

The Air Line Trail

A Connecticut Greenway, State Linear Park and Multipurpose Trail for non-motorized users

Guide & Map for the Towns
of East Hampton, Colchester,
Hebron and Lebanon



Much appreciation is extended to the Public Works Departments of these four Towns who enthusiastically improved the Trail, to the countless volunteers who supported and assisted this project, to the National Recreational Trail Program for the funding of materials, and to the State of Connecticut, Department of Environmental Protection for making available this Linear State Park and Greenway for the use of the public.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

CT DEP – www.ct.gov/dep

East Hampton Parks & Recreation – (860) 267-6020

Colchester Parks & Recreation – (860) 537-7297

Hebron Parks & Recreation – (860) 228-5971 x129

Lebanon Town Hall – (860) 642-6100



East Hampton

1) BELL TOWN VILLAGE CENTER & LAKE POCOTOPAUG

East Hampton is called "Bell Town" as it was the center of the bell making industry for the country. Taking a detour off the Trail at Cranberry Meadow onto Smith St. and traveling west leads to the Bell Town Village Center, a mecca for antique shoppers. Traveling north leads to the business center of East Hampton and Lake Pocotopaug. Caution is advised on busy roads.

2) CRANBERRY BOG

This pond offers benches for resting; the sights of wildflowers and sounds of bullfrogs in the summer; and picturesque ice skating and hockey games in the winter. Cranberry Meadow and Bog was once a natural cranberry producing bog. During the 1920's and 30's, the cranberries were harvested, transported to grocers, and bartered for groceries.

3) RAPALLO VIADUCT

Built in 1873 (as was its sister, the Lyman Viaduct, 1-1/2 miles east in Colchester), the Rapallo bears the name of a railroad director and was built for two train tracks. Originally a 1,380 ft. long bridge 60 ft. high above Flat Brook, the increasing weight of freight trains necessitated filling underneath it in 1913. The spectacular views of the marsh to the north and other natural surroundings make this a rare treat.

