

## Winter Newsletter 2009

Dear Friend of the Farmington Canal Rail-Trail:

Thanks in part to your support, 2009 is shaping up to be a year of unprecedented “gap closing” in our trail. Following a ribbon-cutting in October at the New Haven-Hamden town line, we now have a continuous off-road path from downtown New Haven to the middle of Cheshire – some 14 miles! To the north, the trail is also now complete from Farmington to the state line, some 21 miles.

Of course, this past year has not been without its challenges. Like most non-profit volunteer organizations, we feel the impact of a weak economy. Yet growing support for a healthier environment, on top of tighter household finances, has created greater visibility for urban greenways. The trail has been a boon for those of us who, in this era of constrained budgets, stay home for our vacations but still want an active getaway. The majority of Connecticut residents need not travel more than a few miles from home to enjoy a peaceful bike, walk, jog or scoot on the trail. Its central location through densely settled areas means it is accessible for both utilitarian and recreational non-motor travel.

We need to do more to build on emerging partnerships with both official entities in the towns hosting the trail, and with residents of the neighborhoods it winds through. A surging interest in service bodes well for us to engage with people outside the traditional purview of greenway advocacy. We’d like to partner with garden clubs, faith organizations, historical associations, teen empowerment groups, and healthy lifestyle initiatives to increase use of the trail and help maintain it, as parks department budgets have been drastically slashed this year.

Please join us next year for:

- ❖ Trail days next spring and summer, especially National Trail Day, the first Saturday in June;
- ❖ Trail rides or walks as part of the New Haven Festival of Arts and Ideas in June;
- ❖ Fall rides and other events with the Bioregional Group, Elm City Cycling, neighborhood management teams and others.

As always, thank you for your past support. You have made it possible for many to enjoy the greenway and begin a path of lifelong stewardship.

Many happy returns of the season and see you on the trail!



Lisa Fernandez  
President

## FARMINGTON CANAL HERITAGE GREENWAY - UPDATE ON PROGRESS, Cont'd.



**Hamden June 3  
Ribbon Cuttings in 2009**



**New Haven Oct 26**



**Salmon Brook Bridge  
Key Link Completed**

### **Hamden Lockkeeper's House Developments**

The Hamden Lockkeeper's House at Lock 14, one of only two such structures remaining in the state, has been refurbished and will be open, at least part-time, for the benefit of trail users. The house has a restroom, an outside water fountain, and a police substation for the Hamden bike patrol. We are working with the Hamden Historical Society to develop a small museum focused on both the community's history and the history of the canal and the railroad. Details are still being resolved, but it is expected to be open by mid 2010. Volunteers from our organization will likely open the facility and be on site during the summer, probably on weekends. If you have any ideas about what should be in the museum or want to assist in staffing, please contact Norm Thetford (ntheftord@att.net).

### **News on Individual Sections of the Trail**

1. **New Haven:** New Haven has completed the final section (Phase III) north to the Hamden town line, with the "Golden Spike" dedication held on October 26 (center picture above, with Mayor DeStefano, Congresswoman DeLauro and other town officials). FCRTTA participated in the CT Freedom Trail and Amistad's September dedication of a plaque commemorating the work of William Lanson, an African-American entrepreneur who was a major contractor on the canal and who also extended the Long Wharf pier in the 1820s. Yale University has funded the improvements in the bridges over the trail at Prospect St., Hillhouse Ave. and Temple St. Design work for the next section south to the waterfront is well underway. **NOTE: The trail between Canal Street and Science Park will be closed over the winter for installation of a Yale University chiller line. As a temporary replacement, a pedestrian and bicycle detour path will be created along Canal Street, separated from the street using concrete jersey barriers.**
2. **Hamden:** The final section in Hamden, from Connolly Parkway to the New Haven border (about 2.3 miles), is now complete, with the ribbon cutting on June 3 (left picture above with Mayor Henrici, State Senator Joseph Crisco, and David Schaefer, Chairman of the Hamden Farmington Canal Commission). Because the project came in some \$1 million under budget, Hamden is using the extra funds to design and construct a tunnel under Skiff Street to provide a safer crossing.
3. **Cheshire:** Cheshire has reached agreement with Dalton Industries on an easement through their property and has also received a Recreational Trail Grant to help construct the section alongside the Dalton properties, so we now have some action in Cheshire! The town's residents turned down a proposal to fund construction of the trail north of West Main Street solely from the town's resources. However, once Federal funds become available, activity will most likely resume as town management wants to extend the trail and has included funds in the capital budget.

