

Farmington Valley Trails Council

Greenway News

Dedicated to building, maintaining and beautifying multi-use trails

October 2018 - Volume 18, Issue 1



www.FCHTrail.org

Membership

The FVTC is only as strong as its membership.

If you are not a member, please consider joining us today.

Why join the Farmington Valley Trails Council? Here are a few reasons:

- Tireless advocacy for new trails and connections.
- Maintenance and beautification of existing trails.
- Website, newsletters, folding maps, and informational papers.
- Volunteer opportunities like Clean-Up Day.
- Regular rides.

And so much more!

President's Letter

As you may have read or seen on the news, Travelers and our Department of Transportation sponsored a seminar on distracted driving. I was lucky enough to have received an invitation to attend. It was sobering to learn that the annual number of drivers, cyclists and pedestrian deaths are on the rise after years of decline. It appears that the main reason is distracted drivers, riders and walkers. (Yes, folks who walk and stare at their phones have a tendency to walk into traffic without looking.)

The Board of the FVTC has been concerned about the issue of safety for many years. That is why the FVTC was created 25 plus years ago – to create a safe alternative to the road for walkers, riders, runners, to engage in an activity they love. However, the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail crosses roads and is not 100% complete, so all users of the FCHT must be visible to all and alert. This is especially so because there are “distracted” riders, walkers, joggers, dog walkers, roller bladers, etc. using the Trail. For that reason we are publishing in this newsletter various articles concerning good safety habits all should consider and use. While the articles seem to be geared towards cyclists, the advice herein is not limited to just riders. (cont. page 2)

How to be a Courteous Trail User¹

Riding a bicycle can be challenging. Between the pedestrians, cars, other riders and obstacles lining the streets or trails, riding on roads or trails can be hazardous. Learning how to be safe while riding in populated centers is vital for staying accident-free. One of the most important things to do is to ensure that your bike is fully equipped with all safety precautions, such as bells, lights, reflective gear and bells.

One other important thing to do before getting on your bike is to learn what it means to be a courteous rider. Learning how to respect others and yourself is a great way to keep yourself safe.

Treat others as you would want to be treated. Just because you are on a vehicle that can quickly move does not mean that you should run stop signs or red lights or ride above the recommended and occasionally posted speed limit, which on the trail is 12 mph. When off trail, riders need to ride with traffic while walkers need to be walking against traffic. You should not cut people off, ride in the middle of the street or the trail, or stop suddenly without warning. If everyone practiced this rule, cycle transportation would be much safer.

Learn the appropriate hand signals to indicate what you are doing. The three most important hand signals are stopping, left turn and right turn. In addition, always notify those in front of your location via your voice or a bell or both. Being smart about using the hand signals and the oral signals can help other drivers or riders anticipate your actions and avoid collisions.

Try to ride on bike lane designated roads or on trails. Riding in tight city streets might make it hard for cars to pass, which can cause a dangerous situation.

When you reach an intersection of a multi-lane busy road, it may be safer to use the cross walk and the walk signal. No matter what you do, you must assume, unfortunately, that the drivers will not see you and will not stop for you to cross. Regardless of the type of bike you are riding you should always be an aware and courteous rider.

Ride safe and stay healthy.

¹Edited from Worksman Blog NO59

Safety Tips

• Wear a Helmet •

More individuals are seen in emergency rooms for injuries related to biking than any other sport. Helmets can reduce the risk of severe brain injuries by 88 percent, yet only 45% of children 14 and under usually wear a bike helmet.

We have a simple saying: “Use your head, wear a helmet.” It is the single most effective safety device available to reduce head injury and death from bicycle crashes.

• Find the Right Helmet Fit •

Make sure you have the right size helmet and wear it every time when riding. Make sure the helmet fits and you know how to put it on correctly. A helmet should sit on top of the head in a level position, and should not rock forward, backward or side to side. The helmet straps must always be buckled, but not too tightly.

EYES check: Position the helmet on your head. Look up and you should see the bottom rim of the helmet. The rim should be one to two finger-widths above the eyebrows.

EARS check: Make sure the straps of the helmet form a “V” under your ears when buckled. The strap should be snug but comfortable.

MOUTH check: Open your mouth as wide as you can. Do you feel the helmet hug your head? If not, tighten those straps and make sure the buckle is flat against your skin.

• Proper Equipment and Maintenance Are Important •

Ensure proper bike fit: Before the ride, make sure the reflectors are secure, brakes work properly, gears shift smoothly and tires are tightly secured and properly inflated. Long or loose clothing can get caught in bike chains or wheel spokes.

