

City takes first step in getting trail grant

by: Sarah Melton
(1/13/2010)

Lincolnton City Councilmen are forging ahead with implementation of the future Carolina Thread Trail that will span 15 counties and reach 2.3 million people in North Carolina.

On Thursday, the Council approved submitting a Letter of Interest, due by Jan. 15, to the Carolina Thread Trail Foundation. The letter is the first step in the application process for the Foundation's Implementation Grant, which will ask eligible applicants to submit a formal application in April. Applicants that receive the grant would be notified in September.

The \$20,000 grant would provide corridor design for a new section of the trail from Lincolnton City Park to South Fork River via the Walker Branch and Clark Creek stream corridors. The 1.3-mile trail would connect Ramsour's Mill Battleground with City Park and the Marcia H. Cloninger Rail-Trail.

Construction costs for the project is unknown, but it would not begin until the Rail-Trail between East Pine Street and City Park is finished.

"Since we are working so hard on the third phase of the Rail-Trail and since it will take some time to do that, at this particular juncture, we are just requesting corridor design funding from the Carolina Thread Trail Foundation," said Lincolnton Planning Director Steve Gurley.

The city is currently working on the last phase of the Rail-Trail by extending it from East Pine Street to City Park. Gurley said the city has acquired 20 of the 31 properties needed to finish the last phase of the Rail-Trail.

Trail construction will be funded partially by \$468,000 from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement through the N.C. Department of Transportation.

Since adoption of the "Greenway Master Plan" in 2002, the city has set aside \$150,000 to be used for greenway projects, including land acquisition to finish the Rail-Trail, which opened between Government Street and East Pine Street in 1998.

The letter of interest does not obligate the city to proceed with any formal application or use of any public funds, Gurley said.

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