

# Farmington Valley Trails Council *Greenway News*

*Dedicated to building, maintaining and beautifying multi-use trails*

Nov. 2021 — Volume 21, Issue 2



## Membership Benefits

**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!**

## The Farmington Canal Heritage Trail: A Great and Safe Community Asset

**By Barbara Collins, President, FVTC**

Just when we thought things might return to “normal” (or at least the pre-Covid-19 normal), the Delta variant arrived to make us rethink masks, handwashing, and spending as much time as possible outdoors.

The Farmington Canal Heritage Trail is one of the many great places in Connecticut to spend that outdoor time. The Farmington Valley Trails Council was created 40+ years ago to create a space for cyclists and walkers to be safe from cars and enjoy the fresh air and exercise.

We could not have done it without your support. If you are receiving this newsletter it means you have attended one of our events, joined the FVTC, or made a donation. We thank you. The trail is not finished but we are getting there by working with our local governments to get the funding needed to make expansions and connections.

The towns know what a valuable asset the trail is because of you and our many volunteers who help keep the kiosks filled with information and spend time picking up trash and reporting problems just so a visit to the trail can be as pleasant as possible.

We can never thank our volunteers enough but try to recognize them whenever possible. We can always use more volunteers, especially for our rides or events like the Annual Clean-up and Expo (which - fingers crossed - we will hold in 2022), and joining our Board. Please consider signing up to help us. I can assure you we are a fun crew and don't demand too much heaving lifting.

In this newsletter you can read updates on finishing the gaps in the trail in New Haven and Plainville and efforts to create offshoots of the trail to Bloomfield/Hartford and Plainville/New Britain. Each offshoot will open up access for walkers, pleasure riders and commuters to other trails in Hartford County and beyond.

You will also learn about updates to our website to make it more user friendly for information, purchases from our store, and donations. The new website will continue to list all the towns along the trail and how to report problems you encounter.

Finally, FVTC continues its emphasis on safety with a useful article on alerting when passing, whether on a bike or walking/running. It is courtesy and makes the trail safer for all parties. Likewise, we encourage all to watch their speed when on the trail and to not ride or walk in groups (including pets) that take up the entire width of the trail.

The trail is an excellent place for exercise and social distancing if we all remember to be considerate and caring of others.

# Trail Safety: Focus on Alerting

By Amy Watkins, MPH

Learning how to share the trail respectfully is one of the best things we can do for ourselves and others when we're on the trail. When we practice common courtesy, we not only create happier trails, but we are safer, too.

It's pretty simple, as long as we remember to keep right, pass left, and alert!

**Keep right:** Ride, walk, jog, and skate on the right. Do not take up more than half of the trail. This is especially important to remember if you are in a group, walking a dog, or have children with you. In addition to people coming from the opposite direction, there may be faster moving people behind you who need room to pass.

**Pass left:** Pass others on the left (towards the middle of the trail). Be sure to allow enough room between yourself and the other trail user.

**Alert!** If you are coming up behind someone, alert them to your presence before passing by using a bell, horn, or your voice. The more advanced the warning, the better. You can say "passing on your left" or ring a bell if you are on a bicycle. Walkers must remember to be aware of those coming up behind them. Keep headphone volume at a level where you can still hear others. Better yet, keep one headphone out!

When we act with respect and concern for others, we help create the community we want to live in. Do your part to make the trail a happy and safe destination for all!

FVTC is happy to provide you and your family with bells because we take safety seriously. Look for us at various trail side tables or the Collinsville Farmers Market. Bells are free, but a donation enables us to continue to provide this benefit to other trail users.

## Be Seen: Wear Bright Colors; Use Lights

By Tony Russotto

As we enter the fall season, the days become shorter and darkness settles in a little quicker each day. Using the road or rail trail, you begin to blend into the shadows quicker than during the summer months. What you wear and how you equip yourself is the difference between being seen (and safe) or staying invisible. Some of these ideas are bicycle specific, but the idea is there for any type of road/rail trail user.

