

Farmington Valley Trails Council

Greenway News

Dedicated to building, maintaining and beautifying multi-use trails

Sep, 2014—Volume 14—Issue 2

President's Letter



www.fvgreenway.org

Membership

The FVTC is only as strong as its membership.

If you are not a member, please consider becoming one.

Why?

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.

Monthly rides like the recent "Farm Tour".

And so much more!!

Please join us at our 2014 Annual Meeting at the Avon Senior Center. It will be held on Friday, November 14th at 7:00 pm. We will have my recap of the year's events and an entertaining speaker along with refreshments.

We mourned the passing of our founder, Preston Reed and set in motion the chain of events that recently culminated in the naming of the Farmington River Bridge on the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail as the "Preston T. Reed Memorial Bridge". Please see the accompanying article below.

I'm sure that all of you will be pleased that the River Trail in Burlington will be re-paved soon. The project is a complete re-construction and ConnDOT has bumped the price to over \$800,000. The money has been found and the RFP is out. Expect the trail to be closed for a number of months probably starting in late fall and running through next spring. Please note the warning on fvgreenway.org to be extremely careful on that piece of trail, or actually avoid that area entirely by using the wide shoulder on Route 4. There is no new movement in trail planning in Plainville. I plan to personally meet with elected officials, ConnDOT and other interested parties to perhaps break the stalemate on negotiations for Pan Am RR's right of way and funding for a detailed feasibility/design study for the Town. Keep your fingers crossed.

Downtown Collinsville's redevelopment plan through the federal Main Streets Program is moving forward and will include updates to the Farmington River Trail along with bike racks and a new Information Kiosk donated by the FVTC. New benches have been installed on the FRT in Collinsville according to a master plan set up by the Town and FVTC board member Gary Miller that pre-identifies spots available for memorial benches, providing proper distance from existing benches and thought out, effective, sites. We are very pleased to announce that the Suffield Parking Lot is now being built on

(cont. page 3)

Reed Memorial Bridge

On August 12, 2014, the Farmington Town Council unanimously approved the naming of the Farmington River Bridge on the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail as the "Preston T. Reed Memorial Bridge" for our founder's work. Two plaques will be placed in a way yet to be determined on the north and south sides of the bridge to identify the new nomenclature.

The Town Council Chair, Nancy Nickerson, signed this Proclamation: "WHEREAS, twenty years ago the federal government decided to fund the conversion of abandoned railroad beds into multi-use trails, and Preston T. Reed was determined to bring these trails to the Farmington Valley, and

WHEREAS, Preston T. Reed formulated the idea of creating a six-town committee comprised of valley towns to apply for the federal funding to construct a greenway of multi-use trails to link those towns, and

WHEREAS, Preston T. Reed founded the Farmington Valley Trails Council in 1992, served as its first president, and tasked the Council with partnering municipal employees and interested citizens to make the greenway project a reality, and

(cont. page 2)



Reed Memorial Bridge, Cont.

WHEREAS, Preston T. Reed and the Farmington Valley Trails Council worked with public officials, appointed and elected, as well as community members for over 20 years to create the 84 mile Farmington Canal Heritage Trail as it exists today, and WHEREAS, even after the completion of the greenway, Preston T. Reed continued to imagine improvements and expansions to improve access to the trail, and continued to make personal use of the trails into his mid-90s, and WHEREAS, Preston T. Reed was instrumental in the creation of a beautiful linear park that enhances the lives of the members of the Farmington community as well as those who utilize the trails, and WHEREAS, we hereby thank Preston T Reed for his selfless dedication, immeasurable contributions, his lifelong commitment to the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail as well as the Farmington Valley Trails Council, and we extend to the late Mr. Reed, his wife Ann, his sons and daughters, and his grandchildren, our best wishes. NOW THEREFORE, as a tribute to Preston T. Reed for his dedication to the creation of our community's beloved greenway, we are proud to name this bridge the "Preston T. Reed Memorial Bridge" in his honor." The FVTC and the Town will have a ribbon cutting this fall—look for the date.

TRAIL AMBASSADORS

The FVTC Trail Ambassador Program will be starting up again in May. We have had about a dozen people express interest in being a Trail Ambassador.

FVTC-approved Ambassadors will act as guides, keepers of historical and modern facts, provide handouts such as rules and etiquette information as well as maps, blinkies, bells and water bottles.

Ambassadors will increase awareness about the FVTC, including funding for construction, maintenance, amenities and encourage volunteerism in our organization.

But most importantly, they will promote the **SAFE** use of the trails through proper trail etiquette.

Look for the green vests!!!!

Simsbury Installs Bike Service Station

Many of us have found ourselves walking our bicycles when we should be riding. Changing a flat is one thing, but many other basic repairs can't be accomplished without the proper tools. The new installation of a free standing bicycle assistance station is near Rotary Park on Iron Horse Boulevard on the north side of the bike path, in front of the Performing Arts Center at Simsbury Meadows.

