

Homeowners in a CT town balk at prospect of popular bike trail running on their street

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Homeowners along one of the town's central streets are raising alarms about a proposed extension of the New Haven to Northampton rail trail near their homes, and a state legislator announced Wednesday that she's siding with them.

Opponents are trying to muster support before the Thursday evening meeting where state transportation department designers will present their proposal to close the nagging Plainville gap in the trail.

"I stand with the residents of Hemingway Street in strong opposition to the current proposed alignment of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail," state Rep. Rebecca Martinez said in a statement.

"This plan would place a public path directly through their front yard. This is not a minor right-of-way issue. It's a fundamental question of respect for people's homes and voices," Martinez said. "The residents of Hemingway have said no — and I support them."

The transportation department and trail advocates are inviting residents to study the maps and sketches that will be presented at the Thursday meeting. A series of design plans have been put forward starting more than 20 years ago, but the Plainville gap has proven to be the most persistent sticking point for the trail in Connecticut.

The DOT said that if the estimated \$28 million project moves forward, construction would begin in the spring of 2028 if funding is available, governmental permits are secured and access to some properties is reached. The DOT anticipates federal grants would pay 80% of the costs, with state money covering the rest.

Planners have come up with three options for crossing Plainville, including one route that uses the east side of Washington Street, another that uses the east side of Hemingway Street, and a third that runs through woods.

The Hemingway option doesn't require obtaining any private property and takes cyclists and pedestrians on a route with little traffic. But it crosses some private driveways and requires a "no parking" rule on one side of the road. Neighbors have been balking on social media, saying that could devalue their homes, make parking more difficult and bring unwanted noise to their neighborhood.



Figure 2: Norton Park at Farmington Canal (Facing East)



Figure 3: Hemingway Street (Facing North)



Figure 4: Broad Street (Facing East)



Figure 5: Washington Street - Route 177 (Facing North)

Plans for closing part of the rail trail gap in Plainville. (Courtesy of state Department of Transportation)

The other options come with concerns, too. Washington Street is heavily used, so the popular path would be running alongside traffic if it's built there. It, too, crosses some private driveways, and might require obtaining small sections of private property.

The third option through the woods keeps cyclists and pedestrians away from traffic, but puts the path through wetlands. It could require obtaining more private property than either of the other routes, and could entail building a boardwalk to protect the wetlands.

Martinez is urging residents to attend the meeting at 5 p.m. at Plainville High School, saying the DOT has assured her that no decisions are firmly made yet.

"I am a supporter of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and believe in its long-term value for Plainville. But we need to come up with a better alternative — one that respects the people who live here," she said.

The north-south rail trail covers a distance of about 58 miles between New Haven and Suffield, and is the biggest and most popular in the state. But because CSX and previously Pan Am still operate freight trains on a section of the route in Plainville, the trail hasn't been completed. *(Actually it is NOT CSX operating freight trains on the Plainville segment. It is Berkshire & Eastern RR a shortline railroad owned by the world largest aggregator of shortline railroads, Genesee & Wyoming Railroad (G&W). And several of G&W railroads operate alongside trails. CDP)*

The Connecticut General Assembly

House Democrats



November 19, 2025
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jackson DeLaney
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PLAINVILLE - State Representative Rebecca Martinez (D-Plainville, Farmington, Southington) released the following statement on the proposed alignment of the Farmington Canal Trail:

“As your State Representative, I stand with the residents of Hemmingway Street in strong opposition to the current proposed alignment of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. This plan would place a public path directly through their front yard. This is not a minor right-of-way issue. It’s a fundamental question of respect for people’s homes and voices. The residents of Hemmingway have said no—and I support them.

I’ve spoken with CTDOT, and my understanding is that nothing is set in stone yet. That’s why it’s so important for residents to speak up now, before final decisions are made. Please consider attending the upcoming public information meeting on **Thursday, November 20 at 5pm at the Plainville High School Auditorium (47 Holcomb Way)**. The open house begins at **5pm**, and the formal presentation begins at **7pm**. Your voice matters, and your feedback can help send this plan back to the drawing board.

Can’t attend in person?

- You can view the presentation online and submit comments through December 4, 2025 at portal.ct.gov/DOTPlainville0109-0173.
- Email: DOT.0109-0173Plainville@ct.gov
- Phone: (860) 594-2020 or contact Stephen Hall at Stephen.Hall@ct.gov or (860) 594-2591
- Please reference Project No. 0109-0173 in your message.

I am a supporter of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and believe in its long-term value for Plainville. But we need to come up with a better alternative—one that respects the people who live here.

Let’s protect our neighborhoods and ensure this project reflects—not disregards—the people who live here.”

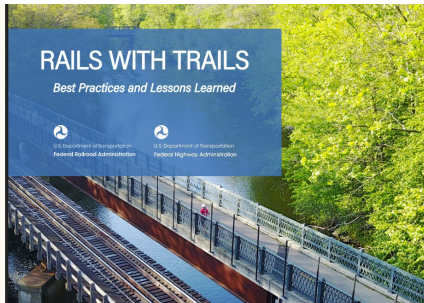
State Representative Rebecca Martinez represents the 22nd District, which includes Plainville, Farmington, and Southington.

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Over 400 examples are below here and their stories.

<https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/rail-with-trails-best-practices-and-lessons-learned/>



Example Genesee & Wyoming Railroad Setbacks: Rails-with-Trails

...

<https://tinyurl.com/RailwTrail>

Ben Bayes
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Genesee & Wyoming Railroad, the world's largest aggregator of shortline railroads has good examples of rail-w-trail along with several other examples in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

SAMPLES OF RECREATIONAL USE STATUTES in some nearby states.

Click on each box below to see examples on how to get rail-w-trail built—or not.

CORRECT OR CONTEMPORARY TEXT



INCORRECT OR OBSOLETE TEXT



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States' Recreational Use Statutes:
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States' Recreational Use Statutes:
Massachusetts