

Naugatuck River Greenway Economic Impact Study Focus Group Report

**Prepared as part of the
Naugatuck River Greenway Economic Impact Study
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2. TRAIL USES AND USERS	7
3. PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF MULTI-USE TRAILS	12
4. CHALLENGES	17
5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND EXAMPLES	23
6. COLLECTING DATA & MEASURING IMPACT	36
7. CASE STUDIES/EXAMPLES	38

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document represents a compilation of all coded statements from three focus groups conducted by UConn-Extension as part of the Naugatuck Greenway Economic Impact Study (2015-2016). Focus groups were conducted on the following dates: March 30, 2016 (public health professionals), March 31, 2016 (trail administrators), and April 5, 2016 (local business owners). The fifteen participants were stakeholders along the existing Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and were recruited through local trail organization networks, chambers of commerce, and a "snowball" type referral process. Participants received information about the focus groups in advance including the purpose of the study, agenda for the focus group, and consent forms (permitting UConn's use of the information). Questions for each stakeholder group were developed in advance with feedback from the research team, Naugatuck Council of Governments based on best practices developed by Richard A. Krueger¹. This study was approved by the UConn IRB under protocol #H16-003.

Statements were coded into four main areas: statements about uses and users of the trails, statements about the impacts of trails, statements about challenges, and statements about recommendations. Coding was reviewed and verified by two coders. Where statements may have reflected multiple meanings they are duplicated in the data reported below. Two additional sections were created to specifically address comments related to data collection and impact assessment on the trails, as well as successes and case studies that were mentioned throughout the discussions.

Trail Uses and Users

Statements about trail use during the focus groups reflected the wide range of uses, and potential uses, for multi-use trails as well as a diverse range of existing users. Discussions emphasized the potential for increasing use by overcoming winter maintenance challenges and promoting and supporting trail use among millennials, young families and those who use it for shopping, transit, to access local amenities and for commuting.

Summary of perceptions of current trail uses

- Organizations use trails as a venue for providing public health education
- Schools use trails as part of curricular activities and for fundraisers
- Communities use trails for family events and fundraisers
- Trails are used in winter, whether they are maintained or not
- Women and young people use trails when they are perceived as safe

¹ Krueger, Richard A. (1994). Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research. SAGE Publications, Inc. 2nd edition

² Bar owner describing how business may drop when there are other events on or around the trail that divert

- While there is a vocal contingent of bicyclists, pedestrian users likely comprise a significant percentage of total users
- Extant trails may not be accessed or promoted to low-income people, minorities or people with disabilities
- Perception that users are primarily suburbanites and out of towners
- Perception that most users are families and light recreational users who value safety
- Employers use trails to promote employee wellness
- Trails serve an important role as transportation routes, connecting communities, and connecting local residents to amenities
- Notes on need to monitor, collect and track use

Impacts of Trail Use

Statements about the impacts of trail use included the trails function as an educational tool (for health and environmental education), community development and planning purposes (to increase community ownership, as an amenity to promote for economic development, and to slow traffic) as well as fiscal impacts such as spending at local businesses and potential for increasing property values. The statements here are perceived benefits and should be viewed in light of the discussions regarding challenges associated with collecting trail impact data.

Summary of statements about the impacts of trail use

- Trails promote general health, well being, and public health education
- Trails create community ownership and spark other community development initiatives
- Trails may serve as tools to educate and promote coordination among trail stakeholders
- Trails help to increase environmental awareness
- Trails add value to and encourage maintenance of nearby properties
- Direct impacts of trails on businesses can be both positive and negative
- Trails may help to slow traffic
- Trails are an amenity that can be marketed to attract young families and millennials both for fitness and commuting

Challenges

Statements about challenges focused primarily on development issues, routing and construction, maintenance, and safety issues. Specific challenges are listed below.

- Actual or perceived safety and security issues
- ADA Compliance/ access for people who are differently abled
- Lack of public awareness
- Routing issues
- Liability concerns
- Lack of organizational capacity
- Competition or lack of cooperation with neighboring towns

- Poor planning or lack of budget for maintenance
- Lack of support from community leaders/businesses
- Unsafe connections from neighborhoods to the trail
- Lack of consistency/state policy or standardization of regulations
- Difficulty working with state agencies
- Too much signage
- Costs of aging trail infrastructure and funding issues in general
- Trees, foliage maintenance issues- poor site planning
- Too much fencing
- Water safety in areas near a river
- Poor mile marking
- Graffiti
- Few existing businesses along the trail
- Conflicting uses

Recommendations

Of most interest to other trail developers may be the suggested recommendations. Recommendation statements were organized into the following general categories: promotion, safety, amenities, demonstrating value, trail maintenance, community and business engagement, and trail planning and routing. Recommendations are summarized below.

- Promotion
 - Use environmental education to increase appreciation for the outdoors
 - Develop events to promote trail use
 - Consider using social media
 - Create a consistent brand including frequent and standardized signage
- Safety
 - Get more people using the trail to increase safety
 - Develop citizen/volunteer patrol programs
 - Engage public safety officials in using trails
 - Be attentive to traffic safety issues
 - Provide a way for users to locate themselves in case of emergency
 - Consider emergency access points
 - Ensure cell phone access
- Amenities
 - The three B's: bike racks, benches and bathrooms
 - Develop good traffic signage and cross walks
 - Maps and consistent way finding signage are essential
 - Ensure adequate parking at trail access points
 - Adjust downtown streetscapes to accommodate Greenway participants

- Demonstrating Value
 - Collect data about trail use (all statements related to this topic can be found separately in the section on collecting data and measuring impact).
 - Educate leaders, planners, economic developers and citizens about how the trail impacts your community
 - Look for low-cost, high visibility projects
- Trail Maintenance
 - Use technology like SeeClickFix to get the right information to the right people
 - Create a plan and budget for maintenance from the start
 - Know who your users are and plan for winter maintenance
 - Engage volunteers in maintaining the trail
 - Choose materials that are graffiti resistant
- Community & Business Engagement
 - Find champions, involve community groups and get them to take ownership
 - Engage a diverse range of businesses and create ways to connect them to the trail
 - Involve schools and young people
 - Integrate the trail into other community planning efforts from the beginning
 - Collaborate with neighboring communities on cost sharing and to create consistency in signage
 - Build a culture of support for the trail in your community
 - Be patient and go slow
 - Look to other communities and trails as examples
 - Use the trail to stimulate innovative ideas
- Trail Planning and Routing
 - Create a destination and an enjoyable experience for users

2. TRAIL USES AND USERS

Statements about trail use during the focus groups reflected the wide range of uses, and potential uses, for multi-use trails as well as a diverse range of existing users. Discussions emphasized the potential for increasing use by overcoming winter maintenance challenges and promoting and supporting trail use among millennials, young families and those who use it for shopping, transit, to access local amenities and for commuting.

Summary- perceptions of current uses

- Organizations use trails as a venue for providing public health education
- Schools use trails as part of curricular activities and for fundraisers
- Communities use trails for family events and fundraisers
- Trails are used in winter, whether they are maintained or not
- Women and young people use trails when they are perceived as safe
- While there is a vocal contingent of bicyclists, pedestrian users likely comprise a significant percentage of total users
- Extant trails may not be accessed or promoted to low-income people, minorities or people with disabilities
- Perception that users are primarily suburbanites and out of towners
- Perception that most users are families and light recreational users who value safety
- Employers use trails to promote employee wellness
- Trails serve an important role as transportation routes, connecting communities, and connecting local people to amenities
- Notes on need to monitor, collect and track use

2.1. Organizations use trails as a venue for providing public health education

Next week is national public health week. What we are doing in our health district, we are setting up a booth and promoting exercise, because that was one of our community health assessment identified areas of need. So we are setting up an information booth, providing water with our logo on there to promote our services, and raffling off a Fit Bit to entice. So we utilize it a lot. We use it for the people who are actually already exercising. We partner with the YMCA, with the regional hospital. So we utilize it..