The stand, called a Dero Fixit, was purchased by the Simsbury Police Department at a cost of \$1,297 as a way to give back to the bicycle community. The FVTC applauds this initiative and thanks the SPD along with the town's department of Culture, Parks and Recreation for their forward thinking installation of this unit.

According to company literature, the Fixit includes all the tools necessary to perform basic repairs and maintenance, from changing a flat to adjusting brakes and derailleurs. The tools and air pump are securely attached to the stand with stainless steel cables and tamper-proof fasteners. Hanging the bike from the hanger arms allows the pedals and wheels to spin freely while making adjustments. The stand is about five feet tall. There is no cost to use the station.

Other towns such as Canton are looking to install such units. The worry is that vandalism could reduce the repair stand's time in service. It remains to be seen how the cost/service metric works out. We believe that the huge amount of bike/ped traffic on Iron Horse Blvd. should provide a "self policing" element that hopefully will keep this important service station working for a long time to come.



Congratulations!

Farmington and West Hartford are the most recent communities to be named Bronze "Bicycle Friendly Communities" by the *League of American Bicyclists*.

Simsbury recently handed in their detailed application for potential LAB Silver Status.

Martin Neid Memorial Replaced

We hope when you pass by the newly installed Martin Neid Memorial Sculpture at Copperhill Road in East Granby that you give a silent thanks to the volunteers that had it replaced. Please look for it at the trail head entrance near the golf course. The stylized bicycle is half of the memorial, which includes the granite bench north of the bridge above Copper Hill Road. Last year some thoughtless criminals stole the original that Maryanne Krajcik and her helpers had installed. It has still not been recovered. This time, Douglas Comstock took over and oversaw the replacement of the sculpture working with the East Granby Parks and Recreation Dept. Doug told us: "Short story is simple. I found out the sculpture was missing via Facebook. We made the decision to do something about it. Less than 24 hours after we launched a "Go Fund Me" page we had



enough funds for the new sculpture. It was through the efforts of so many generous people that we were able to accomplish our goal." Huge thanks go to all the donors and supporters for helping Doug and his volunteers to not only achieve their goal, but to exceed it.

The bike statue (also a functional bike rack) and granite bench were installed on the bike trail in East Granby to honor a man who lost his life to cancer. Martin Neid devoted much of his free time to bike riding and the maintenance of this bike route.

East Granby collectively is one of the most proactive trail communities on the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. In addition to a vibrant volunteer group through the FVTC, the East Granby Park and Recreation department, Public Works and the First Selectman are active advocates and trail maintainers. It should be noted that in the summer of '14, the Town has added signage, replaced fencing, and painted a centerline on the trail with the help of an FVTC grant.

President's Letter, Cont.

the FCHT. This is the result of a grant from Coca-Cola NA that the FVTC received a number of years ago. It will include an Information Kiosk donated by the FVTC and a large number of safe and *legal* parking spots near Phelps Road. A granite monument north of the lot at the CT/MA State Line will be installed in 2015. Our 2014 Trail Usage Study will be out this fall and the 2013 version has been widely disseminated as a major scientific study of an important trail system in New England. We now can say definitively that way over a quarter of a million individuals use the trail system in just the Farmington Valley alone. Our study is being used by ConnDOT and many municipalities including Cheshire and Plainville to justify design and construction funding initiatives. There is also the annual manual count that the Capital Region Council of Governments sponsors coming up soon. This adds depth and breadth to our numbers and aids our towns in planning as well as overall knowledge of the user base. We will continue to staff booths at the various town festival days in the Valley. Look for us at Sam Collins Day, Avon Day, the Unionville Festival and more. Our "Trail Side Tables" program has been held every two weeks on various parts of the trail system staffed by our Board members. Stop by for a handlebar bell, a blinkie, some water and a map or just a talk. Look for our Trail Ambassadors in their FVTC green vests and hats too. Look to our Website, and my best to our Members, volunteers and friends. -Bruce

FRIENDS



East Coast Greenway

THE FARMINGTON CANAL HERITAGE TRAIL



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* All positions expire in 2015



One Man's Tale

2004 - After working 35 years in the banking business, my employer merges with another institution. I have just turned 65. Good timing. I retire in the Spring of 2005. I purchase the car of my dreams....the 50th Anniversary Edition (1955-2005) Ford Thunderbird Convertible. I am free as a bird!

2006 - I totally enjoy my road travels but am having increasing difficulty walking.

2007 - Because of continuing gait problems, a medical diagnosis determines that surgery is needed to relieve an area of spinal stenosis.

2008 - I come to the realization that the surgery has been unsuccessful and that I will be wheelchair bound and also, that I will not be able to drive my convertible again. I am now "handicapped". Shortly thereafter, I decide to purchase a battery operated scooter which allows me some mobility close to home and a degree of independence. Then I recall that I live within a quarter mile of the Trail system which I had cycled on a few times years before.

