

Carolina Thread Trail Public Meeting Summary

Gaston County public listening sessions for the Carolina Thread Trail were held at Belmont Abbey on March 25, Schiele Museum on March 26, Tabernacle Baptist Church on March 31 and Bessemer City Hall on April 22. More than 80 people participated.

Input from these sessions is summarized below. Items mentioned most frequently appear near the top of each list. This public input may guide our steering committee in selection of alternative routes, shape the development of portions of greenway plan (e.g. statement of priorities/identification of themes and concerns) and provide ideas for design guidelines and other Carolina Thread Trail activities.

Questions and responses:

1. How do you want to use trails now or in the future?

A. Active Uses

- biking
- walking (including places for retired people to walk)
- hiking
- horseback riding
- dog walking
- running
- rollerblading/skating
- birding
- fishing access
- mountain biking
- taking pictures – need picturesque areas (panoramas)

B. Active or Passive Uses

- safe transportation alternatives (e.g. those without a vehicle could travel to another city, work and other important destinations; children could walk to school)
- educational opportunities/nature learning
- outdoor and nature experiences
- emotional, spiritual and/or psychological benefits
- conservation
- handicapped-accessible (e.g. should have no more than 3% grade, etc. for ADA compliance)
- have fun
- inspiration
- see historic sites
- access waterways

C. As Host/Venue

- biodiversity
- campsites on trail
- no ATVs or other motorized vehicles (except vehicles for the handicapped)
- reflective places

D. Other Uses/Benefits

- exercise and good health
- community connection - social/connectivity/community spirit
- family participation/family bonding
- for development, building near it/tie new development to trail
- economic development and tourism
- relaxation
- quality of life
- incorporate existing trails
- conserve natural corridors
- scenic values of visible greenways (not always in backyards)
- destination point

2. What important places should be part of the Carolina Thread Trail system?

A. Specific

- US National Whitewater Center
- Daniel Stowe Botanical Gardens
- Crowders Mountain State Park
- Mountain Island Lake State Education Forest
- Schiele Museum
- South Fork River Corridor
- King's Mountain
- Dallas Park (Biggerstaff Park)
- Poston Park/Spencer Mountain
- Rankin Lake
- Catawba River
- Gaston College
- Lineberger Park
- Estelle Rankin Forest

B. General

- downtowns/municipalities
- schools

- public parks (One person said, “to take advantage of lands that are already being protected.” Another said, “connect to active parks and ballfields.”)
- historic areas (e.g. Belmont Abbey, St. Joseph’s Church, and Mt. Holly Cotton Mill, check Belmont Historical Group for list of others)
- retail centers/shopping/restaurants
- neighborhoods/housing
- museums
- libraries
- waterways (one person mentioned connecting to private lakes in the area)
- natural areas that should be preserved
- conservancy lands
- existing trails/greenways
- connection to public transportation (e.g. trains and buses)
- access points that serve all ages, including elderly (nursing homes and other places where seniors live)
- camping areas
- scenic areas
- hospital/medical facilities
- get to Gastonia from Lincoln
- neighboring counties, e.g. Lincoln and York Counties
- hikes in natural spaces
- farmlands and forests
- smaller communities
- YMCAs
- hotels
- moderate-income townhouse development
- active adult communities near trail
- new parks (organic?)

3. What do you want to see along the way?

A. Amenities

- picnic spaces
- bike racks (preferably covered)
- restrooms/facilities
- parking, bus stops and public transit
- benches
- playgrounds
- drinking water
- garbage disposal
- camping
- wi-fi
- cross-country team facilities
- mountain biking trails
- public art (keep graffiti potential in mind)

- exercise stations
- encounter water along the way
- pet waste stations
- emergency call system

B. Signage

- emergency response markers
- nature information

4. What are your community's attitudes and concerns about greenways generally and about the Carolina Thread Trail concept specifically?

A. Design/Location

- width of trail and surface of trail to accommodate multiple uses
- access points and parking on and off the trail
- shared use compatibility
- minimal impact to sensitive habitats
- design compatibility between jurisdictions
- handicap accessibility
- well-marked and signed
- safe road crossings
- emergency, safety and medical accesibility
- connectivity to various communities and other designations

B. Ownership

- Who would own and maintain the trail?
- Private property shouldn't be condemned or landowners otherwise forced to share land for the trail.

C. Safety

- Law enforcement will need to be involved in the security planning, such that patrolling will done for general safety and to be sure that trail rules are followed.

D. Cost/Maintenance

- How will the trail be paid for in the short- and long-term?
- When maintenance is needed and who will be responsible?

E. Timing/Outreach

- Many participants eager to see legs of the trail constructed or otherwise designated
- Want to raise awareness about the trail.

F. Positives

- Excitement about setting a precedent for providing an alternative form of transportation and multi-modal recreation
- Making parks, recreation and conservation a priority
- Anticipated benefits to quality of life.

5. Additional ideas/suggestions offered by participants that did not fit into the categories above

- Have developers put greenways through subdivisions so that there is access for more people.
- Clubs/civic groups/college students/other associations could be involved.
- Suggest creating a symbol that indicates that there is a big group collectively working on this (stickers for cars, etc.)
- In Gaston County, need support from CTT of existing projects and tie those and future greenways together
- Would like to create a model for CTT for other areas and counties to see