We did a specific program with at risk youth from Greater New Haven on the Wallingford Trail. There were many families in the youth who came out with our event who did not know that the trail existed and was so close and accessible to them.

Chamber of Commerce Health and Wellness committee had been working on and partnering with relevant local agencies to take a part of the trail and doing different things along the trail.

My nurse will be sitting doing blood pressures, we're having a staff member set up public information sessions on Lyme disease. All of the issues that we see creeping up in the health department. But also the Y will be doing exercising along the trail. It's a day dedicated to educating, using the trail as an educational tool. Maybe people using the trails are great at rollerblading, but not informed about Lyme disease, an easily avoided risk.

2.2. Schools use trails as part of curricular activities and for fundraisers

As the room mother for my kids' school, the trail is only a block from school. When we were low on funds at the school, we got creative and used the trail for a scavenger hunt. It was a learning tool and a healthy tool all at the same time.

But the best was the 1st grade field trip. That also has a bad effect, in part. We had kids who had already walked on the trail a lot who knew the trail. But we had one kid who walked to school along the trail and got lost on the way. But parents use it a lot.

As far as the school goes, like I said, we host the walk to use the trail. We have a big group that participates in the river run, which is a 5k or 10k or half marathon that also uses part of the trail. All these activities help inform the community about and take ownership of the trail.

2.3. Communities use trails for family events and fundraisers

We use the trail in Cheshire a lot as part of our public events and so on. Now that we're extending it to Southington people are getting very excited. Our problem now is that we don't have any parking spaces!

I've done fundraisers on it for other organizations, including clean up the trail days.

I sit on a board of public health and we do several fundraisers. We did one on the Quinnipiac Trail, with a booth right at the entrance, with balloons. It's a family event. The Quinnipiac Trail has the trail but it also has a labyrinth at the start of the Wallingford Regional Trail. We made it an event, and there were people there on their own who participated because they saw us. This year we're making it a larger event, using the facilities that are there to entice more activities.

Certainly we are and we all are users of the trail. We also use the trail for our annual muscular dystrophy walk and the trail is part of the route.

2.4. Trails are used in winter, whether they are maintained or not

Cheshire does half and half, so half of the trail is plowed, and the rest is left snowy for the skiers and snowshoers. It's all based around trail users. It gets used both ways.

One section of the trail is plowed. We would love to have more but it's going to take..(It's a one mile section). People walk on that all winter.

2.5. The dog walkers are year round, but they are currently disqualified from the Greenway.

People are riding their bikes to work in snowstorms and in the pouring rain. You can't believe how people are out riding bikes. Conditions in which the hardest core of my friends would not ride bikes. It's just the reality of the situation.

We have a lot of lower income people using it as a commuting resource, not just a recreational resource. And that's why I'm always arguing with the Parks and rec department about whether we should plow or not, the snow in the winter. People use this resource to go to work and to go shopping, and when it doesn't get plowed until April that's a transportation justice, social justice issue.

2.6. Women and young people use trails when they are perceived as safe

I grew up in Cheshire and used it all the time when I was younger. The trail is used year round, for example the Santa Run in December.

We do keep demographic information on the users on our part just to give you some information. We had 16,984 users last year from 37 states and 74 countries. 39 percent of users were women

Its safe. That's why so many women use it. They don't have to deal with traffic. You can ..bring your dog along. It has many many many different uses, so from an economic standpoint and a social standpoint

While there is a vocal contingent of bicyclists, pedestrian users likely comprise a significant percentage of total users

But we've seen at least 90% of the usage is walking, very few bikes

2.7. Extant trails may not be accessible or promoted to low-income people, minorities or people with disabilities

A couple of weeks ago we had a mom and a son in a wheelchair who couldn't use our tidal marsh trail because it's a soft trail and not paved, and we had to send them over to Quinnipiac Park where it used to be a street with houses on it. Which is historic and we're trying to do more but we're having a problem with DEEP. And this poor kid in a wheelchair didn't have a place to go outside and enjoy the river, since it was not paved. You know it has to be considered that it's for them too. These trails are for people of all ability levels.

Yes, and if you look at the statistics and public data on health the ethnic groups and social groups that need this aren't aware of this trail and aren't using it.

2.8. Perception that users are primarily suburbanites and out-of-towners

Yes, there were way fewer users once you cross into the cities, and a lot of use in the suburban area

The trail is a real draw for people. They come from all over the state to stay at hotels and ride the bikes. And they come back and do it again. They come here just to use the trail system.

2.9. Perception that most users are families and light recreational users who value safety

So it sounds like there's more use for recreation and less use for transportation. But as far as how our kids and families use it, well as long as you've got an ice cream shop along the way, or a Starbucks along the way, and a few restaurants and bars along the way, it makes for an easy transportation route and a pleasant walk

Well we're starting to see in the past when we've been primarily high end, were starting to see people say "I want fenders and I want a rack and I want to be able to take my bike to work."

We get customers from the trail who are biking, walking their dogs, riding their scooters if they are handicapped. A lot of walkers. We have three or four running groups that start and stop at the pub.

I see our section as more of a recreational facility than as a commuting facility. There are some bikes, but it's more of a community park in the downtown area for socializing.

We know how to ride on the road. We can ride on the road. Most of us do. Were not building the trail for those people, we're building the trail for those people who either haven't been bicycling for a long time, have a family, grandparents, people who want to get out in a safe environment. So that's where this safety thing comes in.

2.10. Employers use trails to promote employee wellness

I use the trails for my employees and patients who want to exercise outside of the gym. It's less intimidating than the gym.

I worked at a nearby hospital, we used it all the time as part of our Employee Wellness Challenge. At the hospital, something we've done for many years is we've had Employee Wellness events where we do a challenge or a competition based around physical activity and nutrition to encourage employees to get out into the community. They would hold specific events, one week it would be bowling and everyone would meet a specific bowling alley and

do bowling. And we would keep a tracker or a planner of how many times we used a trail, or however many times we walked the track at the local high school. We would encourage employees to explore the opportunities for physical activity in the community

Well yes, because in commercial zones, there s a couple of commercial zones, you'll see the guys out jogging on their lunch hour. It a safe place to go and run, stay off the roads. I don't know about any of the business..

I have employees who ride the trail to work and back, along the trail.

2.11. Trails serve an important role as transportation routes, connecting communities, and connecting local people to amenities

The thing I harp on all of the time is connectivity. So the spine trail the Farmington heritage trail that goes up to North Hampton Mass from New Haven, a little over 80 miles, connects all of those communities. So you have a situation where it's not just the old school kind of concept of a linear park. But it's also an alternative transportation corridor. And you can actually get one place to another. You can actually go to the store; you can go places from point to point on your bike or walking. And that's the other real huge issue here is if you are talking about multimodal connectivity,

And another point that I wanted to mention. It's not spoken of very often. And that is that these trails are transportation. However they are transportation of a different sort for a segment of the population that is easily overlooked. And those are people who cant afford cars. And they can only get to work by bike.lives in an area of town, Plainville, where he sees people biking to and from their jobs in the park on the street he lives on, because they need a way to get down to route 10 to the food service establishments. So they close at 9 (pm), maybe they get done at 11 and they're on their way back home. There is a whole class of people will use these and its against all of the rules of the trail. Because the trail says were open from dawn to dusk. We close at dusk. You can't use it after that. They people will use it. It's a fact of life. And I'm glad it's going to be there for them because otherwise they're getting further underprivileged than they already are. So I don't want that group forgotten.