And so on a sunny early summer day I set out for a trial run on my "new" wheels. I knew from past experience that the trail was relatively flat in my area and at a max scooter speed of 5 MPH I would certainly have time to "smell the roses" along the way. My first mile from Brickyard Rd, Farmington took me to the old RR trestle over the Farmington River by a height of 100 feet or so. The views were stunning. To the east, the widening, placid river and to the west, the rapids of Unionville.

As the weeks went by, I was out on the trail frequently...I'd venture a little farther each time, testing the capacity of my batteries. I found that I could travel round trip approximately 10 miles north to Simsbury and, later, west to Collinsville. I noticed along the way that the summer heat was generally 5, maybe 10 degrees cooler on the trail because tree shade covered most expanses; the air always seemed fresher and folks just seemed more happy-faced than those you might find on the street or in a mall. Personally I felt a sense of well-being, energized, happier. No, I wasn't getting any real physical exercise as most people on their feet were, but I had found a safe place where I could travel, in my own limited way, meet new friends and enjoy time outdoors. Over the years, I calculate that I have traveled a couple of thousand miles on "my" section of the trail and the tires of the original scooter are balding!

In 2013 the FVTC recruited volunteers for an Ambassador Trail Program to educate trail users as to etiquette and safety, to provide maps and information and distribute some promotional material. It was a natural for me given my 6 years of travel on the pathway and the kinship I had developed with it.

I enjoy greeting people and the conversations that I have with the cyclists, runners, skaters and walkers regarding their use of the trail. From the older woman who just walks her dog a short distance from home, to the sixtyish couple who, on Friday nights, regularly bike to Collinsville for dinner and then complete the round trip back to Farmington, and the young family of 5 who reported, enthusiastically, that they had just biked all the way from Southwick, Mass.

I've learned that the trail means many things to many people...to me it's my go-to place for a pleasurable time.
-Steve Oehmsen



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One Woman's Tale

By Mary-Jane Gately

Melanie Fensick, an adventurous young woman from Plainville, has traversed hundreds of miles of trails on her skates here in the East as well as elsewhere in the United States. Melanie's long-distance journeys began in 2007 in Connecticut, when she skated all of the state's trails. In the same year, her vision expanded when she visited Washington, DC, and skated the Capital Crescent Trail, which connects Washington to Bethesda, Maryland. Since 2008 her goal has been to do at least a trail a year.

Of the trails in the Northeast which Melanie has traversed, she terms the East Bay Bike Path in Rhode Island "the most picturesque," with its multitude of water views. She also has enjoyed skating the 26-mile Cape Cod Rail Trail. As Melanie describes it, "It was neat to finish skating, walk down to the beach, and then hop on the trail to get back to the hotel." Her first real "trail trip" was to Virginia to do the 43-mile "Washington and Old Dominion Trail," which connects many cities and is popular for people biking to work. Melanie enjoys this trail for its rich Civil War history as well as for the many nearby opportunities to explore, and she visits parts of this trail every year.

Having enjoyed many trails in the East and Northeast, Melanie was drawn to explore trails in other areas of the country. In 2012 she flew to Michigan to do the 23-mile "Hart-Montague Trail." This was her first time flying to a trail destination, as she had traveled by bus to her previous starting points. Melanie found this trail very rough and "not really skate worthy," although she was compensated at the end by finding a newly-created nine-mile extension, which she called "a dream" after having traversed more than 20 miles of rough trail.

In July of this year, Melanie undertook her most ambitious trip. She flew to Minnesota to do the 100-mile Paul Bunyan State Trail. Her skating journey took about five days. She describes it as the most remote trail she's ever been on, with very small towns ten to 20 miles apart. It was very well maintained, very scenic and rich in Paul Bunyan history. This trail remains the favorite of her trail journeys to date.

The trails in the Midwest will be in Melanie's future trips because of their flat terrain and good maintenance. Melanie enjoys the Connecticut trails, especially for their many easy access points and many things to do nearby; however, she has found the maintenance sometimes lacking in comparison to other trails that she's visited out of state. In preparing for a skating trip, Melanie does research and sometimes makes reservations for places to stay overnight. She travels light, wearing a backpack, which holds her water, energy bars, a change of clothes, spare parts, and tools (she goes through a set of wheels each year). Also included are a GPS and her cell phone.

Melanie describes skating the trails as "peaceful and challenging at the same time. I love leaving the stress of driving a car behind and traveling from Point A to Point B under my own leg power. It's a great sense of accomplishment to complete a trail. And when I'm rollerblading on a trail, I tune out everything and just listen to nature around me. It is very peaceful."

When Melanie is not rollerblading, she works as a chemist and as a fitness trainer, and is the owner of The Higher Edge Fitness gym in Southington.



Melanie Fensick out on the Trail

"It's a great sense of accomplishment to complete a trail. And when I'm rollerblading on a trail, I tune out everything and just listen to nature around me. It is very peaceful."



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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www.fvgreenway.org**



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- \$20 Single
- \$30 Family
- \$100 Friend
- \$500 Sustaining Member
- \$1,000 Lifetime Benefactor
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Would you like to be contacted for volunteer opportunities? Y / N

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