Tips for riding at night or when visibility is poor:

1. Ride or walk where motorists can see you. Obey traffic signals and stop signs. Don't make a decision assuming the motorist has seen you.
2. Wear brighter rather than darker color clothing. Bright green, orange, yellow are all great choices.
3. At minimum, use a rear reflector but I would strongly recommend a rear mounted bright flashing light that flashes in a random pattern. This will help distinguish you as a person from all the lights around you.
4. Use a bright headlamp mounted in the direction you are traveling at night or when visibility is poor.
5. Wear a safety vest. Reflective safety vests are lightweight, affordable and fit over existing clothing, whether a t-shirt or a light jacket.
6. Wear ankle reflector bands. Wearing these on your ankles creates an up and down moving motion while you're pedaling that a motorist will be able to see and immediately identify you as a person on a bicycle.
7. Use mini-LED Spoke lights or reflective sidewall tires. These are great to be seen from the side while riding (crossing the road or crossing at an intersection). You will be immediately recognized as a cyclist and not a road sign.
8. Ride slower as it may be harder to see obstructions in front of you.

Remember to make yourself more visible to motorists and other trail users. If you have any personal tips you'd like to share, send us an email at [info@fvgreenway.org](mailto:info@fvgreenway.org).

# Trail Construction Projects Move Ahead in 2021

By Bruce Donald and Scott Bushee

Trail projects are moving ahead to complete the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. These are the projects from south to north on the trail:

New Haven Phase IV had its groundbreaking ceremony on Sept. 13, 2021 and the project is well along, to be completed in the fall of 2022. This 1.6 mile long project includes a tunnel from Yale University south.

Southington is mostly out of permitting, and will go to bid this fall for construction in 2022.

Plainville will be in three phases to close the 5.4-mile gap. The phases will allow for continued progress in construction while the design and environmental permitting is being resolved for the future phases.

Phase 1 – Town Line Road to Norton Park: Preliminary design and public involvement complete, moving into final design. Rights of Way process to start soon. Preliminary talks with regulatory agencies have occurred and have been favorable.

Mitigation for environmental impacts anticipated (wetland creation and interpretive signing likely needed with the project). A 50-space trail parking lot is planned off of Red Stone Hill in Plainville. THANK YOU to everyone that attended the public involvement meeting and supported the trail!!!

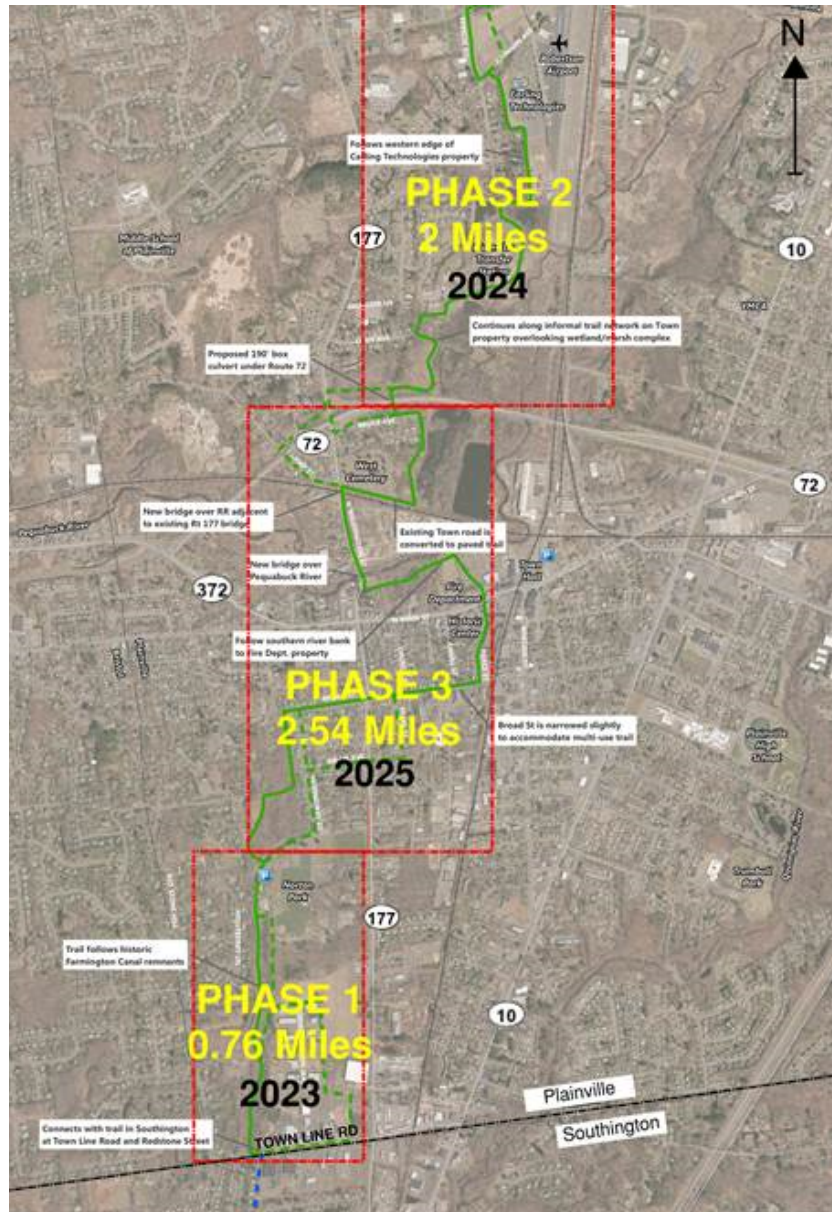
Phase 2 – Route 72 to Northwest Drive: Survey complete, working on preliminary design and coordinating alignment (field walks) with Carling Technologies (a significant property owner affected along the trail). Favorable field walks were held with the City Council for portions of the trail. Another 50-space parking lot for trail users is planned adjacent to Route 72. Public involvement planned for Spring / Summer 2022.

