

# Study underway to connect canal trail

Focus is on gap between Plainville and Southington



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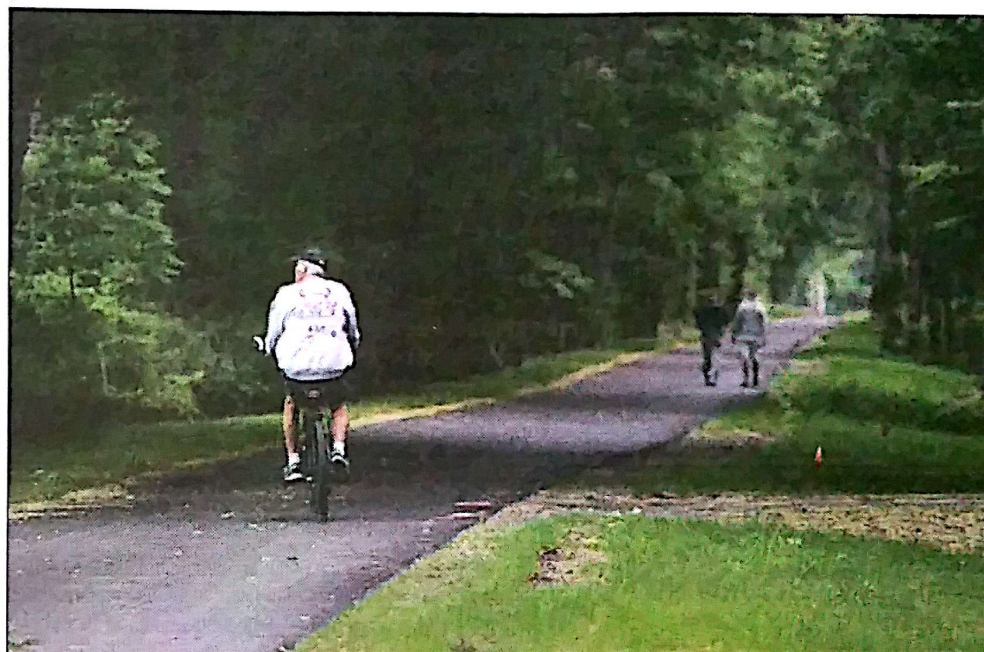
Residents will soon be able to learn more about the efforts to close the gap on the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail between Plainville and Southington.

"It's been a longstanding problem," said Timothy Malone, principal planner for Capitol Region Council of Governments.

The trail stretches 84-miles from New Haven to Northampton, Massachusetts.

Most of the trail has already been completed, with the Cheshire piece finished earlier this month. However, a gap still exists in Plainville and Southington. The first information session will be held July 26, 5 to 7 p.m., at the Plainville library, 56 East Main St.

Malone, along with representatives from consultants VHB, Mobycon and Bluezones, will be holding a series of information sessions for residents in the next few months. Malone says the idea of the sessions is to offer people



Bikers and walkers use the new section of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail during the opening in Cheshire.

| File photo, Record-Journal

the chance to ask questions and learn more about the study, which will be used to decide the best course of action in closing the gap.

The first information session will be held July 26, 5 to 7 p.m., at the Plainville library, 56 East Main St.

Jim Cassidy, head of the Plainville Greenway Alliance, wants residents to know that the completion of the trail in Plainville has a lot of positive

aspects.

"It will give a whole new opportunity to get out and be active," he said.

The alliance has been dedicated to closing the gap for the past decade. Cassidy says that there is no preference on what option to use to complete the trail.

"We just want input," he said.

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Malone is the manager for the project and says that several pieces of data have already been collected.

"Anything we can get our hands on," he said.

Data so far have included looking at topography, environmental factors, traffic patterns, parcel lines, and DOT rights of way. The study has also considered the historical value.

Plainville Historical Society President Nancy Eberhardt

believes that any increased attention to the canal will be a good thing.

"It's a good way to keep the memory of the Farmington Canal alive," she said. "It keeps it from being forgotten."

The society museum on Pierce Street in Plainville has a room dedicated to the history of the canal. Eberhardt hopes the latest project will draw more interest to the significance of the canal.

"The canal opened up a

whole new avenue for travel," she said.

The canal was constructed in the 1820s and completed for use in 1835. Before the canal, there were many restrictions for people to travel. Eberhardt says that the canal came about during a period of expansion for the town.

While the results of the study will not be known for a while, a significant obstacle stands in the way of the trail being completed. In Southington, the trail currently ends at Hart Street. The next seg-

ment to Lazy Lane will be funded as part of a brown-fields settlement through the SRS property. Closer to the Plainville line, rail lines remain active, prompting officials to explore other options to complete the trail.

Funding for the construction and engineering of the trail is also a concern.

"The state is really interested," he said. "We are hopeful."

For more information on the overall trail plan, the Farmington Valley Trails Council website — [www.fvgreenway.org](http://www.fvgreenway.org) — contains detailed information on trail construction progress by town.



Wheeler