



## Will county join Carolina Thread Trail?

February 16, 2010

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Imagine a trail that connects several Lancaster County attractions, including Landsford Canal State Park, the Forty Acre Rock preserve and Andrew Jackson State Park.

Now imagine those trails could lead into neighboring Union, York and Mecklenburg counties, connecting thousands of tourists and nature lovers.

That's the idea behind the Carolina Thread Trail, a proposed interconnected trail system that Lancaster County Council considered at its Jan. 25 meeting.

The trail would extend throughout Mecklenburg County and the 14 counties surrounding it, connecting greenways and significant historical sites.

County Planning Director Chris Karres and County Administrator Steve Willis recently met with representatives from the Thread Trail and Catawba Regional Council of Governments to discuss how Lancaster County could develop its portion of the trail plan.

Karres told County Council there are funds available from the Foundation for the Carolinas, a nonprofit community group, to help all involved counties develop their own unique plans.

He said Lancaster County could use those funds to hire a consultant to determine where the trail would be located and what attractions it would feature.

Future funds from the foundation could help with the initial construction.

Participation by each county is voluntary and there is no set deadline for building the trails, Karres said.

"This will connect historical sites and other points of interest," Karres said. "We'd determine what areas would connect, would there be horse trails, those types of things."

Karres suggested council form a steering committee to help select a consultant and determine the needs of the community. He asked council to select one representative from each council district, as well as from each municipality in the county.

To submit a grant application by the July deadline, council needs to have its committee recommendations by the end of February.

Council Chairman Rudy Carter has already heard from residents who want to be involved, though he has also heard several concerns from landowners as well.

He said many people are worried the county will take their land for use in the trail or run the trail through people's backyards.

"This has to be a totally mutual agreement," Carter said. "The landowner has to give permission. No one is going to take anything from anyone."

Karres said the preliminary process could take at least one year and would include plenty of public input, though the entire process could take anywhere between 20 and 30 years to complete.

"Each county in the region is trying to make connections with the surrounding areas," Karres said. "It's going to be piecemeal and won't be one segment all at once."

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