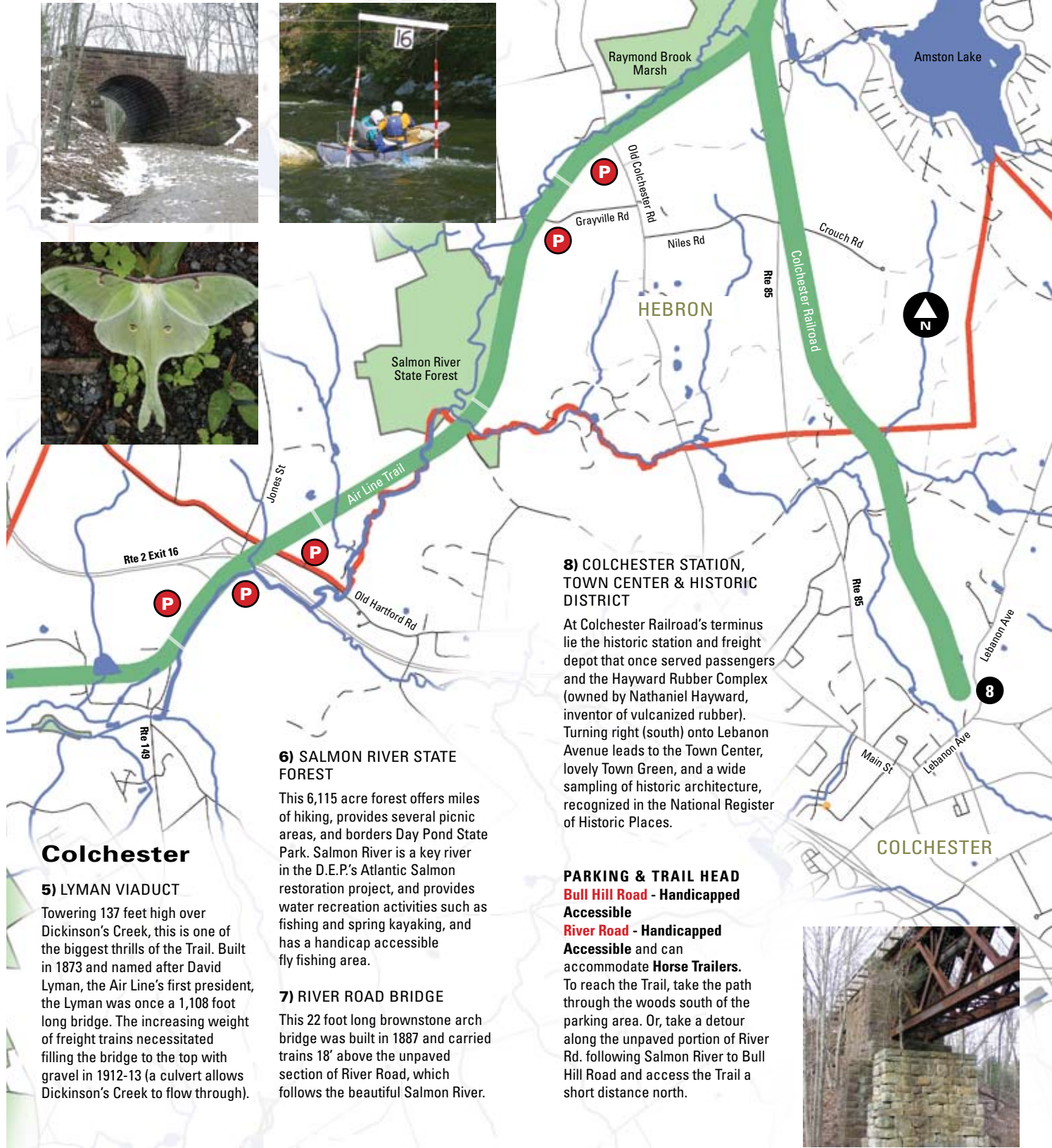
4) COMSTOCK BRIDGE

The Comstock Bridge was built in 1791 and rebuilt in 1860. It is one of only three remaining covered bridges in Connecticut. The Comstock Bridge links East Hampton and Colchester and is approximately 1-1/4 miles south of the intersection of Colchester's Bull Hill Road and the Air Line Trail. The bridge is open to pedestrian traffic and has a picnic area nearby.

PARKING & TRAIL HEAD

Cranberry Meadow on Smith Street
- Handicapped Accessible. A large Air Line Railroad sign highlights the trailhead.





Colchester

5) LYMAN VIADUCT

Towering 137 feet high over Dickinson's Creek, this is one of the biggest thrills of the Trail. Built in 1873 and named after David Lyman, the Air Line's first president, the Lyman was once a 1,108 foot long bridge. The increasing weight of freight trains necessitated filling the bridge to the top with gravel in 1912-13 (a culvert allows Dickinson's Creek to flow through).

6) SALMON RIVER STATE FOREST

This 6,115 acre forest offers miles of hiking, provides several picnic areas, and borders Day Pond State Park. Salmon River is a key river in the D.E.P.'s Atlantic Salmon restoration project, and provides water recreation activities such as fishing and spring kayaking, and has a handicap accessible fly fishing area.

7) RIVER ROAD BRIDGE

This 22 foot long brownstone arch bridge was built in 1887 and carried trains 18' above the unpaved section of River Road, which follows the beautiful Salmon River.

8) COLCHESTER STATION, TOWN CENTER & HISTORIC DISTRICT

At Colchester Railroad's terminus lie the historic station and freight depot that once served passengers and the Hayward Rubber Complex (owned by Nathaniel Hayward, inventor of vulcanized rubber). Turning right (south) onto Lebanon Avenue leads to the Town Center, lovely Town Green, and a wide sampling of historic architecture, recognized in the National Register of Historic Places.

PARKING & TRAIL HEAD

Bull Hill Road - Handicapped Accessible

River Road - Handicapped Accessible and can accommodate **Horse Trailers**.

To reach the Trail, take the path through the woods south of the parking area. Or, take a detour along the unpaved portion of River Rd. following Salmon River to Bull Hill Road and access the Trail a short distance north.



Hebron

9) GRAYVILLE FALLS PARK

This Town Park, connecting with Salmon River State Forest, offers the Grayville Falls of Raymond Brook, picnic areas, and hemlock forests. To reach the park, travel 1/5 mi. west from the intersection of Grayville Road and the Air Line Trail. As the Trail traverses Grayville Falls Park, one can access the park directly by descending west on a steep connecting path.

10) RAYMOND BROOK MARSH

A unique and diverse wildlife habitat where it is possible to view heron, deer, beaver, and turtles all on a single visit. One of the largest inland wetland complexes in eastern Connecticut, the marsh lies within Hebron's Aquifer Protection Zone, a future water supply for the Town. This wetland serves to protect the water quality of Raymond Brook, an important tributary of the Salmon River where efforts are underway to restore the Atlantic Salmon fishery.

11) TURNERVILLE STATION

Near the intersection of Route 85 and the Air Line Trail lies the site of the former freight depot and passenger station. This part of Hebron, now called Amston, was once named after Phineas W. Turner, who established a thriving silk mill industrial complex here. Phineas also saw opportunity in the railroad serving his complex and became a vice president of the Air Line Railroad.



PARKING & TRAIL HEAD

Rte 85 - Large parking area next to "Rte. 85 Lumber." **Handicapped Accessible** and can accommodate **Horse Trailers**.