We have a lot of lower income people using it as a commuting resource, not just a recreational resource. And that's why I'm always arguing with the Parks and rec department about whether we should plow or not, the snow in the winter. People use this resource to go to work and to go shopping, and when it doesn't get plowed until April that's a transportation justice, social justice issue. It's absolutely a consideration for everybody's town, but especially for an urban setting more than the suburbs.

We just had an application for P&Z where they're doing a mini walk, and now they're building a spur that'll build off the trail and into the shopping area,

3. PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF MULTI-USE TRAILS

Statements about the impacts of trail use included the trails function as an educational tool (for health and environmental education), community development and planning purposes (to increase community ownership, as an amenity to promote for economic development, and to slow traffic) as well as fiscal impacts such as spending at local businesses and potential for increasing property values. The statements here are perceived benefits and should be viewed in light of the discussions regarding about challenges associated with collecting trail impact data reported above.

Summary of statements about the impacts of trail use

- Trails promote general health, well being, and public health education
- Trails create community ownership and spark other community development initiatives
- Trails may serve as tools to educate and promote coordination among trail stakeholders
- Trails help to increase environmental awareness
- Trails add value to and encouraging maintenance of nearby properties
- Direct impacts of trails on businesses can be both positive and negative
- Trails may help to slow traffic
- Trails are an amenity that can be marketed to attract young families and millennials both for fitness and commuting

3.1. Trails help to promote general health, well being, and public health education

I think the major impact is to get the people out and walking.

There's always environmental impacts. You have people going out there and appreciating the environment. Cleaning up and getting groups to realize the gems that they have. I can't say it's for sure but you can see that people are taking more care of areas and cherishing them.

It may be more anecdotal, but seeing Facebook check-ins and MapMyRun maps show that people are using these trails for health. What about doing an incentive, like a giveaway at the end if people log the number of times they use to trail?

I don't think sometimes the parks and recs people understand as, they know exercise, but they might not understand that the trails are important public health assets. It was a teachable moment.

3.2. Trails help to create community ownership and spark other community development initiatives

When you have the trail, the great thing that happens is it's not just the trail. You need to look at the big picture, there's a lot of things going on and the trail allows us to take advantage of some of it.

Public Works is really excited about working for the trail and has really taken charge, in part because people see them on the trail and compliment them or complain to them, and it's given them some amount of publicity.

Once you have a trail, there's more opportunities for other parts of town to become walkable and also for developing youth programs to get kids on bikes. We have two such programs now. We've children in fourth grade that now have bicycling as part of their PE. So once you become more of a bicycle friendly community.

3.3. Trails serve as tools to promote coordination and collaboration among trail stakeholders

It's a smart business decision, and it'll be a great asset both to town and their business. This also helped them overcome some minor opposition from neighbors and the public, and build support in corners where they might not have had it before.

But it's that type of public private partnership stuff I think were going to see a lot more of. I really do because one of the issues is that there are so many people using these trail systems now that you've almost got a captive audience to an extent.

Even if there's opposition, many towns will have opposition, but it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy eventually. People recognize as it gets closer to their municipality they decide maybe they really do want to be a part of this.

3.4. Trails are tools for increasing environmental awareness

I think it opened up our rivers, completely changed the attitudes about our rivers. So going down Sunday morning nine o'clock and it was full with boats for parking and there's an unbelievable number of fishermen down there. The word got out that this was a great place for fishing.

I think that it's opened up the perspective with the youth. You can go down there and look at the animals.

3.5. People perceive the trail as adding value to and encouraging maintenance of nearby properties

Realtors are now marketing properties close to trails. The real estate signs for properties near trails have the notice on the sign on people's front lawns. That's an indicator that at least real estate agents are saying that this adds value to your property. But it also serves the purpose of

encouraging use by showing people that it's adding value.

There was a big concern that my property values were going to go down or crime would increase, and I'm sure we have stats that show that that isn't the case. And property values have increased as a result. As it turns around, the trail has added value to your property as opposed to be a derelict rail. But after seeing the value of the trail, a new neighborhood nearby is clamoring for the trail to come to provide that vital link.

Really push abutting landowners to clean up their act, in many cases.

But we really saw a lot of abutting business owners or homeowners push, all of a sudden now your property is very visible whereas before you didn't care what it looked like back there. So what's happened in Southington, I think some of these business owners have taken the opportunity to really promote themselves. So in our town that's been a very positive aspect of it.

3.6. Direct impacts of trails on businesses can be both positive and negative

The flip side of that is there something the town could do to offset the cost to me. And we've asked. One of the nice things is these two folks were instrumental in helping to get my little sign in the trail. That does bring in a small amount of business so I'm very appreciative. One of the proposals last year was a kiosk at these events that identified all of the businesses downtown without having to pay advertising dollars. It didn't pass but it was proposed.

I'd like to grow into but they won't ever move it as and we've stayed in that location despite it being too small for our operations to stay near the trail. The trail draws people to rent bikes from us. Even though they do the free bike in town, we do a whale of rentals for people wanting to bike up and down the trail.

Cyclists spend more money than the average person in a car. They are there in town for a longer period of time. You can park 10 or 12 bikes in one car space.

I was to say 10-15% is related to the trail I don't think that would be too far out of line. A half a million dollar sales - it adds up. And of course it's real seasonal too. We can just see.. we have a lot of people that come to the business from all over the country - they'll fly their bikes in and so forth they get on their bikes right behind our store and go off on the trail. So its not like they are coming to ride the trail and we just happen to be a little place where they can ship their bikes to. I've already got 30 people coming in- eight from Florida - over the next four months that we're already scheduling. And it's primarily to ride the trail.

So the impact on my business is not easily measured obviously because it's so integrated into what we do.

It's amazing how some businesses caught on right away in terms of value and others are still scratching their head and they don't see the bigger picture.

But the trail wouldn't be successful if the businesses weren't supporting the people to get repeat customers. So the businesses have to rally around it and so forth. Because the repeat businesses ...and over the past three years over the summer time a lot of it is repeat business.

My business actually dropped this year because of the economy coming back. Again, it's not just the trail, it's the whole package. So we can talk about music festival, concerts all summer. The trail is a big piece of that. People walk the trail to get to the concerts so they don't have to deal with traffic. And if it wasn't for that trail people would be able to park close enough to go. People always say of that music must be great for your business. And I say those are my worst nights!²

So it's not always as obvious as you might think.

It costs more to have a trail in your town. It costs more. It takes more tax collars to have a trail. If a strong viable community of taxpayers doesn't support that tax, then the people who are paying taxes have to pay more.

If you're looking for a place to stop and eat or drink bam have it right next to the trail and you've got people right there.

3.7. Trails may help to slow traffic

And the foot traffic slows, people see a lot more at 10 miles an hour than they do at 30 or 40.

3.8. Trails are an amenity that can be marketed to attract young families and millennials

I also work with people that are trying to relocate in the area. And just like I show them the library and the town halls, I also show them the stop off and drop off locations on the bike trails,

And there's nothing worse than relocating with children that are of -5 years of age with kids who were 10 or 15 years of age - your life is over if you do that to a child. So I said, you know, are your children self sufficient. And they said oh yea we all have cell phones. I said do they have bicycles? They said yea, and I told them to bring their bikes. So we brought them and they had drop off locations for the kids and we looked at houses and they moved to town. That's what closed the deal for them.

