



Winter Newsletter 2012

Our trail means many things to many people. Our members, trail visitors, and advocates near and far all share a deep love of accessible urban trails connecting central CT cities and towns, for biking, walking, jogging, non-carbon commuting or just plain strolling along. That love unites us in caring to complete our trail in CT, connect it with the growing trail corridor in Massachusetts, and steward it for the future.

Our organization, and the right-of-way that prompted our founding 25 years ago, have come a long way since 1987. Though less dramatic this year than in recent prior years, we continue to make progress. Forty of 56 miles of the right-of-way in Connecticut have now been completed, and six of the 11 towns it passes through have finished the conversion. Four of the five towns where gaps remain fall in our bailiwick, as most of the northern half of CT is now done. Advocates in each town where trail has yet to be built – New Haven, Cheshire, Southington and Plainville (and Farmington to the north) – continue to fight for the vision we all care about, and we are moving in the right direction. Read about the details in this report, and if you live in those towns, please express your support for the trail to your Town Council!

Much of the progress can be measured not so much in terms of mileage of new trail completed, but in the enthusiasm and hard work it inspires. As the gaps continue to close, we've seen some real on-the-ground dedication and volunteerism at the neighborhood level. This past summer a Friends Group got started in New Haven, focusing on maintaining and improving the Newhallville section. We teamed up with the Student Conservation Association, New Haven's Youth-at-Work program and the Urban Resources Initiative of Yale to create new plantings, tend to current ones, and restore the stone dust path for runners. The group, in partnership with us, is laying the groundwork to repeat this success next summer. To me, that's the measure of our future: the extent to which we engage with like-minded partners to keep the trail going once the work of making it real from the Long Island Sound to the Massachusetts border is done.

At the same time, we still face long-standing challenges, particularly in Plainville, which hosts a stretch of active railroad on the corridor we've been using to create the trail. There, a passionate and savvy group, the Plainville Greenway Alliance, is taking the lead in keeping the pressure on town planners, elected officials and the state DOT to design and acquire passage through the town so that through-visitors can get to finished sections on either side.

Your membership helps us support these on-the-ground partners and nurture alliances with other groups who share our vision and connect us regionally to state and regional trail systems and organizations.

I first found the trail 16 years ago when it was just a couple of miles long on either side of the Cheshire-Hamden town line. My son was a baby, and we needed a place to push him in a stroller that was safe and smooth and beautiful. Since then I've logged many a mile on finished and unfinished sections training for running races. Last month, my dog and I ran 20 miles of it with her on a leash. We really appreciated the water fountains along the way, the stone dust path which was easy on my knees, and the varied views of forest, meadow and civilization (and squirrels!). Whether you're running, strolling, blading, biking, or walking your dog, I want to see you out there in 2013. Many thanks for your continued support.

Lisa Fernandez, President



Clean-up in the New Haven Section



**East Coast Greenway
Tour: Portland to Hartford**



Ride-to-Work Day

News on Individual Sections of the Trail

1. **New Haven:** (1.6/3.4 miles; 47% complete) The trail is complete from Hillhouse Ave. to the Hamden town line. There are occasional closures in the southern part of this section while Yale University develops two new residential colleges in the area – please check our website for updates: www.farmingtoncanalgreenway.org The final design for Phase IV, the final section south to the waterfront, is now 60% approved by CONNDOT, including the tunnel section, where historical signage is envisioned. A Friends group dedicated to the New Haven section of the trail launched this year. It is active in the summer months. Our website is the best place to go if you'd like to volunteer.
2. **Hamden:** (9.5 miles; 100% complete) The tunnel under Skiff Street completed in 2011 is proving a boon for trail users seeking safe and efficient crossing. The existing grade crossing, with a traffic light, is still available too. Several groups of high-school students have “adopted” sections of the trail and are doing regular clean-ups. The museum at the Lock Keeper’s House (just south of Shepard Avenue) has been open on nice weekends during the summer and fall. Please stop by and enjoy some of the history of the canal, get a map, or use the restroom! Please contact us if you would like to volunteer to staff it on weekends or adopt a section of trail.
3. **Cheshire:** (2.8/7.5 miles; 37% complete) Cheshire has reached agreement with Dalton Industries on an easement through their property, and the state has agreed to pay for the cost of both the design and construction of the trail there (about 0.6 mile). The cost of the section from West Main St. to Jarvis (about 1.4 miles) will be split 80/20 between the state and Cheshire, and the final section from Jarvis to the Southington line (about 1.9 miles) will be paid for by the state. The Cheshire Town Council voted to reallocate a \$250,000 DEEP grant towards the design, along with another \$112,000 from town funds. Milone and MacBroom was selected as the design firm.
4. **Southington:** (4/6.6 miles; 61% complete) Construction is complete and the trail is open from the Cheshire line through the borough of Plantsville. One company, SRS, has agreed to construct a half-mile section of the remaining portion, though no progress was made in 2012. The bridge over route 322 was painted in 2012.
5. **Plainville:** What little progress that has been made this year has been painfully slow. CTDOT took over negotiation for the unused RR right-of-way on the north side of town from CTDEEP early this year, but those negotiations have ground to a halt with no indication of when (or if) they will begin again. In the meantime, Plainville Greenway Alliance has agreed to work with Town Engineering staff over this winter to develop a preliminary design for that portion of the trail designated by Milone & MacBroom to be located in Norton Park. By Spring 2013, we hope to have that layout complete for review by Town boards and for presentation to the public prior to seeking funds for final engineering and construction. The Bicycle Friendly Committee has also successfully encouraged the Town to submit the busiest on-road portion of the trail in the center of town to CTDOT for approval to install pavement markings (sharrows). Tentative approval has been granted, and we hope to see installation in Spring 2013. This is a major step, as this is a signed State route.

