



FARMINGTON VALLEY TRAILS COUNCIL

MULTI-USE TRAIL SPECIFICATIONS AND DESIGN POLICY

This paper's intent is to provide an outline for a cohesive local design standard and is not meant to dictate trail-building guidelines which are solely the purview of federal, state and local authorities. However, as a general guide the FVTC recommends the following design criteria:

- The AASHTO *Guide for Development of Bicycle Facilities* (1999).
- The Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines.
- The *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*, (MUTCD US DOT, (2003) at <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/HTM/2003/html-index.htm>.

In particular, the MUTCD "contains all national design, application, and placement standards for traffic control devices. The purpose of these devices, which includes signs, signals, and pavement markings, is to promote highway safety, efficiency, and uniformity so that traffic can move efficiently on the Nation's streets and highways."

The FVTC recognizes a multi-use trail to be hard-surfaced smooth bituminous concrete (i.e. hot mix asphalt, or ConnDOT's current pick which is SuperPave). Usage is limited to non-motorized pedestrian traffic with the exception of electric wheelchairs and Segways used by police or by the disabled. Equestrian usage is not permitted without special permission of the town within which the trail falls, and only on trail sections that include wide non-paved shoulders for protection of the surface and to allow sufficient space for passage of multi-use traffic. Critical design components include, but are not limited to, structures, design speed, width (ten feet or 3 meters is the requested minimum), grade, shoulder width, grade intersection treatments, stopping sight distance, placement of bollards and safety-rail height.

Specific FVTC Design Standards

Trail enhancements provide a dramatic addition to the usability of the trails. Trail amenities enhance a sense of community by serving as a transportation alternative, recreation facility, community meeting place, cultural attraction, economic engine for local business, and an accessible means to enjoy our natural landscape while taking exercise. The FVTC wishes to create a visual identity for our multi-town linear park. The use of clear and consistent design elements creates a strong visual connection throughout

the corridor, while providing each town with flexibility to incorporate local design motifs.

Amenities

The FVTC has identified and installed specific trail amenities that add substantially to the overall usability of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) and the Farmington River Trail (FRT). These amenities include but are not limited to information kiosks, benches, and water fountains. The appropriateness of the improvement as well as design, functionality, materials, durability, maintenance and cost must be carefully considered.

Signage

State of Connecticut and Federal DOT standards for basic signage should be maintained and used throughout the trail system. Federal regulatory, warning and recreational and cultural interest sign patterns should remain the standard.



In an effort to recognize the whole of the 60-mile trail from New Haven, CT to Northampton, MA, the FVTC has acknowledged the designation of “Farmington Canal Heritage Trail”, replacing the selective and parochial designation “Farmington Valley Greenway”. This becomes more important as the trail is completed through the MA border and plans for building in Plainville, CT move ahead in the coming years.

Trail Head Signage



Farmington initially designed and implemented what the FVTC suggests as the design standard for the trailheads of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and the Farmington River Trail. This oval sign includes a center oval in which each town can individualize the graphic design. The sign is carved and painted wood and is approximately 3’x 5’ and placed on 4x4 PTL dimensional posts. Individual town designations can appear below.



The Farmington Canal Heritage Trail is part of the East Coast Greenway which stretches from Florida to Maine. The Trail from New Haven to RT 315 in Simsbury is eligible for the signage at left. All of the trail north from Farmington to Simsbury is now designated as part of the ECG.

Information Kiosks



This heavily constructed kiosk includes a railroad station-type roof of split cedar shakes and pressure treated lumber construction. The display board cover is plexiglass and hinged and lockable. This style is used throughout the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and River Trail system.

Pavilions



This pavilion was recently finished at the RT 4 parking lot on the River Trail in Unionville. It continues the railroad station motif and is all pressure-treated and cedar construction. As more and more people use the trails more shelters and facilities will be needed. The FVTC and Farmington Rotary, along with Public and private donations covered the \$30,000 cost.

