What are the Benefits of Multi-Use Trails?

Bruce Donald
President, Farmington Valley Trails Council
Chairman, CT Greenways Council
Chair, CT Committee, ECGA

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Why Trails?

✓ An integral part of transportation policy
✓ Provide “active” transportation opportunities
✓ Recreational facilities, or “linear parks”
✓ The healthy option
✓ Provide pollution and noise abatement
✓ Foster tourism & economic development
✓ Fantastic community amenities
Pedals & Feet are Transportation

Fact: CT DOT now views mobility in terms of people and not completely the movement of vehicles. Applause is in order!

✓ Walking has always been the primary form of transportation. Most trips necessarily involve some element of walking.


✓ Torrington can’t thrive if everyone drives! There is not enough room or money to build new roads and highways.

✓ Bike/ped infrastructure makes public transit more effective in meeting travel needs through multi-modal connectivity; particularly in densely populated environments.
Active Transportation

Fact: Active, or alternative transportation is growing exponentially – just look at the rise of bicycle commuters and the success of Safe Routes to School.

✓ Connectivity: “Complete Streets” policies – sidewalks, trails, bicycle facilities, share the road signage, and sharrows.

✓ Infrastructure: Streetscape amenities, bike racks, benches, landscaping, lighting, public art.

✓ The Key: Better access to more destinations, providing healthy choices in how you can get where you want to go without relying on a car.
Fact: Trails are recreational facilities, “linear parks”, and cultural classrooms.

✓ The original reason to build multi-use trails was purely recreational.

✓ Communities with these facilities are MUCH more sought after. People want a city where there are safe, accessible, and comfortable linear parks for all users, including people with disabilities (ADA compliance).

✓ These repurposed corridors are retained permanently as improved community open space.

✓ Create a connected linear park amenity: “Torrington Historical District Trail” would be a great community builder, enhancing cultural awareness and historical identity.
Public Health

Fact: The American health crisis is real and exercise IS health.

✓ Trails create healthy opportunities by providing users with attractive, safe, and accessible outdoor facilities. Their very existence lowers barriers to engagement in physical activity.

✓ Communities can use trails as tools to help make exercise more convenient and neighborhoods more exercise-friendly.

✓ With more trails on the ground than ever before, the evidence shows the extent of the positive impact they have on public health.

✓ The feds pay 28% of all health care costs in the US, and spend billions on infrastructure. Investing in trails hits the bottom line for both of these sectors.
Pollution Abatement

Fact: Walking or biking to a destination is a one to one reduction in vehicle trips and therefore pollution and noise.

✓ Americans drive cars and taxis 1.5 trillion miles a year. Around 10% fewer vehicle miles are traveled in communities with good walking and cycling facilities.

✓ Safe routes are critical: parents driving their children to school make up about a quarter of morning commuters in suburbia!

✓ If the number of kids who walk and bike to school returned to 1969 levels, it would save 3.2 billion vehicle miles, 1.5 million tons of CO\(^2\) and 89,000 tons of other pollutants annually.

✓ The health costs of air pollution are a minimum of $10 billion a year.
Economic Development

Fact: Studies confirm that every dollar spent building multi-use trails returns a multiple of that yearly.

✓ Trail-based tourism is a major economic driver in communities, creating annual revenues of millions of dollars per trail in direct consumer spending, and making existing businesses more profitable.

✓ Trails promote a reinvigoration of municipal centers. Visit Collinsville, Southington, Simsbury, or Unionville on a sunny weekend day and be impressed.

✓ Safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access enables more individuals full participation in the local economy.

✓ Real estate prices are higher in more desirable walkable, bikeable communities. Homes near trails sell faster for more money.
A Community Amenity

Fact: Trails improve a community’s quality of life.

✓ Residents are overwhelmingly positive about them. Such communities lure younger, professional, motivated citizenry.

✓ Trails have become sources of community identity and pride.

✓ CRCOG and UCONN did a survey in Hartford in which 86% of respondents agreed that more places where people can walk (rather than drive) point-to-point are needed. There is great demand.

✓ Trails are the new “town square”. People naturally congregate, meeting family and friends away from the TV, making connections with neighbors, fostering pride, and building a better community.
Bruce Donald
president@fvgreenway.org
860.202.3928

Resources:
American Trails - National Trails Training Project
http://www.americantrails.org/resources/adjacent/index.html

Rails to Trails Conservancy
http://www.railstotrails.org/experience-trails/benefits-of-trails/