

# FORT MILL TIMES

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## **Off the beaten track: Next section of nature trail through York County planned**

By [Jonathan Allen](#)

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Planning for the York County portion of the two-state, 15-county regional Carolina Thread Trail kicked off in Fort Mill Monday at the Spratt Building.

The project, which seeks to link the 15 counties of the Charlotte region through a network of trails and greenways, will eventually stretch from Iredell County in the north, south to Chester and Lancaster counties, and from Anson County in the east, westward to Cherokee County.

"It's creating a lot of enthusiasm and now we want to hear from you, the things you want to connect and how you want to make those connections," Project Director Ann Browning told the small audience. "There will be more than 2 million people touched by this."

Tega Cay and Fort Mill both recently passed resolutions supporting the projects, and York County is one of two pilot counties taking on the first stages of the ambitious plan. In North Carolina, Gaston County is serving as the other pilot county.

A concept map has the county's leg of the trail going from the Catawba Cultural Center east of Rock Hill to near Kings Mountain State Park, with another leg north into Mecklenburg County past the Anne Springs Close Greenway. Local developers, chambers of commerce and representatives from Fort Mill, Tega Cay, Lake Wylie, Rock Hill and York County gave input earlier this month on where York County should put its leg of the trail.

With support from the Trust for Public Land and the Catawba Lands Conservancy, the Thread Trail program consists of a multistep process to identify possible trail routes and eventually construct them.

Currently, a private capital campaign is underway to provide seed money and may eventually be used to create matching grants for infusions of public money on the local level.

First, the counties must each come up with countywide greenway master plans. Once such a plan has been adopted, the individual counties are supposed to focus on small segments of the overall plans, acquire the necessary land and build the trail, Browning said. Both Gaston and York counties have received \$50,000 grants to begin crafting master plans.

Monday's meeting is the first step in that process. Following a short video and presentation on the benefits of a greenway system - economic, health, quality of life and environmental - by Browning, Kelley Hart of the Trust for Public Lands and local planning and recreation officials, the audience broke into two groups to begin discussing what the participants wanted to see come out of the trail project.

Attendees were asked three questions: how to use the trails now and in the future; which important places should be on the trail or connect to it; and, what did they want to see along the way, and what are the current community concerns and attitudes about greenways.

Suggestions included educational markers along the trail, shelters, small parks and benches, connections to urban centers, equestrian access, connections to cultural and historical sites, short and lengthy trails, and much more.

Three more planning meetings are scheduled through April. Two are scheduled for later today, in Rock Hill at Manchester Meadows at 337 Mount Gallant Road from 6 to 8 p.m., and in York at the McCelvey Center at 212 East Jefferson St., also from 6 to 8 p.m. Then on Tuesday, April 22, a meeting is scheduled from 7 to 9 p.m. at Bessemer City Hall at 132 West Virginia Ave. in Bessemer City, N.C., in Gaston County.

Anyone interested in weighing in on the future of local trails can also submit comments through the Carolina Thread Trail Web site at [www.carolinathreadtrail.org](http://www.carolinathreadtrail.org). Browning said.

<http://www.fortmilltimes.com/187/story/120341.html>