



Public input needed for 15-county trail plan

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Olivia Neeley

SHELBY - The determining factor when connecting counties across the state through the Carolina Thread Trail is public input.

And local residents got a chance to see the concept of the trail up close at a public drop-in session at the Dover YMCA Thursday.

"The main guiding principle for the Carolina Thread Trail community is self determination," said Randi Gates, community coordinator with the organization.

The Carolina Thread Trail (The Thread for short) is a 15-county, two-state initiative designed to inspire and facilitate the creating of a regional network of trails, blueways and conservation corridors that will grow together over time, linking more than 2.3 million citizens.

"Communities will determine if they will participate, where trails will be located and what type of trails they want," Gates said. "The whole process relies on the public's input."

Presentations and experts explained the concept first hand with display boards, maps and an 11-minute video explaining The Thread.

Representatives from Cleveland County, its municipalities and the Carolina Thread Trail, along with local project consultant LandDesign discussed project visions and goals.

"Our main intent through this process is to map out what everyone wants on paper and piece that together as funding becomes available," said Bill McCarter, Cleveland County planning director.

Catawba Lands Conservancy is the lead agency for The Thread, working in partnership with the Trust for Public Land, Foundation of the Carolinas, and many local partners. The project is being funded primarily by grants, McCarter said.

McCarter said input is vital to mapping the connections between destinations. "We need their input to find out where they want to be when using the trails and where they want to end up," he said.

The Thread has created a Web site for residents to visit, take surveys, watch videos, look at maps and photo sharing. All new plans will be posted for public review on the site.

"They (public) will define what routes they want throughout the county," Gates said.

Lincoln County has been through the information/input process and Gaston and York, S.C. are just finishing up - their draft plans are on the CTT Web site.

Carl Spangler, the president of the steering committee, was instrumental in the Spangler Foundation giving \$1 million to this project, with the stipulation it be spent on Cleveland County.

You can visit the Web site by going to www.wikiplanning.org. Once you are there enter the password CCTT or your home zip code in Cleveland County when logging into the project.

The Carolina Thread Trail will develop over time as communities build trails that will eventually link parks, green spaces and attractions throughout the region. Not all local trails and greenways will become part of the Carolina Thread Trail. Analogous to our highway systems, The Thread will develop as a "green interstate" focused on linking local trails and regionally significant attractions.

Source: www.carolinathreadtrail.org

<http://www.shelbystar.com/news/thread-38957-county-trail.html>