Phase 3 – Norton Park to Route 72: Alignment still under refinement. Alternate city streets being reviewed at the request of the council to determine best alignment.

Converting city streets to one-way traffic is under consideration to make room for the trail. Floodway limitations identified in the vicinity of Route 177 and the Pequabuck River.

There is still a lot of work to do in this phase, as it's very difficult. The goal is still an off-road alignment. The design will ultimately be the best of all of the limitations we have to work with.

In addition to the above, work on the Tariffville extension will start construction in April 22. This extension will, in the future, allow people to bike & walk into Bloomfield then Hartford and then East Hartford. A CRCOG gap study of a trail for these Towns will be award shortly to be finished by mid 2023.





# Ride Through History on the Farmington Canal Trail

By Cornel Matarrese  
(c) Connecticut Explored Inc.

Imagine riding your bike on a sunny afternoon. The fresh air is blowing gently in your face. You listen to the birds chirping. You are calmly riding on a bike trail. You can see the peaceful flow of a river nearby. These are some of the things you might experience on the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail.

One warm summer day, my family and I explored the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT). We rode our bikes seven miles. We rode through Simsbury to Granby. It was a beautiful route with all sorts of nature to see. We saw a deer on the trail. We enjoyed the trail very much.

The Farmington Canal trail is about 80 miles long. It goes from New Haven, Connecticut to Northampton, Massachusetts. Fifty four miles of the total trail go through Connecticut. The first six miles were opened in 1996.

## Trail History

The Farmington Canal Heritage Trail goes back to 1822. A group of business people decided to build a canal. It would start in New Haven. It would go north to Massachusetts. This explains the word “canal” in the name of the trail.

A canal is a man-made river. A canal is used to transport goods. Read about the Farmington Canal in “Canal Crazy in Connecticut.”

The canal closed in 1847. It had a lot of problems. During floods and droughts the canal couldn’t fully operate. The canal leaked. Its sides caved in. It constantly needed repairs.

Railroads were beginning to be built in Connecticut. Railroads seemed like a more dependable form of transportation. Railroads were not usually affected by the weather. Trains moved goods and people faster.

The canal was filled in. Train tracks were laid on top. Eventually though, railroads were replaced by a newer technology. Companies chose trucks to move their goods. Cars and busses could move people closer to where they wanted to go. The railroad over the former canal closed by the late 1980s. It had operated for more than 100 years.

A group of people came up with the idea to replace the rails with a trail. The trail would be used for walkers and bicyclers. In 1987 a group of people got permission to replace the railroad tracks with a public trail. This was during the “rails-to-trails” movement. In 1992 the Farmington Valley Trails Council (FVTC) opened the trail to the public.

## What You’ll See

The FCHT is a beautiful trail. It follows the Farmington River. You get nice views of nature. The trail also passes through several towns. The town centers are great places to stop for a break. You can find a place to eat, and places to shop and relax along the way.