² Bar owner describing how business may drop when there are other events on or around the trail that divert regular customers away.

I had a realtor - same thing. She sent me an email saying I have three clients I'm working with- ones a tri-athlete. She went through all of their interests. She said give me information on all of your bike clubs all of your events and I just barraged her with information. She closed all three.

Another impact to the store turns out to be the commuting aspect as well. We've got folks, since the trail is planned to go around to Tarifville, so they are actually talking about being able to commute to Hartford from this area. And so the impact on the store economically its hard to say but we do get a lot of people that do commute.

But there's a growing number of young people who want to get their fitness in in the morning and at night, they want to be able to commute to work, they want to be able to commute without having to go over the mounting and to compete with cars. So that link to Hartford again, it's a huge draw for business for recruiting young talent.

[A developer] is realizing that there's a lot of new businesses and new housing developments going in that he's going to benefit.... he didn't realize it until we told him that he was on one of those sharrows routes. He actually invited us to come and talk to him because he heads up a group called Simsbury North, which is another borough in Simsbury and he's been buying some land up that way. And I think he realizes that's the next big growing area. And he wants to make sure that there's a route form the trail to all of the businesses in Simsbury north.

The people at Dorset Crossing there's two facilities there, one is Dorset Crossing which is apartments. They actually have their own bikes and they are one my sponsors. They know how important it is to be able to attract tenants via the bike story.

We have 88 units of luxury apartments called Mill Commons, the group I'm partnered with. Were 100% occupied. And young people living there don't have the storage area of faculties, but on occasion, it's a nice day, lets go for a bike ride

4. CHALLENGES

Statements about challenges focused primarily on development issues, routing and construction, maintenance, and safety issues. Specific challenges are listed below.

- Actual or perceived safety and security issues
- Poor access for people who are differently abled
- Lack of public awareness
- Routing issues
- Liability concerns
- Lack of organizational capacity
- Competition or lack of cooperation with neighboring towns
- Poor planning or lack of budget for maintenance
- Lack of support from community leaders/businesses
- Unsafe connections from neighborhoods to the trail
- Lack of consistency/state policy or standardization or regulations
- Difficulty working with state agencies
- Too much signage
- Costs of aging trail infrastructure and funding issues in general
- Trees, foliage maintenance issues- poor site planning
- Too much fencing
- Water safety in areas near a river
- Poor mile marking
- Graffiti
- Few existing businesses along the trail

4.1. Actual or perceived safety and security issues

I think now with trails there's also indications of police incidents, where there have been occasional exposures and muggings. That's something that we did not consider in our planning.

But once I hit the Hamden line, I was very isolated and all alone. Once I was down to Dixwell I felt unsafe, and would turn around and come back, because there weren't enough people.

how do you overcome the stigma and the perception that as you get into Hamden and New Haven?

4.2. Poor access for people who are differently abled

A couple of weeks ago we had a mom and a son in a wheelchair who couldn't use our tidal marsh trail because it's a soft trail and not paved, and we had to send them over to Quinnipiac

Park where it used to be a street with houses on it. Which is historic and we're trying to do more but we're having a problem with DEEP. And this poor kid in a wheelchair didn't have a place to go outside and enjoy the river, since it was not paved. You know it has to be considered that it's for them too. These trails are for people of all ability levels.

4.3. Lack of public awareness

I don't think enough people know about it, though. You guys have been using it for 30 years, but there's still a lot of work to be done to make sure there's access for all. Getting the word out that anyone can use it, even from outside of the community.

Yes, and if you look at the statistics and public data on health the ethnic groups and social groups that need this aren't aware of this trail and aren't using it.

There are so many great routes in town that no one knows about.

4.4. Routing issues

There is a long term goal of connecting the NRG to the FCT through Cheshire and Waterbury but we're not finding a real good path for it but that's why it's a long term.

We do not have access to the same abandoned railroad right of way. It was in Southington, it was in Simsbury, because we have an active rail, active freight on this north south line. So we know we're not going to be able to easily go alongside that railroad. We're going to have to find other ways.

4.5. Liability concerns

Liability is really a touchy issue with a lot of communities. But the real key to reducing liability is maintenance and good planning prevents liability issues best. Fencing design, proper standards followed then that reduces liability. It's a big budget issue.

4.6. Lack of organizational capacity

: Some trails have very active community groups that will be willing to take this up, but when community groups are not strong they aren't able to maintain very well. Then it's up to city and towns and that becomes problematic.

4.7. Competition or lack of cooperation with neighboring towns

To demonstrate how important this has become to towns, Simsbury used to be the only game in town, in the Farmington Valley- we were bike friendly, we had the bike share, kids were all on bikes. bicycle friendly infrastructure. Well now Avon, Collinsville, Farmington, Southwick

Massachusetts all said we need a piece of this. We want to get our hands into the cyclist pie. So now were competing with all these other town as our businesses.

But you're right that it is a collaboration. We want people coming into this area. We want bike friendly Avon, Farmington. We want people coming to this area. We want this trail to become a destination. So we work with Collinsville on their bike ..

4.8. Poor planning or lack of budget for maintenance

Some of these trails were proposed as maintenance free, but that's obviously not true.

Something we're doing with the multi-use trail with Fastrack, where DOT is supposed to maintain it. But we're on it more and more maintaining it ourselves. But we don't have a line item for maintaining roads, either, it's just another thing that we do.

4.9. Lack of support from community leaders/businesses

We tell our town leaders we need to keep pushing the envelope because we want to make Simsbury a destination for cyclists. We want them to come to the pub. Some businesses will say I'm in the jewelry business I don't get anything out of this. Well you do,. All boats rise when money comes into town, and that's part of the story we've been trying to communicate to people.

We've been trying very hard to get businesses to buy bicycle racks. In many cases the businesses that we call on are not the property owners. So we have to go to the property managers.

Well the property managers say well the [trail] is a pain in the neck to snow plow around, they are a pain in the neck to mow around. These are people who come in, and pay the rent. They are paying for things. They are your customers. And more and more are coming by bike now. But the management is doing well to engage with the trail.

Otherwise they were in the handicapped ramp laying down. They are safety hazard. But for some reason we see a lot of resistance from businesses for putting in the bike racks.

who are on the bike trail and the road at the same time are fools if they don't realize that now they have to have two facades, one for the [bicyclists] and one for the cars.

And businesses have been faced with a lot of economic stress, and taxes, and issues. So I understand.

Well if you think you're trying to have your business survive and keep inventory and keep employees and keep the doors open something has to give. Unfortunately it's always this type of program that has to give.

4.10. Unsafe connections from neighborhoods to the trail

The problem is getting there safely if you are a family with kids. And I think if we were to have done something differently we would've done a lot more forward thinking on good safe arterial connections down from neighborhoods down to the trail to get people to those businesses safely. I hear students when they are coming down- the first thing parents want to know is there a safe route do I have to worry about my kids on bikes really congested road.

Its not such a big deal with other areas but access points to the trail where they intersect with road and road intersections that the trail crosses aren't a big part of maintenance that's tough to get a handle on because some of those projects involve state highways and downtown areas. But some of them may be just be simple areas where kids may be using the trail and the access point is not real easy for them to navigate without crashing or they have to get off of their bike.

And we have ongoing issues with that. One of the issues is with a curb cut on the trail is sightlines and is it safe to cross? That's a major issue.

