

# Farmington Valley Trails Council

## *Greenway News*

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### President's Letter



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I had the opportunity mid-March to join the Connecticut contingent at the National Bike Summit in Washington, D.C. with board member Jim Cassidy (who has a hand in this letter due to his great notes), and a host of our CT friends led by the unsinkable Mary-Ellen Thibodeau of Bike Walk Connecticut. This three day event featured a speech by Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood on March 11<sup>th</sup> at which he stated that we “have a full partner in Ray LaHood,” – something that is quite remarkable coming from a federal transportation official. The USDOT may be starting to recognize that there are other things than cars. Google announced its new bike directions app in GoogleMaps, and the League of American Bicyclists announced a new “Bikes Belong” campaign. Lance Armstrong even talked to us from Hawaii. The highlight for me was the part where we put on our suits and went calling on our Congressional delegation. We had been asked by the LOB to talk about six issues: the Active Community Transportation Act of 2010; the Complete Streets Act of 2009; the Safe Routes to School Program; the Urban Revitalization and Livable Communities Act; the Land and Water Reauthorization Act; and finally to ask them to join the Congressional Bike Caucus. Our first meeting was with Chris Murphy (D) 5<sup>th</sup> District. Nine of us crowded into the office, and while the meeting started with a staffer, Rep. Murphy shortly joined us. We ended up with him asking a few questions, and I let him know about the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and our successes, and the initiative to build a trail along the Merritt Parkway, which he had not heard about. He told us that he was already a member of the Bike Caucus and was generally supportive of all of our “asks”. He concluded by saying “Not since I took office have I received a delegation this big from my district on any one issue”. We next met with Joe Courtney’s (D) 2<sup>nd</sup> District staff aide, who was supportive but didn’t take too many notes. Finally we went over to the Senate Office Building, and met with Chris Dodd’s (D-CT) senior Transportation Aide, Jackie Primeau, who just happens to be from Avon. Jackie was very well informed on the local issues we brought up, and the meeting became so collegial that she started lamenting the lack of cooperation between the Parties on just about any issue presently being brought before Congress. (See page 3)

#### Really?

More than half of all the parts in a typical bicycle are in the chain. That's 114 outer plates, 114 inner plates, 114 rollers, 114 rivets, and 114 bushings for 570 parts in the average length chain.

## Simsbury Becomes a Bicycle Friendly Community

Simsbury, CT was just named in May as a Bronze-level Bicycle-Friendly Community by the League of American Cyclists. Simsbury becomes the third community in New England and one of only 140 in America to get this honor. They also beat out the likes of New Haven and Plainville, among others. They join communities as diverse as Vail, Colorado and New York City. For Simsbury to get the designation on its first application is stunning. The LAB process is opaque even to its own membership, but it is certain that they favor communities with multi-use trail systems that are predominantly off-road. Yet Falmouth, MA, with the Cape Cod Trail only received an honorable mention.

(cont. page 2)

## Bike Friendly Community, Cont.

The evaluation process is equally divided between the five “E’s”: engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement/adjudication, and evaluation/planning. The award is obviously a huge feather in all of our caps. Advocacy groups like the FVTC, the elected officials and staff of the Town of Simsbury, an enlightened group of citizens who actually use the trails and roads in town in record numbers, all have a hand in this designation. But the effort also goes back to 1992. It should be remembered that a huge amount of volunteers, officials, local and ConnDOT staff (many long gone) contributed. So congratulations Simsbury! We look forward to continued growth of your bike/ped facilities.

## Get Comfortable!

By Craig at Granby Bicycle

The staff at Granby Bicycle attended training in New York City last winter on fitting bicycles for customers. The Fit Kit looks at your body, your bicycle, and your current set up to get a great comfortable ride. It’s that simple. Our bodies get used to our bicycles over time. The human body adapts to “being uncomfortable” and we just put up with it. But we don’t have to. Every rider should consider “getting comfortable”. We’ll keep it simple.

First: Check that your seat is level. Adjust your seat so that it is parallel to the ground. If your seat is tilted down, then you’ll be pushing yourself back on your seat causing stress to your hands, arms, shoulders, and neck area.

Second: Check your seat height. Sit on your level seat and place your heels on your pedals. Adjust your seat post height so that your leg is straight when your heel is on the pedal. When you place the ball of your foot on the pedal you’ll have a nice bend to your pedal stroke. This is the beginning to pedal efficiency and comfort for your knees, feet, and hips.

Third: If you have an adjustable stem, then sit on your bike and place your stem and your handlebar where you’re most comfortable. You’ll have to loosen the bolts that allow for handlebar and stem adjustments. If you have drop bars, then believe it or not, you can still adjust your bars for comfort. Most shops would be glad to adjust your drop bars for you. Stems and handlebars are adjustable to some degree. Adjust them for comfort.

Fourth: Put your brake levers where you feel in control. Tilt and move your levers where you want them. It’s your body.

Fifth: Apparel. Get a pair of cycling gloves and cycling shorts. The padding is like a second layer of skin. You’ll have to trust cyclists on this one. It works!

Sixth: Ride a seat that is comfortable for you. Give your butt at least a half a dozen rides to get in shape. Try as many saddles as possible for comfort. Everyone’s backside is different.