The trail starts at the famous Yale University campus in New Haven. You can also visit Lock 12 Historical Park in Cheshire. This is where you can see the remains of the former canal.

Find maps and information on the trail’s website: <https://fchtrail.org>

Lock 12 Historical Park, Cheshire, 487 North Brooksvale Road, Cheshire. The park contains a pavilion, picnic area, a restored 150-year-old canal lock (one of the original Farmington Canal locks) and a museum which is open by appointment only.

*Cornel Matarrese wrote this when he was a fourth grader in Simsbury, Connecticut.*

This article was originally published in the book *Where I Live Connecticut* in 2016. Read the article with pictures and a Connecticut map showing the trail location at <https://whereilivect.org/ride-the-farmington-canal-heritage-trail/>

“Canal Crazy in Connecticut”: <https://whereilivect.org/canal-crazy-in-connecticut/>

Sources with clickable links:

<https://fchtrail.org/history/>

“The Ill-Fated Farmington Canal,” *Connecticut Explored*, Spring 2008

## Trail Friends



**rains-to-trails**  
conservancy



**East Coast  
Greenway**



**THE FARMINGTON CANAL  
HERITAGE TRAIL**



## FVTC DIRECTORS

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**Ron Goralski**

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**Preston Reed**

**(1916-2013)**



**FARMINGTON CANAL HERITAGE TRAIL  
& FARMINGTON RIVER TRAIL**



## Reorganized and Brighter Website Gets Updates

We have had a soft launch of our newly refreshed and updated website. It's nicely reorganized and brighter. We think you will appreciate the simplified navigation.

Email us from the "Contact FVTC" page. You can still easily join FVTC or renew your existing membership from our "Join Us" page. Membership will now track from your date of joining or renewal, rather than March to March.

You can still buy our trail maps easily from the home page and our cycling jerseys and caps in our nicely reorganized store.

As always, you can use PayPal. If you don't have a PayPal account, you can use debit or credit cards.

If you access our website using a bookmarked URL, please be sure it looks like this: <https://fchtrail.org>.

## Farmington Valley Trails Council Seeks Volunteers

The FVTC has a number of volunteer positions open. We are looking to you to help us fill them. Please contact the Barbara Collins for either position that interests you.

**Communications Director:** FVTC seeks a dynamic Communications Director to interface with the public, local governmental officials, CT officials and the media on all matters relating to the trails. The Communications Director will assure that trail specific content is posted to social media and be responsible for encouraging increased use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) by all people and organizations that have an interest in the trails.

**Prospective FVTC Directors:** FVTC is looking for dynamic, interested individuals who love the trails and are interested in participating in a leadership role in guiding the FVTC to serve its mission to promote and enhance the trails into the future. We need new ideas, experience in a variety of disciplines, enthusiasm for our mission and commitment to the trails.

If you are interested, please contact Barbara Collins at [barbcollins@mac.com](mailto:barbcollins@mac.com)

## Farm to Farm Ride Was a Success

On Saturday, September 11, 2021, FVTC was able to host its 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Farm-to-Farm Ride. A total of 46 riders set off around the town of Simsbury visiting various farms.

The first stop was the Ryan Family Flower Farm where beautiful mums and fresh cut flowers could be purchased. Riders also made stops at J.L. Hall Farm, George Hall Farm, Flamig Farm and Tulmeadow Farm where gourds, fruits, vegetables, ice cream and other goodies were available.

Purchases made by riders travelled along in a support vehicle and were delivered back to where they started. A great ride enjoyed by all. If you were not able to join us this year, we hope to see you next year.

### ABOUT THE FVTC

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 The Arc of Farmington Valley (FAVARH).  
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Contact Information:  
Barbara Collins, President  
Farmington Valley Trails Council  
P.O. Box 576  
Tariffville, CT 06081  
Email: [info@fvgreenway.org](mailto:info@fvgreenway.org)

On your handheld device:  
<https://fchtrail.org>

**Farmington Valley Trails Council**  
**P.O. Box 576**  
**Tariffville, CT 06081**

## Become an FVTC Member!

Check desired box(es) and enclose membership fee:



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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to be contacted for volunteer opportunities? Y / N

Detach and mail to FVTC, P.O. Box 576, Tariffville, CT 06081

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