4.11. Lack of consistency/state policy or standardization or regulations

Our state has not created any policies to dictate what municipalities have to do. So you'll see differences as you go from one town to another. So it's important that you get started with some sort of standardization.

4.12. Difficulty working with state agencies

It was an immense hassle to get, for instance pedestrian activated flashers up. It would take years. Literally years of studies and people saying oh I lost the study. No really!

It's just a hassle, because then you have to do entry permits for the work, and they impose a lot of restrictions on you that aren't really necessary. Where if you are doing it as a town you call the guys down at the garage and two days later you've got the sign up and the cross walk banded. With the state can take 6 months to a year to do that

4.13. Too much signage

We don't want to have the trail looking like Las Vegas with signs everywhere. "My sign is bigger than your sign"- we cant have that.

4.14. Costs of aging trail infrastructure- funding

we have one of the oldest trails in the states. Its gorgeous, but it's old, dated. And everyone compares it to the newer trails. All of the traffic takes its toll and New England winters take their toll. So we have to always be lobbying for those dollars.

It's just insanely expensive, just to give you an example, what it costs us to put a bike on the street. When we get one (a bike racks) that's rusty, it's \$153 per bike to clean up and its \$50 to insure it. If we used a bike docking system with the swipe card, it'd be a couple thousand per bike.

Even if they have a pilot program they would need sponsorship tax money- either a hospital ..

That's a case in point because in many towns they do have a line item budget for parks and rec, but the town garage doesn't necessarily have a line item budget.

We have very little crime on the trail, but if the police department isn't out there. How many hours can you put the police out on a bike and be effective versus in a cruiser and be effective, and the police will choose the cruiser of course.

4.15. Trees, foliage maintenance issues- poor site planning

There's a very important feature as they are building trails is that they've had problems with tree routes.

When Burlington was first built it was not built correctly. It just wasn't. And so one of the issue came up was that it was being destroyed by root intrusions.

The tree canopy is nice, but with that comes other maintenance and costs that were never included in the planning.

We cannot maintain all of the plantings we put in, and we put in fences that the mower wouldn't fit under so they have to use a weed whacker in addition which takes more time and costs.

4.16. Too much fencing

I would say fencing on our particular trail because we go right by the Farmington River.

An awful lot of the original fence especially in the in the older systems does not need to be there. So one of the things we did is we write a white paper on where you have to have fencing. And I think we did 12 difference cross-sections and 12 difference states and their regs. And came up with specific percentage slope and all of the things you need to know to have to have fence. I know you talked about this in depth. And you've reduced fence by about a third in Simsbury. And it's still an ongoing problem. There's no two ways about it.

4.17. Water safety in areas near a river

Burlington's fire department worked really closely on ramps and fencing, and we've had a lot of issues with people falling into the river.

4.18. Poor mile marking

Once those things are done and we have the proper mileage of the whole trail system, for example there's several mile 0s in different towns

4.19. Graffiti

We put in nice examples of medallions and brownstone piers but people graffiti'd over some of the pieces and we can't clean them, or stole some pieces from the trails.

4.20. Few existing businesses along the trail

In our area, our recreational trail leads to commercial destinations on each end, and there's nothing Burlington can do because the area is not a commercial area. We've been exploring, but we haven't developed alongside the trail as of yet.

4.21. Conflicting uses

we learned of new uses, like fishing. Something that we didn't think about or plan for. And the fishing people for example used the trail in different directions to cross into the river to fish.

And we also had a problem with snowmobiles and motorcycles which really tear the stone dust trails up. And bollards are useless against them because they're coming in from the farms.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND EXAMPLES

The following recommendation statements are organized into the following general categories: Promotion, Safety, Amenities, Demonstrating Value, Trail Maintenance, Community & Business Engagement, and Trail Planning & Routing.

5.1. Promotion

5.1.1. Use environmental education to increase appreciation for the outdoors

We have to also look at what we do for fun. We have to change the mindset from walking at the mall to walking on the trail outdoors.

I think it's also educating people about what "hiking" means. It isn't climbing Everest, it's a nice walk.

5.1.2. Develop events to promote trail use

You've got to get people thinking about it and planning on using it.

People aware, educating people on the great trail that's part of their community, doing events to get people to actually use it.

It's about promoting it and doing events that would get people out there using it. As you said you saw less people, you were alone, not enough people around.

I'm sure there are youth groups of some kinds in the neighborhoods, if you build youth events around use of the trail and environmental projects, those people will keep using the trails and make users feel safer. You get the youth involved early on I'm sure there's a way we can make the whole trail feel good for people you know.

5.1.3. Consider using social media

And when it comes to the website, you want to use something where people are already using, like Facebook and so on. We're working on getting kids to check in and show that they're using the trail, so we're using hash tags since the mayor uses twitter to send messages to the mayor that they're using the trail.

5.1.4. Create a consistent brand including frequent signage

But if you want to capture tourism, you've got to have a consistent brand. We're working on a logo, for example.

5.2. Safety

5.2.1. Get more people using the trail to increase safety

As you get more and more and more people on the trail it becomes self-policing. So not only do you have much less crime or no crime, in the case of the vast majority of the trail system that I know if, you get less graffiti, you get less kids kicking in fence rails, all of the stuff that traditionally we used to have in abundance 15 years ago is almost all gone because there's so many people using the trail that it is in fact self policing

Again the best solution is getting more people on the trail and more eyes on the trail.

You can use as many words as you want even a few pictures but get out on that trail and experience the freedom.

There's safety in numbers. So if somebody asks, a member of our group asks, is there any proof of that? There is. You can find the study online that will prove that there is actually safety. The more that there are cyclists on the road, the better motorists act around them motorists act around them. The fewer of us the more difficult it is for motorists to figure out how to do that.

5.2.2. Develop citizen/volunteer patrol programs

And you have communities that have police explorers, use them on the trails. Most of these high school kids have to do community service.

Just to follow up on that, from my experience and working on trails for a lot of years, I think the first key is that the community needs to patrol the trail. If members of the community begin patrolling the trail, it can provide a seed of use to make people feel safe. Then you get a critical mass of people out there using the trail and once you have a large number of people using it you almost don't need the patrol anymore.

If you did get Parks and Recreation on board maybe they could supply high school or college students to provide patrols as a volunteer opportunity, help with measurements and help with.

5.2.3. Engage public safety officials in using trails

Our public safety in our town has a Segway and some PD bikes for trail access and patrolling.

5.2.4. Be attentive to traffic safety issues

Especially for people with children. Safety. Well making it a safe road so that they are aren't afraid that their child is going to wander into traffic.

So we've said, this trail in order to be successful has to be safe for users of all ages. Parents, kids.

5.2.5. Provide a way for users to locate themselves in case of emergency

We painted mile markers into the trail, so that if you're reporting to the police department or maintenance you can locate it.

The medallion either gives you the exact mileage from a specific point, or in some cases it's a color, but whatever it is that's important.

5.2.6. Consider emergency access points

...three access points on the trail before you had those ramps installed, which was a big deal.

And we've numbered the ramps which have helped a lot.

5.2.7. Ensure cell phone access

5.3. Amenities

5.3.1. The three B's: bike racks, benches and bathrooms

So bike racks: another organization I work with is the New Haven Green Fund, and we give out funds. We just gave money to the Long Wharf Theater to provide bike racks. So bicycle groups in new haven and all that. It may be worth thinking about how we finance these improvements.

The basic fiscal part of parking, trash receptacles, dog poo bags, restrooms, benches,

The benches, we have a program to install benches, and I know Southington does as well. We have kiosks, information kiosks, along the trail that not only, we contribute particularly to the installation of those but we also keep them up. The advocacy groups keep those the information those up to date- maps notices and so forth.

