

Carolina Thread Trail connecting communities

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By Trent Faris

ROCK HILL, SC (WBTV) It's happy trails for a project linking 278 miles of trails through 15 counties. In Gastonia, a celebration Tuesday morning. The Carolina Trail Thread sign unveiled at Pavilion Park downtown, as well as Manchester Meadows Park in Rock Hill.

This will be Gastonia access to the new Greenway that will link Gaston, Mecklenburg, Cleveland, Lincoln, Anson, Stanly, Union, Lancaster Chester, York and Cherokee Counties together through a series of walking and bike paths.

It looks like a spider web on a map, but the trail system is connecting cities with each other "The way it connects is communities talking together and as they plan their trail and their neighbors plan their trails they point for the same location," said Anne Browning project director for the Carolina Thread Trail.

Browning says the Carolina Thread trail project helps communities reconnect with an older way of life. "Wouldn't it be great to have an opportunity to walk or cycle to your neighboring communities and not always have to get in the car and fight the traffic and find a parking place," said Browning.

Eventually the Carolina Thread Trail will connect more than 11 communities by trail. So essentially some one could walk from Manchester Meadows in Rock Hill to Freedom Park in Charlotte without walking on any roads.

City leaders hope when all the threads are connected they'll connect them all with more economic development.

"Any time you have efforts that enhance quality of life you're going to create opportunity for economic development," said Rock Hill Mayor, Doug Echols.

Mayor Echols says companies look for cities with good amenities for employees.

"They're not going to move their business to a place that doesn't have a good strong quality of life and that's why we work so hard at in in Rock Hill," said Echols.

Browning estimates it will take at least 20 years to connect all the trails together.

"In the mean time there will be lots of great trails to enjoy," said Browning.

The pricetag on the project is \$150 million. \$19 million has already come from companies like Bank of America and Duke Energy. The rest would come from public funds.

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