If you feel uncomfortable with the mechanics of loosening and adjusting parts on a bicycle, most shops will help you. Finally, check your air pressure so that when you get on your bicycle you ride with comfort and efficiency. Happy riding, and remember, get comfortable!

Visit us at [www.granbybicycle.com](http://www.granbybicycle.com) or call 860.653.4800.

13th Annual

### Trails in Motion

#### New Metric Century

Please join us at Iron Horse Blvd in Simsbury on June 5th for a 10, 30, 50 or 62-mile ride. Or if you want you can walk, skate or run. See [www.fvgreenway.org](http://www.fvgreenway.org) for more information.

Metric Century (8:00AM)

50-Mile Bike Tour (8:00AM)

30-Mile Bike Tour (9:30AM)

10K Walk/Run/Skate (9:30AM)

5K Walk/Run/Skate (10:30AM)

10-Mile Bike Tour (10:30AM)



Fun for the whole family!

Proceeds go to the trails.



### NEWS!

#### Electronic Newsletter

Our next edition of the newsletter will be available electronically in order to save money on printing and postage, use less energy, and to streamline our production process. If you do not want the email version let us know and we will send you a hard copy. We will send an email with directions to state your preference this summer.



## Can't We Just All Get Along?

There is a continuing discussion between those who believe that bicyclists are safer off-road and those that demand their right to vie with cars on the road. The LAB is a case in point. They favor engineered off-road facilities for their Bicycle Friendly designation, but at the same time train League Cycling Instructors who specifically train cyclists for the road. The conversation can become militant at times. One solution has been bike lanes, particularly in urban areas. We are not going to build more roads but they do get improved and could be widened. But every street should NOT get a bike lane. Plainville's recent study decided that part of the FCHT had to be on-road. It is all about connections, then road characteristics, and finally how to provide for the cyclist. Painted "sharrows", which are bike symbols with chevron arrows that show cyclists the way may be used. As a practical matter, you can join in the fray by riding with our friends at the Municipal Center in Plainville on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 to 4:00PM (rain date the 20<sup>th</sup>) for a short "Route, Ride and Vote" on which roads in town should be used for the FCHT. This will be the first piece of the trail on heavily traveled roads and you can have a say on it. The first thing is that riding on the road with motor vehicles actually is safer than trying to use sidewalks. Bicyclists are more visible if they are joining the traffic flow, as drivers register them as needing attention as fellow travelers. The key (and the source of much of the problem) is that many experienced cyclists are scofflaws. Motorists have a legitimate gripe with riders that don't stop or signal and don't ride single file with the traffic. You can have it both ways – off-road and on-road, but we all must recognize the rules apply to all of us.

## President's Letter, Cont.

So what did I bring away from this? Firstly, I saw over 700 attendees that were genuinely interested in advancing many of our shared goals. Secondly, I saw some informative panels and met some great people. Thirdly, as I huddled with the small amount of people from the Northeast, I realized that we were grossly underrepresented. In fact, of the 140 Bicycle Friendly Communities named by the LAB, only two were in New England: Brunswick, ME and Burlington VT. (We now know about Simsbury getting the honor as third, noting that NH, RI and MA don't have one). Even the Rails to Trails Conservancy administers New England out of Ohio. At a pizza party (pretty good for D.C.) sponsored by the East Coast Greenway, I talked with Eric Weis, and we both agreed that something had to be done. So ... the FVTC will be one of the sponsors of the first annual New England Regional Bike-Walk Summit to be held in Providence, RI on October 7<sup>th</sup>. There will be a full day of break-out sessions designed to attract a broad range of bike/ped stakeholders. The Summit already has some major corporate sponsors, and for my sins I will be one of the panelists. Keep tuned for more information.

After debriefing with the FVTC board, I feel strongly that our organization should help out our region on selected issues, where we are needed, but refocus on our own backyard, looking at Plainville and Tariffville in particular, as well as Collinsville, Burlington and Farmington – all of whom need or will need our help on a variety of issues stemming from designing and building new trails. The newly constituted Bike Walk Connecticut under MaryEllen Thibodeau will take the lead on both state and federal lobbying, with our vocal support of course, while we focus on building, maintaining and beautifying trails, as well as getting folks onto them through events like the Clean-up Day and Trails in Motion. As always you can find me at rbd1414@hotmail.com.

Happy Trails! — Bruce.



### Thanks!

On April 18th 2010 the FVTC held our first annual trail-wide Clean-up Day. We had over 80 volunteers at three separate staging areas cleaning the entire 30+ miles of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and the Farmington River Trail. This effort was spearheaded by Rich Rowlenson, who developed, planned and ran an excellent effort. We finished with over five cubic yards of trash. Thanks to Ben Fernandez at Paine's and Steve Mitchell for the dumpsters! Additional thanks to our three staging area managers Dwight Weed, Steve Mitchell, and Lee Sinkwich. It's amazing the amount of trash we found, and it was so helpful that we will do it again next year!

### FVTC DIRECTORS

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- Preston Reed - Founder
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**FARMINGTON VALLEY  
GREENWAY NEWS**

This publication is written and formatted by board members. 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. This newsletter is printed and distributed by our friends at FAVARH.

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**We're on the Web!**

***www.fvgreenway.org***

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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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