

Thread Trail meetings

By Staff Reports · heraldonline.com FTP

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York County is likely to serve as a model to the rest of the state for what the Carolina Thread Trail will become. And today, residents will have a chance to offer their ideas regarding the trail during meetings in Rock Hill and York.

Planners have heard from developers, chambers of commerce and city and county leaders. Now, they want input from the people who will be using the trail and have a stake in where it will go and how it will be developed.

Two public hearings already have been held in Fort Mill and Clover. Today's hearings will be held from 6 to 8 p.m., one at Manchester Meadows in Rock Hill, and the other at the McCelvey Center in York.

Potential pieces of the trail already are in place in the county. For example, a two-mile section of the Nation Ford Trail in Fort Mill running along Sugar Creek is a likely link. That trail could join with the Ann Springs Close Greenway and the 31 miles of trails circling Fort Mill. Another trail would connect Kings Mountain State Park, west of Clover, with Crowders Mountain State Park in North Carolina.

Those who attend tonight's meeting will see a concept map that designates those links. But county officials say all this still is in the early planning stage, and trail organizers want ideas on how to design the county's leg.

The only hard and fast requirement is that all the pieces fit together and connect with trails in 15 other counties. Ultimately, the trail organizers hope to develop a 7,500-square-mile "green interstate" stretching from the top to the bottom of the state.

York and Gaston counties are the first to blaze the Thread Trail, each having received \$50,000 grants to start the process. Private money also will be used as matching funds for state and federal grants to build legs of the trail. Nearly half of the \$40 million goal has been raised since the plan was unveiled in the fall.

But York County residents have a chance now to make a difference in how this project progresses. Will the trail accommodate bicycle riders and horses? What type of amenities, such as restrooms, playgrounds or camping areas will be located near the trail? What points of interest, such as museums, historical areas or unusual natural sites might be connected by the trail?

County leaders have some ideas that will be presented during the meetings. They are considering, for example, having trails on both sides of the Catawba River and tying the Thread Trail into Duke Energy's recreational areas and green space allocated to the county by developers. But tonight, planners want to hear from the public.

This project could take 10 to 20 years to complete. But many legs of the trail should be in use long before that. When completed, a trail linking North and South Carolina and running from the Upstate to the Lowcountry will be a great asset for outdoor tourism in the state.

We hope local residents will offer their ideas for the trail and that the first leg in York County will serve as a worthy example for the rest of the state.

IN SUMMARY

Residents will be asked to share their ideas at meetings today about state's Thread Trail.

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