6. **Farmington:** (2.6/5.0 miles; 52% complete) Construction is now complete in Farmington from Red Oak Hill Road north to the Avon line. Farmington will be starting the process of getting quotes for the design and construction of the last section south from Red Oak Hill Road to Cronk Road in Plainville. That will ensure the connection of Plainville to the northern half of the trail.
7. **Avon:** (4.6/4.6 miles; 100% complete) Avon's section of the trail is complete, and mileposts have been installed in cooperation with Farmington and Simsbury. The zero marker is at Red Oak Hill Rd. and increases going north. Once the trail is complete all the way to New Haven, we plan to initiate a project to re-mark the entire trail, starting from Long Wharf in New Haven.
8. **Simsbury:** (7.4/7.4 miles; 100% complete) The final 1.8-mile section of the trail, from Stratton Brook Rd. through Hazel Meadows to Drake Hill Rd., is now complete.
9. **East Granby:** (5.6/5.6 miles; 100% complete) Construction is now complete in East Granby with the installation of the Salmon Brook Bridge and the re-alignment of the trail around the Imperial Nurseries and partially into Granby.
10. **Suffield:** (1.2/1.2 miles; 100% complete) With the refurbishment of several former railroad bridges, construction is now complete in Suffield as well, all the way to the state line.
11. **Southwick, MA:** (6.2/6.2 miles; 100% complete) Construction of Phase 2, from Point Grove Rd. to the Westfield line, was finished in October. Southwick's trail is now paved from the Connecticut line to the Westfield line, a total of about 6.2 miles. Volunteers from the Powder Mill Middle School recently completed a mural in the Point Grove Road Tunnel. The Park and Recreation Department has been working to install accessible benches and display kiosks along the trail.
12. **Westfield, MA:** (1.1/7.4 miles; 15% complete) Phase I of the Columbia River Trail is now complete from the Southwick town line north to just before the Tin Bridge over the Little River. Phase II, which is going out to bid shortly for construction in 2013, will extend the trail another mile to the north. It includes the rehabilitation of two bridges over the Little River. The final two phases, Phase III, from the Northampton line to downtown, and Phase IV, the downtown section, have been designed but not yet funded. Their website is: www.columbiagreenway.org
13. **Southampton, MA:** (0.1/3.9 miles; 3% complete) The concept of a greenway along the railroad right-of-way has been included in the Southampton Open Space Master Plan, and voters approved the purchase of the right-of-way from Pan Am Southern Railway in November 2012. In 2011, as part of the Easthampton Manhan Rail Trail (see update below), a 0.1 mile section of rail trail was constructed in Southampton to connect to Coleman Road - the first portion of the trail built in Southampton!
14. **Easthampton, MA:** (6.3/6.3 miles; 100% complete) The city of Easthampton and the Friends of the Manhan Rail Trail have now completed the trail in Easthampton. They have a great website with lots of information: www.manhanrail.org
15. **Northampton, MA:** (3.5/3.5 miles; 100% complete) The city of Northampton and the Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways distributed a new trail map and continued building a robust trail-support network. Bicycling and walking are being promoted heavily by the city government. North/south passenger rail service through the city (connecting to New Haven) has brought new challenges and opportunities. Construction has started on a trail tunnel under the active rail line that will connect the network of Northampton trails to the Norwottuck Trail that currently runs 10 miles from Northampton through Hadley and Amherst, and into Belchertown (completion late 2013).

JOINT TRAIL MAP PROJECT: Maps of the entire trail in Connecticut are now available on our website as well as on paper. Let us know if you would like one.

WEBSITE: Our new website has been operational since early 2012. Please go there for up-to-date information, news about events, and to contact us about any issues. The address is: www.farmingtoncanalgreenway.org Please check it out!

USEFUL LINKS: East Coast Greenway: www.ecg.org, Bike Walk CT: www.wecyclect.org, Farmington Valley Trails Council: www.fvtrc.org, FCRTTA: www.farmingtoncanalgreenway.org.

THANK YOU!

Hundreds of Association members generously contribute to our organization and provide virtually *all* of our financial support. We are very grateful for your response to our annual membership campaign. We appreciate not only our faithful regular contributors, but also new members and those who have resumed support. We like to think this reflects your understanding that the Association continues to be an effective advocate for rail-trail construction.

As in the past, Association leaders remain involved as significant advocates of Farmington Canal Rail- to-Trail activities at both state and local levels. Your continued, generous support enables the organization to pursue our ultimate goal of an 84-mile trail from New Haven to Northampton, MA, connecting with other major trails at those and intermediate points. If you would like to participate more actively in this stimulating process, please contact Norm Thetford: nthetford@att.net, or write the Association at the address below. Thanks for your help!

Farmington Canal Rail-to-Trail Association

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Farmington Canal Rail-to-Trail Association Board

Lisa Fernandez, <i>President</i>	Richard Lyons
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