One of the big things is restrooms, provide those and boom you've got warm bodies who will stop.

5.3.2. Develop good traffic signage and cross walks

If you're doing signage the only sign that I would suggest highly is that when they did Cheshire they did not initially promote cross walks ok and pedestrian right of ways and we were having accidents like you can't imagine so they finally put those little drive over ones and I will tell you

I really think that it has brought a wider range of people observing pedestrians walking. , one big sign right at the beginning would be to promote the crosswalks. We had so many accidents when the trails began in our town, but now that we have good crosswalks drivers are being more considerate altogether. Crossing walks are also access points when planning parking.

5.3.3. Maps and consistent way finding signage are essential

Universal signage too. We started with way finding signage. Eventually we'll get municipal signage, library this way, town hall that way. Eventually we will move into commercial signage. But you have to be really careful doing that. We don't want to make your trail to look like Las Vegas. And that's very important when you design your trail in the Naugatuck Valley. Make sure that all f the communities are on the same page with that.

Plus I keep the trail map proudly displayed on the wall. We actually got it donated
D: Donated by the trails council. But its large and it says we are a biking community. When you put that up on your wall. It says ask us about the trail.

There should be a sign that says .6 miles to town center where you have a Starbucks and ... It could be tastefully done. It does have to be a municipal sign. But you need to tell people where they are because people are totally lost on the trail. People that are not locals.

Way finding signage.

For example, there's one shop that put a little sign on the trail that says "ice cream" that really grabs people. Other trails have more finished signs and directions, but individual towns have to think out how to get people on the trail to get off and into the town.

5.3.4. Ensure adequate parking at trail access points

5.3.5. Adjust downtown streetscapes to accommodate Greenway participants

5.4. Demonstrating Value

5.4.1. Collect data about trail use (See Data Collection Section)

5.4.2. Educate leaders, planners, economic developers and citizens about how the trail impacts your community

And that's a big part of becoming a bicycle-friendly community not only attracting residents to town but attracting businesses. Quality of life is important to the younger generation coming in. They want places where they can walk and bike and maybe commute to work three or four miles. That's an enormous part of that whole initiative- it isn't just about kids in school now, it's about the businesses.

And more people are going back to their offices. There was a period of time when everyone wanted to work from home. And I'm finding clients that are going back to their offices and saying we don't need a home office any longer we would rather go into the office. And I believe that the taxpayers who object to paying taxes would not object as loudly if they realize that their tax dollars are supporting that function. And that its benefits the businesses and town.

5.4.3. Look for low-cost, high visibility projects

One recommendation about cost: we started this conversation talking about how to get towns to really take on this trail issue, and I think that just letting them know or doing an FGD that there are low cost ways that create win-win situations, looking at the things we mentioned already with universities and schools, that really could give them an opportunity to take ownership of the trail. It's possible it's doable.

In Derby we took a fountain that was given to the city a while ago that had been sitting someplace. Its original purpose had been for horses and all that. We had planned to have landmarks at the entrances to the greenways, so we restored the fountain and made the entrance a nice historic marker.

5.5. Trail Maintenance

5.5.1. Use technology like SeeClickFix to get the right information to the right people

In New Haven we have a wonderful system called SeeClickFix started by a friend of mine. But it's very useful. It geo-locates any kind of citizen complaint about potholes or graffiti. It immediately goes to the issues and goes directly to the relevant department. The app sorts its. And it's completely integrated with the town's work and everything. It's a very efficient system for reporting all kinds of quality of life concerns.

5.5.2. Create a plan and budget for maintenance from the start

Maintenance and good planning prevents liability issues best. Fencing design, proper standards followed then that reduces liability. It's a big budget issue.

And that's one reason I advocate for putting the trails under parks & rec, so there's a clear authority who's in charge of maintaining.

So one of the recommendations I would have is to sit down at the beginning and discuss and fund maintenance costs rather than discovering issues later.

When the design is being done, have the maintenance people in on the discussion from the beginning so they can have proper input.

Definitely have the maintenance people at the table while the design is going through, so you can fix these maintenance issues beforehand.

Have the public safety at the table at the beginning for all of the natural resources or conditions involved, and then they can plan for their budgets.

Involve the police early. They need sightlines so they can see into certain parts of the trail, and they need appropriate access to the trail. Most of that isn't necessary during the day, but at night.

5.5.3. Know who your users are and plan for winter maintenance

If you are able to get funding to plow the trail it would be immense.

People are riding their bikes to work in snowstorms and in the pouring rain. You can't believe how people are out riding bikes. Conditions in which the hardest core of my friends would not ride bikes. It's just the reality of the situation. But for a trail like this that's going to go through Waterbury. In areas like that it's a major consideration.

5.5.4. Engage volunteers in maintaining the trail

For us the trails council has an adopt-a-mile program which has been very active in our town.

Yeah so we've got 8 towns. ... We have a system that's been set up for 15 years where we've got carefully vetted volunteers that are trained and they go out and adopt a piece of trail. So we've got 33 or so paved miles we've got in the Farmington Valley including the river trail all have volunteers that do light maintenance, they pick up trash, they get leaves off of the trail. And one of the things they do that's important is they actually; we have a system where they call in if there's something they can't do. They shouldn't be running machinery on the trail that includes chain saws. So, if a tree is down they call the town garage or the parks department. It's different in each town

...you can get your local garden club or whoever to come in to take care of plantings if necessary, which really cuts down on maintenance and builds use.

5.5.5. Choose materials that are graffiti resistant

Make sure what you put in is sturdy, graffiti resistant and easily cleaned

We've put in murals that the kids painted and graffiti walls which have helped a great deal. Intentional graffiti sites.

5.6. Community & Business Engagement

5.6.1. Find champions, involve community groups and get them to take ownership

Some trails have very active community groups that will be willing to take this up, but when community groups are not strong they aren't able to maintain very well. Then it's up to city and towns and that becomes problematic.

Having strong ownership in community organizations serves a dual purpose of use and personal investment to keep the trail safe and well-used.

we've found a lot of good intersection between biking and businesses, and it's what young people want when they move to a new town. We try to get everybody in town, realtors, businesses, town residents, to get buy-in

One is that you have mavens in the community that will stir the pot a lot and keep everything moving. You have to have those dedicated volunteers to make everything work. If you don't it won't.

And if all of the communities that abut that trail start their bicycle-friendly community activity now, set up a committee, start learning what it really takes to become a bike friendly community, and start assembling a collection of people who have very diverse skill sets or instance. For instance, real estate, public works engineer, someone in marketing, someone that's tied into the economic development commission so that you start getting all of these brains working in the same direction. The police, the board of education, businesses.

Yeah so we've got 8 towns. And you want to talk to Southington about this too. We have a system that's been set up for 15 years where we've got carefully vetted volunteers that are trained and they go out and adopt a piece of trail. So we've got 33 or so paved miles we've got in the Farmington valley including the river trail all have volunteers that do light maintenance, they pick up trash, they get leaves off of the trail. And one of the things they do that's important is they actually; we have a system where they call in if there's something they can't do. They shouldn't be running machinery on the trail that includes chain saws. So, if a tree is down they call the town garage or the parks department. But maintenance is different in each town

5.6.2. Engage a diverse range of businesses and create ways to connect them to the trail

We interact with businesses all the time, soliciting participation

Just to give you an idea of where we have our bikes, we've experimented with many different types of businesses. It's been successful at some and not so successful at others. We have bicycles at delis. One of the biggest places has been the ice cream place in Unionville and miniature golf place. Talk about a cheap date! You can get a bike for free, play a round of golf and have ice cream for under \$20 for two people. Its fantastic. We have bikes at F's

supermarket. Who would imagine that a grocery store would be so successful? it's our second-biggest location. But there's seven days a week customer service staff at that location. We don't have the type of bike program where you swipe a card and pull a bike out of a locker. AN automated system. You have to go in, pick out a bike from the back, talk to a human being. It's not like Boston. There's men's and women's bikes. ... reconfigure our entire system. When we found that 60% of our users were women we changed 60% our bikes to reflect that.