Rte 207 - Limited parking.

Old Colchester Road - Limited parking.

Grayville Falls Park - Can accommodate **Horse Trailers**.

To access the Air Line Trail from this Town Park, go east from the parking lot, cross the open meadow and then the bridge over Raymond Brook, and climb an embankment to the Trail.

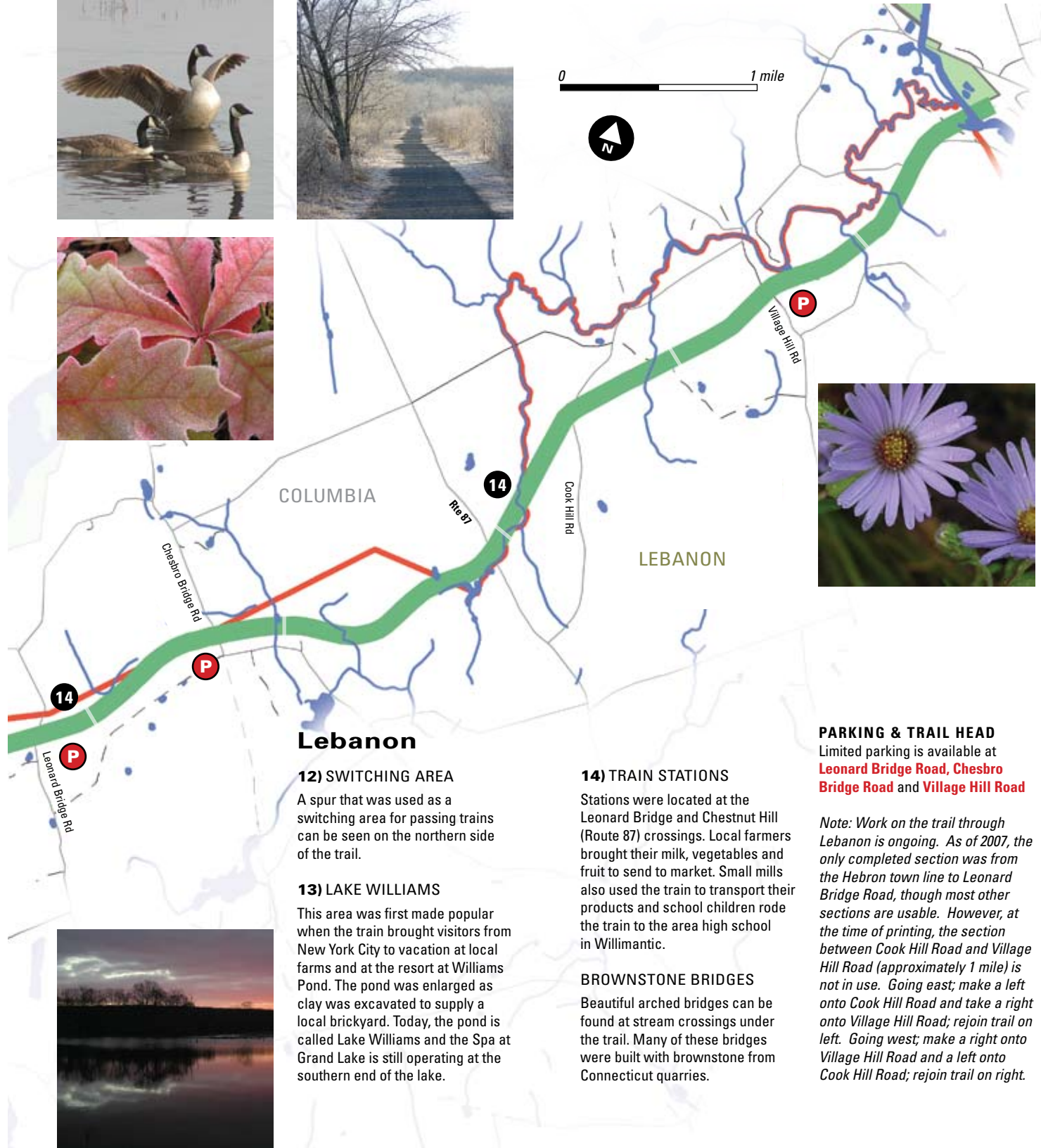
Grayville Road - **Handicapped Accessible** where the Air Line Trail intersects Grayville Rd.

Old Hartford Road - **Handicapped Accessible**





0 1 mile



Lebanon

12) SWITCHING AREA

A spur that was used as a switching area for passing trains can be seen on the northern side of the trail.