## FARMINGTON CANAL HERITAGE GREENWAY - UPDATE ON PROGRESS, Cont'd.

4. **Southington:** Construction has just started on the next two-mile section south (towards Cheshire) from the portion in the center of Southington that was completed in 2005. The railroad formally abandoned the tracks to just short of the Plainville town line, which will open up additional trail area in the future.
5. **Plainville:** The Plainville Greenway Alliance has been working with town officials, and Milone & MacBroom recently completed a preliminary design outlining the possible routes through the town that don't conflict with the active railroad. Essentially, the southern section will be a combination of on-road along low-volume, low speed roads along with open space parcels; the northern section will be a combination of on-road and original railroad right-of-way; and the center section will be all on-road with a variety of routes being considered. Further public hearings are planned to provide additional information to users and to get additional input on possible routes.
6. **Farmington:** Construction is now complete in Farmington from Red Oak Hill Road north to the Avon line. Farmington has started preliminary design work for the section south from Red Oak Hill Road, now that significant design activity has been started in Plainville.
7. **Avon:** 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 all the trail, starting from Long Wharf in New Haven.
8. **Simsbury:** The final 1.8-mile section of the trail, from Stratton Brook Rd. through Hazel Meadows and past the Ensign-Bickford Company to Drake Hill Rd., is now complete. Previously, the proposed trail had to detour twice that distance through city streets to get to the completed section.
9. **East Granby:** The owners of the Imperial Nursery farm that straddles the right-of-way in the Floydville section granted a land swap (and \$50,000) that shifted the trail to the western edge of their property (along Rt. 10 and actually in Granby instead of East Granby) instead of through the middle. Construction is now complete on the three sections, comprising 3.4 miles. After much delay, the construction of the Salmon Brook Bridge is also now complete (right-hand picture above). The dedication ceremony was on September 20. Your association was one of the groups that helped see the project through to completion.
10. **Suffield:** 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:** Construction is complete on the first section of the trail, from the CT line to the new tunnel at Point Grove Rd. (about three miles). Design of the second phase, about 3.2 miles, is complete; construction will start after the installation of a sewer line under the right-of-way. The TEA bill passed last year has \$4 million earmarked for construction of this and the Westfield section, and Southwick also received funding from Coke through the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.
12. **Westfield, MA:** Construction of the section of trail through Westfield, about 3.2 miles, has been delayed due to funding issues and the installation of a sewer line, now under construction. The trail has been designed and will utilize nine bridges going through Westfield. When finished, this trail will be one of the few elevated trails through an urban area in the country.
13. **Southampton, MA:** There is still resistance from some residents; but a group, "Friends of the Southampton Greenway," has begun to meet on a regular basis. The idea of a greenway based on the right-of-way of the former railroad has been included in the town's recently completed Open Space Master Plan. The State has earmarked funds for the purchase of the right-of-way, and the Pioneer Valley Railroad has stated its willingness to hold the land until the town is ready to go forward with the project. The success of the first Easthampton section should help to move the process along.

## FARMINGTON CANAL HERITAGE GREENWAY - UPDATE ON PROGRESS, Cont'd.

14. **Easthampton, MA:** Construction is complete on the first section of the Manhan Trail, from South Street to Route 5, about 4.2 miles. Part of this trail lies on the right-of-way of the New Haven to Northampton Railroad and will ultimately become part of the Heritage Trail. In September, a portion of this trail had a major washout which cost about \$500,000 to fix.
15. **Northampton, MA:** Construction has started on the portion of the New Haven to Northampton Railroad right-of-way that connects the Norwottuck Trail in the northeast to the Manhan Trail in the south. Construction included a new bridge over Main Street/Rt. 9 that parallels an active rail line. The design of the next phase, which will include a section of rail-with-trail (due to the active portion of the Boston & Maine Railroad – now Pan Am Railway), is underway. This phase will include the junction of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (from the south), the Norwottuck Trail (from the east), and the Northampton Bicycle Path (from the west).

**TRAIL MARKERS:** Frequent users of the trail may have noted that various types of mileage markers occur in several areas. Farmington and Avon have combined to set markers northbound, starting at Red Oak Hill Road. Hamden and Cheshire start at the joint town boundary, with Cheshire marking northbound and Hamden marking southbound. Hamden has one-tenth mile markers and has also color-coded each quarter-mile section to help users identify their location in the event emergency help is needed. New Haven has retained an architectural firm to design informative markers along with mile markers for their trail, which will be installed as part of the final phase. For map enthusiasts, the Google map program now shows greenways, including parts of this trail, which can be helpful in planning a bike trip.

### 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 call Norm Thetford: 203-288-4038, e-mail: [nthetford@att.net](mailto: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

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