

What are the Benefits of Multi-Use Trails?

Bruce Donald

President, Farmington Valley Trails Council

Chairman, CT Greenways Council

Chair, CT Committee, ECGA

TorringtonWalks! Talk

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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.
- ✓ The Metric: A Balanced Transportation System = Motor Vehicles + Transit + Bicyclists + Pedestrians.
- ✓ ***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.

Parks & Rec

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 CO² 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/>