And we have a box by the door with all of the maps. I give them away for free. I make a donation every year to the trails council.

The businesses have to be supportive and be supported. You can't keep coming to the business and asking for donations if you're not getting, like putting up a little sign that says "restaurants this way."

Proximity is important, and we have a diverse group of businesses

But the trail wouldn't be successful if the businesses weren't supporting the people to get repeat customers. So the businesses have to rally around it and so forth. Because the repeat businesses ...and over the past three years over the summer time a lot of it is repeat business.

Finally I think he saw the light and put some tables out and cleaned up his location. People who are on the bike trail and the road at the same time are fools if they don't realize that now they have to have two facades, one for the [bicyclists] and one for the cars.

But getting business on board earlier, we didn't do that, because we were just learning ourselves about how to build a bicycle friendly community. We were focusing on the low hanging fruit. And I think that and I think that in hindsight if we were to start all over again knowing what we know now we would, I hate to use the word propaganda, but a lot of times people need to hear things two or three times before they connect the dots. And some businesses get it right away and others it takes longer.

Even a special program for 50/50 on a bike rack, just as a thought. That's a small example - there's reluctance but if you say there's a special program for new businesses if you buy a bike rack now when you open if you have a bike rack we'll split it with you..

Whenever we do our bike calendar we have a lot of stuff going on. We try to have events connected to businesses in some way.

So having these business amenities close to the trail is particularly key..? It's huge. We have an ice cream shop that did the same thing. They built a patio that had picnic tables right there so they made it a nice little rest stop.

Write a prototype concerning unified commercial signage.

5.6.3. Involve schools and young people

I mentioned before we now have bicycles in the PE programs in the school. We've also trained 100 high school kids last year and 85 the year before for programs in the summer. So it takes off ...The growth has been phenomenal.

One community painted the bikes with colors and then we went to a bike that was more of an ... bike, a bike share. After that decided to do something quite unique. We had the honors art class in Simsbury high school paint bikes for us. Two of these are now in the museum of American Art in New Britain. So we are trying to encourage people to use bikes at museums now. Little by little we keep experimenting.

They advertise a lot with that program with the children and an education museum, and now my kids go there on their own. They know which road to get off to go to the store and so on. It's normal for them, and even expected for the young

I think that it's opened up the perspective with the youth. You can go down there and look at the animals. Doing identification of tracks in the snow in the winter is a fun activity. There's so many other things you can teach upon. I was always a very active Room Mother, so I always promoted it.

5.6.4. Integrate the trail into other community planning efforts from the beginning

Finally our public works people are they are so connected to complete streets no they have bought into the concept and every new project they are looking at it through complete streets policy eyes. And we should have done that so much longer ago.

With all of these new developments coming in we want to make sure this is thought out so we don't have a patchwork quilt out there.

Connectivity. So the spine trail the Farmington heritage trail that goes up to North Hampton Mass from New Haven, a little over 80 miles, connects all of those communities. So you have a situation where it's not just the old school kind of concept of a linear park. But it's also an alternative transportation corridor. And you can actually get one place to another. You can actually go to the store; you can go places from point to point on your bike or walking. And that's the other real huge issue here is if you are talking about multimodal connectivity, and this would be part of it.

5.6.5. Collaborate with neighbor communities on cost sharing and to create consistency in signage

That's again a marginal thing. We've worked with towns where you buy equipment that is then shared between municipalities but you still need to get them to use it. And that's something that can be arranged, and it is a cost, but it isn't that big of a cost compared to their existing budgets.

Our state has not created any policies to dictate what municipalities have to do. So you'll see differences as you go from one town to another. So it's important that you get started with some sort of standardization. So you really have to try to work to create some multi community organization that has some quasi-governmental authority. By doing that then you can promote the entire trail to the outside world and draw them into the area with their dollars.

There was a time when we were still trying to get it to be more uniform, and we decided to put a stripe down the middle of the trail to differentiate different directions of travel. And It wasn't the same kind of striping machine that you use on the roads, so one of the towns said, we'd be interested in having this. We contributed t the purchase of one that would be used by several towns. So I see that as a really key factor in how towns can share equipment.

5.6.6. Build a culture of support for the trail in your community

At the end of the day, it's part of the network in this community that's just critical. It's not just the trail. And that's I think what's coming through here. I'm a big picture guy. It's the river. It's the quality of the community which is critical.

5.6.7. Be patient and go slow

This whole project takes time. You have to have a lot of patience.

This issue of managing expectations is extraordinarily critical.

5.6.8. Look to other communities and trails as examples

Now that's a leap but there certainly are enough examples from across the country of places across the country that have done this work long before Connecticut. It moved from west to east. There is a lot of data out there.

5.6.9. Use the trail to stimulate innovative ideas

It was a gas station that was getting some mild opposition from the neighbors and form the public. And they were probably saying what can we do to offset that? And they came up with this and all of a sudden maybe you've got some support from corners you wouldn't have had before.

5.7. Trail Planning and Routing

5.7.1. Create a destination and an enjoyable experience for users

Industrial buildings that back up to the trail on the south side of the center are covered with murals. Absolutely gorgeous murals. It became a competition. Its like ok, we'd like to have something like that in Plainville too, if possible. So that people will enjoy biking through this town on whatever route we finally settle on.

And it's has to be pleasant to use. It can't be going through areas that are just an eyesore. It's got to be pleasant to use.

Give them some type of destination within your town.

5.7.2. Create safe routes for local users from the trail to neighborhoods, transit points and community amenities

Finding safe routes for people to the town center is the key.

But the guy kind of made a spur off the trail through his development and back to the trail again so he's going to try and grab whatever traffic he can and promote a walking, bike friendly shopping area. That guy is pretty smart with that
And there's been other examples. A large gas station convenience store went up on with Simsbury with a direct connection there. She built a gazebo next to the trail I as part of the project. And that type of stuff is actually happening more and more now

The connectivity between bike and transit is becoming more and more important.

It isn't just the old school concept of the linear park, but it's an alternative transportation corridor. You can actually get from one place to another, to the store, on your bike or by walking. And that's the other huge issue here is that if you're talking about multimodal connectivity this would be part of it.

5.7.3. Make accommodations for trees

There's a very important feature as they are building trails is that they've had problems with tree routes. Building them wide enough to make proper accommodations for trees is really.. when Burlington was first built it was not built correctly. It just wasn't. And so one of the issue came up was that it was being destroyed by root intrusions.

5.7.4. Mitigate user conflicts

But in my experience the best way to mitigate the these kinds of users conflicts is increasing the number of users of your multiuse trail so that car users know they should be looking out for somebody on a stroller or roller blades when they are in that area.

5.7.5. Make accommodations for water and drainage issues

But in my experience the best way to mitigate these kinds of user conflicts is increasing the number of users of your multi-use trail so that car users know they should be looking out for somebody on a stroller or roller blades when they are in that area.