• Be Bright, Use Lights •

Be bright and use lights all the time - and make sure your bike has reflectors as well. It is also smart to wear clothes and accessories that have retro-reflective materials to improve biker visibility to motorists.

Most states require a front light but allow the use of a rear reflector. Headlights are not so much for bicyclists to see where they are going, but for others to see them. **Riding without a headlight means drivers will not see you, and surprising motorists is never a good idea.**

FVTC Director Walter Rochefort, Bicycle Cellar, LLC, Simsbury, CT

President’s Letter, Cont.

The use of lights is as important for a walker as for a rider. Manners while on the Trail should be exercised by all users of the Trail.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter. Don’t forget to join us at our Annual Meeting on November 16, at the Avon Senior Center. Details are on our web site: FCHTrail.org

Barbara Collins—president@fvgreenway.org



Trail Etiquette

- Ride, walk, run and skate on the right side of the trail and pass slowly on the left. Before passing, alert persons by bell, horn or verbally.
- When stopped, please move off the trail. Please ride, walk, run or skate to allow others to share the limited trail width.
- Cyclists should stop at intersections, carefully check traffic and walk across roads. The trail intersects with heavily traveled roads.
- Wear appropriate safety gear. Approved helmets could save your life. Trail users are responsible for their own safety.
- Keep your bicycle in good operating condition. Be prepared for a flat tire.
- Keep the trail clean and safe. Bring out what you carry in. This helps the volunteers who keep the trail clean.
- Please keep dogs leashed and close to you. Clean up after pets and take the litter with you.

Helmet Safety: Keep a Lid On It²

There are just so many reasons people give for not wearing a helmet while roller skating, inline skating, or riding a bicycle while on the Trail. “It’s uncomfortable and hot. It messes up my hair. It isn’t cool. I’m only going a short distance. I’m not going to fall, so I don’t need one” are just a few.

But there are no valid excuses for not strapping on this vital piece of protective gear. And if you are a parent riding with kids, it is doubly important that you lead by example and always wear a helmet.

Trauma to the brain can occur as a result of an impact, or a jarring motion, such as a quick turn or sudden stop. Even seemingly mild head injuries, where you don’t lose consciousness, can cause permanent behavioral and cognitive problems. Studies have shown that wearing a helmet can reduce your risk of a serious brain injury and death because during a fall or collision, most of the impact energy is absorbed by the helmet, rather than your head and brain. However it is important to have the correct helmet.

There are, in fact, different helmets for different activities, and each type is designed to protect your head from the impact common to a particular activity or sport. Always wear a helmet that is appropriate for the activity you’re involved in, the others may not protect you adequately.

To ensure optimal protection, your helmet should meet the following criteria:

- Feel comfortable but snug.
- Sit evenly on your head (not be tilted back on the top of the head or pulled too low over your forehead).
- Not move in any direction, back to front or side to side.
- Have a secure buckle to keep it from moving or falling off on either a first or second impact. So if you are riding your bike and collide with something (first impact), the helmet will still be firmly in place if you then fall onto the pavement (second impact).
- Be easy to adjust and fit properly without a lot of adjustments. And once adjustments have been made, they should stay put.

Test your children's sizing by having them try on a variety of helmets. When fastened and tightened, the helmet should not move from side to side or front to back, and your child's forehead should be properly covered to keep it protected. Helmets for children or toddlers should also have a buckle that holds firm in a crash but releases after five seconds of steady pull to avoid potential strangulation. A child's helmet will usually fit for several years, and most models have removable fitting pads that can be replaced with thinner ones as the child's head grows. The helmet should fit perfectly when you buy it.

These guidelines apply to children who are at least 1 year old. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children under 1 year of age should not be on bicycles at all.

Bicycle helmets are designed to protect against a single severe impact, such as a fall onto the pavement. The foam material in the helmet will crush to absorb the impact energy during a fall and can't protect you again from a subsequent impact. So even if there are no visible signs of damage, you must replace it. Furthermore, even undamaged bicycle helmets should be replaced after five years of use.

If you want the best advice, go to a bicycle shop. There the staff can fit you correctly and help you purchase the best helmet for your budget. The staff recognizes the importance and is always willing to help. Many local shops give discounts to FVTC members so remember to bring your membership card when you shop.

²This is a edited version of a posting by Dr. James Young of the Rush University Medical Center



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GREENWAY NEWS

Become a Member!

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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- \$20 Senior 65+
- \$25 Single
- \$40 Family
- \$100 Friend
- \$500 Sustaining Member
- \$1,000 Lifetime Benefactor
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