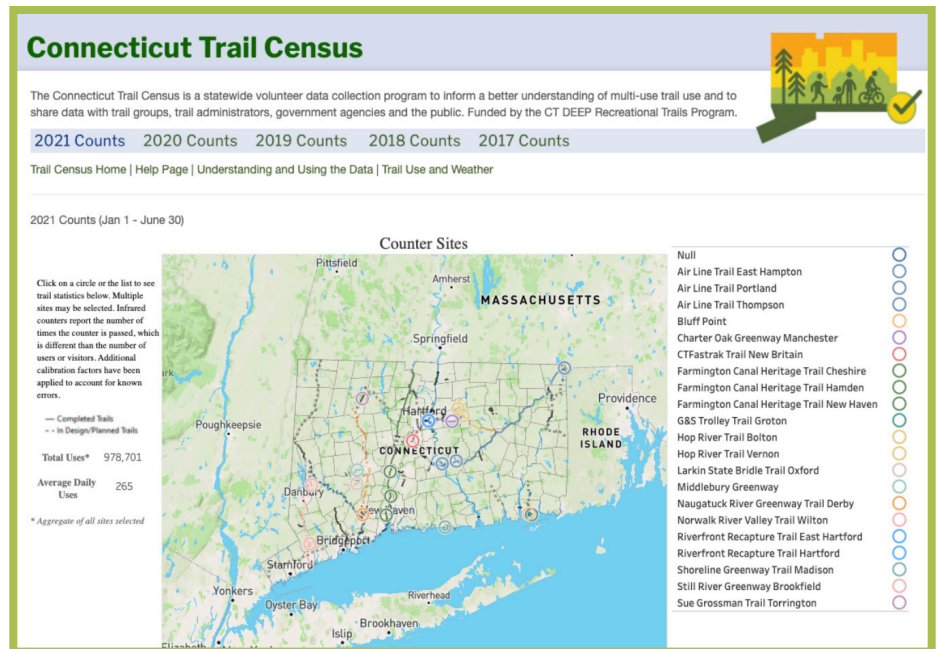


Establishing Baseline Data for Trail Use and Maintenance: Examples from Connecticut

Data collection programs can be an efficient way to start collecting data about trail use, users and maintenance needs, and many communities have implemented these programs to inform decisions about trail amenities. Many of these programs do not require significant investments in equipment or consultants but may benefit from partnerships with state agencies, planning agencies or partners with mapping, GIS or database related skills.



The Connecticut Trail Census is a statewide volunteer-based data collection and education program that encourages data informed decision-making and promotes active citizen participation in multi-use trail monitoring and advocacy. The Trail Census includes trail use counts recorded by TrafX infrared pedestrian counters, trail user intercept surveys administered by trained volunteers or QR code, and public education programs. Infrared counters used in the Census collect data on 24 trail sites throughout the state, continuously. These counters sense the temperature differential between warm bodies and the ambient air temperature. Every time a trail user passes the counter, the counter records it as a use. Data is downloaded from the counter boxes quarterly and uploaded to the TrafX portal where it is corrected using established adjustment factors. Staff then make this data available to the public through a Tableau-based interactive data portal that shows monthly, weekly, daily and average use.

The Trail Census relies on community volunteers to assist with counter maintenance, conducting manual calibration counts that are used to determine adjustment factors. These partners use trail use data to support local and state grants and advocacy, support data driven design, prioritize amenities and changes.

State of Connecticut DOT: *Statewide Trail Asset Inventory Assessment*

The State of Connecticut Department of Transportation is developing an application to assess the current condition of trails across the state that will result in a database of maintenance features. While this project has not yet been completed, it is likely to result in: creation of a strong database to coordinate maintenance and repairs necessary to keep the statewide trail network safe and accessible to all users, highlighting issues that can be addressed during the design phase of future projects; documentation of the durability of components; and identification of trail gaps. DOT staff identified maintenance criteria such as surface deterioration and quality of fences, the status of amenities like trash cans, dog waste stations, removable bollards, picnic tables, benches, solar panels, bike racks and features related to ADA accessibility such as curb slopes, railings, and ramp slope. DOT staff started by identifying trails of regional significance and trails that received partial funding from the state or federal government and locations. The Arc GIS Collector application was used to begin the assessment process.



This infosheet is part of a series based on webinar presentations for the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development small grant project

Best Practices in Bike/Pedestrian Trail Data and Monitoring. More information can be found at <https://cttrailcensus.uconn.edu/nercrd/>

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Based on a webinar presented on May 6, 2020, 1:30pm by Charles Tracy, Bill Champagne and Marlon Pena (Some content has been updated to reflect current programmatic changes)

Resources

[University of Connecticut Trails Census](#)

Graphic courtesy Laura Brown, University of Connecticut Extension.

Photo courtesy Aaron Budris, Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments.

