

Farmington Valley Trails Council

Greenway News

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President's Letter



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It was a pleasure to be one of the speakers at the first ever Bike-Walk New England Summit held in Providence a few weeks ago. The audience was suitably impressed with what our towns, the FVTC and ConnDOT have been able to accomplish these last 18 years. We were one of the major sponsors and the over 150 attendees from all over New England were so happy with the experience that it will happen again next year.

The ground breaking for the Collinsville - North section of the River Trail was held on October 15th. The 2.2-mile section is now being built, with the hardest engineering issues being dealt with first and a completion date of summer 2011. ConnDOT currently has the trail terminating behind Best Cleaners on RT 44, but the FVTC and the Town have been in talks with the Shoppes (to the south across Lovely Street) to have the trail terminate in the Kohl's parking lot so that there is plenty of room to park and also available food and shopping. Burlington will have completed their last section of the River Trail this year, and Farmington is hopeful that they will receive funding to finish their piece. The last major gap in the entire length of the 80.4-mile Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) is the 9.1-mile gap including southern Farmington, all of Plainville and northern Southington. Plainville is very close to getting funding from the State to purchase the abandoned rail corridor from the center of town north to Northwest Drive. This time around Pan Am Southern RR seems motivated. If so, expect design planning to take place in 2011 for the 2.2 miles in Farmington and the 1.7 miles of Section 1 in Plainville.

One of the things that the Board felt strongly about was moving forward on a variety of projects that would spend down the funds we have collected over the last few years. Although I don't have enough space to tell you everything we are doing, I can hit the high spots: The Salmon Brook Bridge Fund was a great success and we have given \$63,000 to the Town of East Granby with the remaining \$7,000 remaining to help with costs associated with the installation of crossing lights desperately needed at RT 20 and RT 189.

(See page 3)

ConnDOT and Federal Funding

Really?

Seven out of eight Dutch people over the age of 15 own a bike and use them for 30 percent of all urban trips they make.

In America we are still under 1 percent bike usage for urban trips.

It is not easy to figure out how the Transportation Enhancements (TE) funds in the Federal Transportation Bills work. (1991s ISTEA through the current SAFETE-LU have funded the majority of our trail system in the Farmington Valley) We know that the state since 1992 has never used close to 100% of those funds on actual TE projects. The federal legislative requirement is that ten percent of all STP funds must be spent on enhancement projects. This program is for projects that go above and beyond what is "customarily considered part of a transportation activity." Within the 12 eligible enhancement areas, ConnDOT selects the 13 STP-Enhancement projects in consultation with all the RPOs in the State. (our RPO is CRCOG, which prioritizes the projects in Greater Hartford).

Routinely however, the feds take back part of the funding that had previously been authorized to the state.

(cont. page 2)

ConnDOT and Federal Funding, Cont.

You are cordially invited to:

Our 2010

Annual Meeting

Friday, November 19, at 7:00
P.M.

Avon Senior Center

635 W. Avon Road, Avon, CT
06001

PROGRAM

- Our President, Bruce Donald will give a year-end report on the FVTC and trail construction, other initiatives and unveil the NEW WEBSITE!
- Special guest Paul Mikkelsen will talk on his cross-country ride from San Diego to Savanna earlier this year to raise money for the American Heart Association and the New Britain based Community Mental Health Affiliates.

No Admission Charge - Light refreshments will be served.

When this happens ConnDOT prioritizes which programs give up the money to fund these “rescissions”. Not surprisingly, they often choose a method that unfairly targets the programs that typically fund bicycle and pedestrian transportation projects. Their approach has been to take funding from various programs in proportion to their amount of “unobligated funds”. These funds have been authorized for spending by Congress, but are not yet entirely through the process of being awarded to a specific project. Bike/Ped projects are a pain for ConnDOT because they are small, usually contain engineering issues disproportionate to their size, and therefore take up a lot of time that could be spent on the big highway and rail projects. As a result, a higher proportion of funds in Bike/Ped projects are “unobligated” at any given time, making it easy to remit the funds back to Washington.

According to the U.S. DOT, Federal Highway Administration, federal TE funds apportioned to CT were \$8,838,173 for 2010. This is based on 10% of STP funding for the state (The FHWA apportionment to CT was \$498,351,678 making TE 1.8% of the total if it was all used). If the state does not use the money it must be returned in a process called rescission.

As of August 23, 2010 Connecticut used only 22.3% of the 2010 allocated TE funds and the state rescinded \$6,939,956 or 9.4 months worth of funding. Only 14 states in America cut more TE funds relative to their apportionment. A number of states did not cut any of the funding at all. (See the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse: www.enhancements.org for more information).

