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CAROLINA THREAD

Trail project lands grant from Knight

Foundation to give \$1 million toward 400-mile greenway

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The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation has granted \$1 million to the Carolina Thread Trail, which aims to connect 15 counties around Charlotte with locally-built greenway trails.

The foundation had awarded \$550,000 in 2005 to start the project, and has supported other green-space programs in Charlotte. It sees the 400-mile web of trails as part of "transformational change" coming to the region, said Susan Patterson, Knight's program director in Charlotte.

"With the greening of America, the timing is right to more fully support this type of work," she said.

Thread Trail proponents envision a system to link significant trails and places throughout the region.

It's an ambitious plan that is expected to take 15 years and cost \$110 million to \$150 million. About \$40 million would be raised privately, with the hope that government grants would help pay for trail construction.

About \$16.7 million has been raised so far, said Dave Cable, executive director of the Catawba Lands Conservancy and Thread Trail director. The Trust for Public Land is working with the Catawba group to put the plan into place.

Other major backers: Duke Energy, \$1 million; the Bank of America Charitable Foundation and Wachovia Foundation, \$4 million each; and the Foundation for the Carolinas, \$2 million.

Two communities, Gaston County and York County, S.C., have won \$50,000 grants for planning and design stages. The Knight grant will help organizers offer more planning grants to local communities, Cable said.

The Knight Foundation, headquartered in Miami, was created with bequests from two brothers of the Knight Newspapers family. In addition to journalism programs and national initiatives, the foundation focuses on 26 communities including Charlotte where the Knights owned newspapers.

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