5.7.6. Integrate the trail with parks and playgrounds to increase use

Maybe having an event at a park or other public facility adjacent to the trail could promote usage of the trail? Having a park or playground right along the trail so especially in urban areas ...if you know someone's going to use the park area then make it better utilized.

Down into Hamden, by Brooksvale Park, they made a really nice off-the-trail right to the park access. It's a trail off the trail leading to another area of opportunity to learn about sugar maple or whatever you want. They have these other things. I also liked back when I was doing mountain biking, they would have little trails off the trail. So the mountain bikers can use it.

The other thing I've seen that helps with young families is the Rotary Park here. So as you think about the greenway are there plans for parks and playscapes along the way as another family attraction? I can't tell you how many times I've made the walk down the route there to Rotary Park, which often includes a stop at Jimmy Foster's.

It's the integration of playgrounds, the integration of the town maintenance staff, It's the integration of businesses like yours that ride a bike to the bike shops....

5.7.7. Consider costs and benefits of paved or stone dust trails and consistency of surface

We looked at a stone dust trail, but there's a lot more maintenance costs that go into the non-paved trails fixing washouts. We found that paved trails are ultimately cheaper for us.

And if you're marketing this as tourism and people come down to a stone dust trail they don't like that. And consistency is very important to maintain

Paving makes a big difference.

5.7.8. Look to other communities and trails as examples

Now that's a leap but there certainly are enough examples from across the country of places across the country that have done this work long before Connecticut. It moved from west to east. There is a lot of data out there.

5.7.9. Use the trail to stimulate innovative ideas

It was a gas station that was getting some mild opposition from the neighbors and from the public. And they were probably saying what can we do to offset that? And they came up with

this and all of a sudden maybe you've got some support from corners you wouldn't have had before.

6. COLLECTING DATA & MEASURING IMPACT

The following statements were made regarding both challenges and successes in collecting data and measuring impacts.

When we built the Derby Greenway we built a website where people could go get a page for themselves and record their activity and their weight and heart rate
We have it on our..[evaluation] form [when people return their bicycles]but a lot of people don't take the time to do that, though. We ask people where they went, how far they went, what businesses they frequented and maybe 1 in 10 will respond to the question. We've also recorded their email addresses and what we'll be attempting to do this year is follow up responses and asking particular questions about where they went and so on. When they return the bikes they just want to get rid of it and go so no one wants to take the time. So we're going to take a look at it from a different point of view, and also have tables on the trail as we do once per month to question people as they go by. And we can change our form of questions to try to seek economic information.

Well last year we counted with three counters. They weren't working all the time- 326,000 people used the trail. Double digit growth year over year.
We have a database in our bike/ped committee for two years now, our third year's data this year.

It's called a bicycle account. And the league of American bicyclists recommended it. Most bronze level.. businesses. I would recommend it be one of the first things on the list. You start to track year after year data on things like how many bike racks bike racks are in town, how many kids are in your schools, how many miles of shared use bike lanes do you have. It's a pretty good size account, but the nice part of it is that if you make the assumption that as all of these things increase there are more people on bikes, going slow, coming from out of town, past your businesses, good things happen. Now that's a leap but there certainly are enough examples from across the country of places across the country that have done this work long before Connecticut. It moved from west to east. There is a lot of data out there. And the bottom line is when cars slow down and people get on bikes there's a lot more traffic for real, not mention just businesses.

But when you don't have many users, you do have to look at the prices (and costs) to match that level of users.

One of my frustrations is being able to measure the impact.

Now we're putting out the counters to measure the use, so we'll know how many, but we don't the impact of that.

We're always looking for good data. We're on a movement of healthy community boards and committees so on, and you don't know what partners have in the way of data. I have a very small staff but maybe mid-state has more ideas as they do this more often than I do.

It could be helpful to find out how many people are using the trail so that we know whether these incidents are actually common or just isolated incidents? High percentages or low percentages. The trail counts have been very helpful from an analytical standpoint. When people aren't registering when they use the trail or registering when they're back which is a way of safety and surveillance then, you don't know if an incident is the exception or the rule, and that's difficult. So if it's part of the community surveillance, you can set up a registry system so people can register out at different points if they're going from A to B. You need a sense of where they're starting, where they expect to finish, and whether they finished.

We're always looking for good data. We're on a movement of healthy community boards and committees so on, and you don't know what partners have in the way of data. I have a very small staff but maybe mid-state has more ideas as they do this more often than I do. I think if you sit there and you can measure that, you can really show the impact. In my head, now I'm thinking, when someone comes up to the tent, they're going to sign their name, they're going to tell me their Fit Bit starting point, and then tell me their Fit Bit ending point as they leave and sign back in before I will give them a raffle ticket.

You can do one other thing is that you can also collect zip codes when you're intercepting people. Those zip codes will give you a sense of whether there are people from other towns are using your trail or coming to your events, and it also gives you a sense of how far people will travel to the trail of who walked to the event and who drove. Just some ideas, you can do a lot with zip code information.

Before we applied for silver bicycle friendly, we did do two very small research studies, one was a five-minute survey, we wanted something quick to get information on quick issues and to use as a quick benchmark, and the other was a survey monkey that had four sections essentially about how bike friendly do you think we really were. So in two or three years you can ask the same questions and see how the dial moved. For us, that's part of Evaluation (the five E's). They want to know whether or not you are tracking how you are doing.

Maybe we could get a masters student doing a thesis on the trail doing counts and spot interviews. How much do college students spend, for instance we could start tracking that.

7. CASE STUDIES/EXAMPLES

7.1. Examples

7.1.1. Wallingford - Leadership

I would say Wallingford. The mayor has been involved with trails for a long time, working to connect Wallingford to Meriden and North Haven, and she's a big advocate. Connect Wallingford to New Haven.

7.1.2. Collinsville - Trail maintenance and promotion

There's a prime example we can show you just what happened in Collinsville and the trail in Canton which was in hideous shape for many years. They resurfaced it. We have a free bike facility right there next to the BX section of the trail. Ridership in two years went from 137 people to 643 people just borrowing bikes, not the total count. The total is in the tens of thousands. That brought a tremendous amount of business to Collinsville. La Salle market-like you said you can't get next to the place on weekends.

7.1.3. New Britain- Downtown connectivity

...New Britain, some of you may be opposed to the bus system that the governor pushed and put through from New Britain. But I understand it's functioning pretty well and I've ridden it myself a couple of times. I could see the center of New Britain there's a revival, those factories are being converted into lofts, and young people are going to move into there and take the bus into Hartford. The public works director there..., we gave them our kids fleet so they could start a program like ours. But they came to us and said would you come to a focus group because we are thinking about bringing bike share into Hartford along CT Transit. And they have brass from everywhere at these meetings. And XX said I think this is a great idea... there's no safe infrastructure to get from the bus to where they are going. So you're taking people and putting them out on unsafe roads.

7.1.4. Farmington- Traffic safety

And if you've got town streets, Farmington's a good case, Farmington has just put up three new sets of flashers. One very noticeable one on Brickyard road but there's a couple of others on the river trail as well - one crosses cooper one crosses river road and mine. And they did them themselves. I think it was a state grant.

B: No one was pushing. They did it themselves!

7.1.5. Hamden- Integrating parks and other compatible uses

Down into Hamden, by Brooksvale Park, they made a really nice off-the-trail right to the park access. It's a trail off the trail leading to another area of opportunity to learn about sugar maple or whatever you want. They have these other things. I also liked back when I was doing mountain biking, they would have little trails off the trail. So the mountain bikers can use it.