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Putting Thread Trail on the map

People who shared their ideas in spring can come and see the preliminary designs.

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Last spring, the public had a first shot at shaping a massive regional trail described as a "green interstate."

Folks spoke up in a series of meetings about where the multi-county Carolina Thread Trail should go and what sections would allow such activities as horseback riding or hiking.

Residents in Gaston and York (S.C.) counties will be able to see those suggestions laid out on maps in another round of meetings to review route options.

Organizers say the design effort is still collaborative and more suggestions from the public are encouraged as the trail continues to take shape.

"We'll be funneling more feedback into the batter again," said Cecily Durrett, spokeswoman for the Catawba Lands Conservancy, the lead agency behind the project. "This is a work in progress."

The idea to build a trail connecting the 15 counties that make up the Charlotte region was first proposed three years ago. The trail will link cities, towns and regional attractions and also preserve natural areas.

So far, organizers have raised about \$17 million in private donations that will be divided among the counties and be used to leverage more funding from state and federal grants.

The project pioneers – Gaston and York counties – were each given \$50,000 to begin the planning.

Gaston's trail will lead from Lincoln County in the north to York County in the south. Such issues as how it looks, where it goes and what it's made of are all up to the community.

In a series of four meetings that began in late March, residents were invited to give their input about the project.

David Fogarty, a member of the Gaston 20/12 trail committee, said about 80 Gaston residents came out to share their ideas. Some were concerned their property might be taken away to build the trail. But Fogarty said that once they were assured that wouldn't happen the focus shifted to how to connect the trail to the most important places in Gaston County in the most affordable way.

Discussion also touched on taking advantage of existing rights of way for water, sewer and power lines.

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