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County debates greenway cost, benefits

[By Michael Barrett](#)

CHERRYVILLE — Talk of a conceptual greenway system that would link Gaston with 14 other counties has been mostly positive.

But Gaston County commissioners worry they'll be expected to foot part of the bill for the Carolina Thread Trail.

The county board backed away from approving a resolution "to support" the thread trail during a meeting last week. It tabled the issue after Commissioner John Torbett questioned the wording.

The resolution made no mention of money, but Torbett was still spooked.

"The term 'to support' suggests committing money," he said.

Other commissioners, including Tom Keigher and Joe Carpenter, said they felt there was no reason for concern.

"All we're doing is approving the concept," Carpenter said.

County Attorney Chuck Moore agreed that the resolution would not be financially binding in any way.

"But it does say 'to plan, design and build,'" said Commissioner Pearl Burris Floyd.

Commissioner Mickey Price was also uncomfortable with passing the resolution.

"Unless it's reworded and it specifies what we're supporting," Price said.

The system of trails and greenways is still just a concept. So there are no concrete designs or cost predictions, said County Manager Jan Winters.

In December, Gaston County and York County, S.C., each received a \$50,000 "pilot project" grant from organizers of the trail effort.

The Catawba Lands Conservancy, the project's lead agency, has estimated the overall cost at between \$100 million and \$150 million. Grants and donations could pay for much of that.

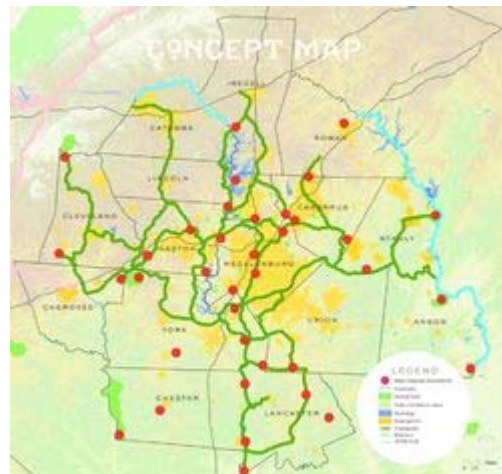
CLC executive director Larry Cable has said \$40 million might need to come from the 15 counties over a span of 10 to 15 years.

Not everyone at the meeting was in favor of the greenway concept.

Laura Stroupe, a resident of Old Dallas Road, said during public comment that greenways are good for recreation. But they also become drug corridors that encourage crime, she said.

"They are wonderful in idea, but dangerous in reality," Stroupe said.

The concept also assumes the city and county will be able to acquire the land it needs to build the



greenway, Stroupe said.

"I've kind of had it on a personal level with the city of Gastonia trying to plan the region for everyone else," she said.

But Gastonia City Councilman Dave Kirlin refuted Stroupe's claims.

Studies have shown greenways raise nearby property values and improve quality of life, he said.

The county board may discuss the resolution again next month.

You can reach Michael Barrett at (704) 869-1826.

http://www.gastongazette.com/news/county_16463___article.html/resolution_greenway.html