www.fvgreenway.org

Your Support is Important!



Check desired box and enclose membership fee:

- \$10 Senior 65+ / Junior under 18
- \$20 Single
- \$30 Family
- \$100 Friend
- \$500 Sustaining Member
- \$1,000 Lifetime Benefactor

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (days) _____ (eves) _____

E-mail _____

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

Comments?

Detach and mail to FVTC, P.O. Box 576, Tariffville, CT 06070

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