13) LAKE WILLIAMS

This area was first made popular when the train brought visitors from New York City to vacation at local farms and at the resort at Williams Pond. The pond was enlarged as clay was excavated to supply a local brickyard. Today, the pond is called Lake Williams and the Spa at Grand Lake is still operating at the southern end of the lake.



14) TRAIN STATIONS

Stations were located at the Leonard Bridge and Chestnut Hill (Route 87) crossings. Local farmers brought their milk, vegetables and fruit to send to market. Small mills also used the train to transport their products and school children rode the train to the area high school in Willimantic.

BROWNSTONE BRIDGES

Beautiful arched bridges can be found at stream crossings under the trail. Many of these bridges were built with brownstone from Connecticut quarries.

PARKING & TRAIL HEAD

Limited parking is available at **Leonard Bridge Road, Chesbro Bridge Road** and **Village Hill Road**

Note: Work on the trail through Lebanon is ongoing. As of 2007, the only completed section was from the Hebron town line to Leonard Bridge Road, though most other sections are usable. However, at the time of printing, the section between Cook Hill Road and Village Hill Road (approximately 1 mile) is not in use. Going east; make a left onto Cook Hill Road and take a right onto Village Hill Road; rejoin trail on left. Going west; make a right onto Village Hill Road and a left onto Cook Hill Road; rejoin trail on right.

Of Interest

The Air Line Trail is the site of the former Air Line Railroad, built to connect Boston with New York City in the shortest route possible - as if by a "line" drawn through the "air" via the city of New Haven. The Air Line Railroad was a controversial project because of such obstacles as the Connecticut River and countless ridges, along with its exclusion of the capitol city of Hartford. Nevertheless, by 1873, this railroad was functioning from New Haven to Willimantic. At these points, the Air Line was able to link with other rail lines to connect New York and Boston in the shortest way then possible. The freight and passenger trains utilizing the Air Line became quite numerous. By 1877, Colchester center was linked to the Air Line at Turnerville (now Amston) via the Colchester Railroad. As the weight of freight trains increased over the years, the Air Line's weight restricting viaducts, numerous curves, and high grades eventually led to its decline.

In 1996, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) proposed the rehabilitation of the railbed as a multipurpose trail and linear state park. The portion of the Air Line Trail in this brochure is part of the 22.95 mile southern Air Line rail corridor and also includes 3.6 miles of the Colchester Railroad spur. The southern section of the Air Line Trail links Portland, East Hampton, Colchester, Hebron-Amston, Lebanon, and Willimantic via a greenway rich in natural beauty and cultural assets. The vision is to link the Air Line Trail with the East Coast Greenway, a multi-purpose trail which proposes to connect cities from Florida to Canada along the east coast.

In a regional effort, the Towns of East Hampton, Colchester, Hebron and Lebanon have worked together to link their sections of the trail. The National Recreational Trails Act provided funding for materials, the Connecticut DEP provided the linear park, and the four Towns provided the labor and services. Enthusiastic volunteers and town employees enabled the development of the multi-purpose trail in an efficient, focused manner. Work on sections of the Air Line Trail is on-going. All interested in assisting in the enhancement or maintenance of the Trail are encouraged to contact their local Parks and Recreation Department.

ENJOY AND PLEASE HELP TO PROTECT OUR TRAIL!
TAKE ONLY PICTURES, LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS.

Safety Tips *For ensuring the enjoyment of all*

The Air Line Trail is for non-motorized use (except for wheelchairs) and is open dawn to dusk.

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES



PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES



PLEASE...

- KEEP TO RIGHT, pass to left, call out before passing.
- BICYCLISTS - when approaching horses, dismount and ask the equestrian if it is safe to pass. This is especially important in the viaduct and bridge areas.
- STATE LAW REQUIRES THAT PETS ARE LEASHED and please clean up after your animal(s).
- SUPERVISE YOUNGSTERS, especially near bridges, viaducts, and road crossings.
- WEAR BRIGHT CLOTHING, especially during the fall and spring peak hunting seasons. Fluorescent orange or yellow vests are recommended.
- RESPECT PRIVATE PROPERTY along the trail.
- RTE. 2 INTERRUPTS THE AIR LINE TRAIL from Hebron's Old Hartford Rd. to Colchester's commuter lot on Rte 149.
GOING EAST: exit the commuter lot, turn right onto Rte 149 go under Rte 2 overpass and trail begins again on right.
GOING WEST: follow trail across Old Hartford Rd., until it ends. Turn left onto Rte 149 and after Rte 2 overpass, turn left into the commuter lot; the Trail is at the far right.

CAUTION IS ADVISED ON THESE ROADS as there are no bicycle lanes and traffic may be fast or heavy. Please wear bicycle safety helmets, bright clothing and follow bicycle and pedestrian safety rules.