Mile Markers

The FVTC has created and will continue to improve upon a mile marker system for the entire trail length. New sections will be mapped using GPS for reliability and new signs will be installed with town permission. Now that the trail goes from point to point, occasional “distance to” signs at trailheads would add information and spur travel to town centers. “0” mile is at Red Oak Hill Road in Farmington for both the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and the Farmington River Trail.

Bollards and Pavement Marking



This piece of trail in Unionville shows proper pavement marking and bollard placement. Splitting the trail and denying incursion from motorized vehicles. Critical issues include assignment of right of way, providing guidance for pedestrians, and to alert road users of a pedestrian crossing point. Bicyclists must also be reminded that they have the same responsibilities as the driver of a vehicle.

Benches



One standard design has been used on the trails since 1994 and is available from the FVTC for area towns, Boy Scout projects, and memorials. It has proven to be a robust, cost-effective, and simple pattern that has been in use for many years with negligible flaws. Most benches on the trails have inset plaques to designate the donor.

Unified Rules

Individual towns have signs posted indicating rules specific to the trail including prohibited conduct, exclusions, curfews, etc. The FVTC would like to suggest a uniform code of conduct or guidelines. This example is from Simsbury:

Welcome to the Simsbury Section of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail



- For the safety of all, please stay on the designated trail, be courteous, and respect the rights of adjacent property owners.
- The flow of traffic on the Trail is similar to road traffic. Always ride or walk single file on the right and before passing on the left alert others by bell, horn or verbally.
- Stop, look and listen before crossing roads. Obey all traffic signs and regulations.
- The bicycle speed limit on the Trail is 12 mph.
- Bicycle riders are encouraged to wear protective headgear. Make sure your bicycle or other equipment is in safe operating condition.
- Please do not litter. In consideration of others please keep dogs on a leash at all times and clean up after your dog.
- Report Trail maintenance problems to the Parks & Recreation Dept.: (xxx) xxx-xxxx.
- Report accidents on the Trail directly to the Police Dept.: Dial 911.
- Motorized vehicles (except wheelchairs), horses and livestock are prohibited.
- The trail is open for recreational use between the hours of sunrise and sunset.

Interpretive Signage

The FVTC envisions the use of interpretive signage to bring attention to items of cultural, historical and natural interest to trail users. A standing committee picked from our Board of Directors is now working on this issue. Such signage is already in use on certain parts of the trail. The committee will also revisit commercial signage on the trail system.

Landscaping

Ornamental plantings and screening are integral parts of the trail corridor. The FVTC suggests plantings at trail head/access points, as buffers or screening for unwanted views, and for contiguous land-owners. The FVTC also suggests a policy of clearing existing and overgrown vegetation on trail sides and most particularly a policy of clearing at trail

heads/access points and road crossings where foliage can obscure sight-lines. This increased visibility will serve to warn both drivers and trail users of the intersections and dramatically increase safety.

Parking Facilities and Access Points

Trailhead parking must accommodate not only local trail users but also an anticipated influx of out of town users as well. As the trail becomes substantially completed in 2008, word of mouth and publicity will generate substantially increased usage. This may require additions and improvements to existing parking lots.



An exemplary use of parking lot border fence, trail fencing materials (note the round rail instead of split rail which is also being used in Simsbury) and plantings at the new RT. 4 parking facility on the River Trail in Farmington. Note that the new pavilion has been placed where the blue car is in the picture.

General Safety

As ridership grows on the newly connected trails there is a heightened concern for safety. We cannot speak for ConnDOT but we urge both area towns and the state to revisit curbs-cuts and intersections with the trails as they carry an ever-increasing amount of bike/ped traffic. In addition to traditional warning signs in advance of intersections, motorists can be alerted to the presence of a trail crossing through flashing warning lights, zebra-style or colored pavement crosswalks, rumble strips, raised crosswalks acting as speed humps, and alternative signals such as the Cross Alert System©. Both motorists and trail users can benefit from improved sight lines at roadway intersections.

The FVTC looks forward to continuing its work as an advocate, volunteer maintenance, amenities for the trails and as a valued information source for the area towns that it serves.

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