



## **Voice Your Opinion On Planned Interconnected Regional Greenway**

By: Dave Hardin

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Plans are just beginning for a series of connected greenways and trails across fifteen counties in our region. Catawba County will be part of the trail system and you will have three opportunities coming up in late January to learn more about the plan and give your opinion on where greenway corridors should be located in our county.

The Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) will create a network of greenways, trails and blueways (connected waterways) in a fifteen county region that will connect 2.3 million people in North and South Carolina. The fifteen counties include: Anson, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cherokee, Chester, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lancaster, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanley, Union and York.

County planning staff has been actively involved in the CTT process. They met last year with city planners and recreation directors across the county to inform them of the CTT and the opportunity to participate in first stage planning for the CTT segment in Catawba County.

The County and cities will work together to develop a plan over a 10 to 12 month period that will identify corridors for the trail in our county, designate the backbone of the network as the Carolina Thread Trail and outline an action plan for implementing prioritized segments of the trail.

The first of three public forums on the planning for the Carolina Thread Trail will be held on Monday, January 25 at the Sherrills Ford Elementary School cafeteria at 8103 Sherrills Ford Road. A second forum has been scheduled for Tuesday, January 26 at the Newton Depot at 1123 North Main Avenue in Newton. The third forum will be held on Thursday, January 28 at the Highland Recreation Center Community Room at 1431 8th St. Dr. NE in Hickory. All three forums will run from 6 until 8 p.m.

The CTT has been established as a non-profit organization and is being financed from private donations and State and Federal funding sources. Over \$15 million has been raised thus far. The CTT provides funding to local governments through a grant process to begin development of the Thread Trail segment in each county. The grant has helped make this a very low cost project for Catawba County. A local match of 10% is required for the planning process, which has totaled only \$6000 up to now and is being shared by the participating jurisdictions.

These three public forums are another example of the kind of meeting I wish more people would attend. Once plans for the routing of Catawba County's section of the Carolina Thread

Trail have been determined and the funding has been approved, it will be too late if the trail doesn't include a good location you had in mind or if it runs in an area you think may not be a good place.

County and city planners from across Catawba County will be available along with project consultants at all three of the public forums scheduled for January 25, 26 and 28 to tell you more about the plan and hear your ideas and opinions. I hope you'll make plans to attend the forum nearest you.

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