Transportation Enhancement funds can be used for bicycle and pedestrian projects, “complete streets” programs and other multi-modal initiatives. The fact that ConnDOT disproportionately marks for rescission the funds allocated to them for a grossly underserved portion of transportation as a whole is a crying shame. If ConnDOT truly believed that cyclists and walkers were part of an overall transportation plan they would calculate the rescissions based simply on the size of the program; or in proportion to their share of the budget; or NOT AT ALL.

Having said all of this, it is a very real issue that TE may not be a meaningful component of the next Transportation Act. We will all have to work starting next year to see that does not happen.

-Bruce Donald

NEWS!

Electronic Newsletter

Our next edition of the newsletter will be sent 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 when you renew your membership this season and we will continue to send you a hard copy.

5 Easy Steps For Safety Enforcement

Much has been made of the Complete Streets and 3-Foot Passing laws that Connecticut passed lately. Unfortunately there has historically been little or no enforcement of any cycling issues on the road. The majority of bicycling accidents are not reported. Here are five initiatives that would make a huge difference: 1) A monitoring program that reports on state and local police departments’ bicycle safety enforcement; 2) Establish police training at both the academy and for veteran officers; 3) Publicize and enforce the new and existing ordinances, including the issuance of tickets; 4) Establish new penalties for reckless driving that have some real deterrence power; and 5) Codify how to report on bicycle and pedestrian injuries. ConnDOT only tabulates police reports (a fraction of incidents) involving an automobile (also a fraction of incidents). An Internet-based reporting system for bicyclists and pedestrians would encourage reporting where police are not involved. Police also need to be incentivized to report incidents. The state is working on some of this, but a comprehensive approach would go a long way.

Destination: MA

If you haven't had a chance to ride up into Massachusetts yet, I recommend a delightful destination on the trail going north into Southwick. A place with gentle music, great food and drink, WiFi, toys and books for the kids. Complete with couches inside to relax on, and a porch outside to view the day. It is a great place to build community and I often meet neighbors from my town.

Red Riding Hood's Basket is 1.2 miles north of the State Line or 1.5 miles north of Phelps Road in Suffield. It is the big white building on the left as the trail crosses Congamond Road going north. Once there you will find a variety of fresh baked goods, soups, quiches and sandwiches. During the summer months there is nothing like one of their delicious ice cream flavors or a smoothie. The bike-friendly owner, Margie Secora and her staff provide fresh food and friendly service.



October hours: M T W, 6-3; Th F, 6-4; Weekends 8-5. Winter Hours: closed Monday, T W Th F 6-4; Weekends 8-4. Please visit <http://www.redsbasket.com/> for more information.

-Jerry

President's Letter, Cont.

New larger folding maps are being designed that will have the information that you are used to on one side (Farmington to the MA border) and new information on Plainville south to New Haven on the other. This new map will be the first to show the whole FCHT in Connecticut. We are pleased to be working with the Farmington Canal Rail-to-Trail Assn. on this important project.

Another huge project is the complete redesign of our Website, fvgreenway.org. You will find a modern site with much more information displayed in a timely manner. Please visit and tell us what you think!

Knowing that a growing component of our work will be maintenance, we have initiated a Fencing Plan that is mapping the entire trail system and identifying areas where fencing needs to be replaced. The FVTC will work with our towns to help defray the cost of new fencing, and suggest areas where it is in fact to longer needed. This Plan will be in full effect in 2011.

We have also made a \$2,000 donation to the new pavilion being built by the Rotary Club of Farmington at the new parking lot on New Britain Ave.

We continue to be concerned with safety issues. A big one continues to be the lack of etiquette both by cyclists and pedestrians. To that end we have created a laminated "rules of the road" for trail users that we will make available. Another initiative that we have talked with every town in the trail system about is painting a center line on the trail to delineate traffic. A great success in both MA and RI, we feel this will help with keeping right, passing and reminding groups to keep a lane clear on the path.

Despite making an attempt to bring in some new ideas to the position, I will remain your president for another two years. We continue to make strides in attracting volunteers and new board members to help in our work, and we hope and trust that type of expansion will continue. I look forward to your comments at president@fvgreenway.org.

— Bruce Donald

Safety Update

This summer, ConnDOT launched its "Share the Road" campaign, highlighting the "3-foot" law that went into effect in October of 2008 is designed to provide a safety "buffer zone" for bicyclists. A notable success for Connecticut advocates, the law was designed to protect bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians, through awareness and education. Specifically, it requires motorists to allow at least three feet of separation when overtaking and passing cyclists on Connecticut roads. DOT notes that there is a "risk of a fine" and therein lies the problem: lack of enforcement. We urge you all to politely educate drivers on this important law, and GET THE WORD OUT!

FVTC DIRECTORS

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**FARMINGTON VALLEY
GREENWAY NEWS**

The Farmington Valley Trails Council (FVTC) 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 by our friends at DATA MANAGEMENT of Farmington and distributed by the folks at FAVARH. © FVTC 2010.

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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

**Farmington Valley Trails Council
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