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FARMINGTON CANAL HERITAGE TRAIL & FARMINGTON RIVER TRAIL



Dear Chairs Lemar and Leone:

The Farmington Canal Rail-To-Trail Association (www.fchtrail.org), on whose board I serve, is a 501c3 organization that has since 1986 supported the completion of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) in southern Connecticut. After many years of work to complete the FCHT, only two gaps in the trail remain between New Haven and the Massachusetts border. When finally completed, the 84-mile trail will extend all the way from New Haven to the Connecticut River near Northampton, Massachusetts, an unparalleled recreational resource serving and connecting Connecticut communities along the central spine of the state. It is also becoming a tourist destination for cyclists throughout the region, bringing in tourist dollars and generating economic development (see information provided by CT Trail Census, <https://cttrailcensus.uconn.edu/>).

The next challenge for strengthening and expanding the trails network in Connecticut is connecting the FCHT to other trails in the state and also to regional and multi-state trail networks such as the East Coast Greenway, a 2900-mile trail project connecting Maine to Florida along the eastern seaboard.

The Airline Trail, a premier trail in eastern Connecticut, is also a critical link in the East Coast Greenway. Currently the Airline Trail is connected to the FCHT via the New Britain-Hartford busway right-of-way, the Charter Oak Greenway, and a circuitous route near Hartford that adds significant additional mileage for East Coast Greenway through-travelers. A more direct connection in central Connecticut between the FCHT and Airline Trail would help to maximize both the FCHT and the Airline Trail as recreational assets and create a much more desirable "spine" for the East Coast Greenway through Connecticut, in accordance with goals set forth by the Connecticut Greenways Council and our State Plan of Conservation and Development.

We welcome your support for building a robust network of multi-use trails in Connecticut and urge your approval of SB 775.