

Charting the future of the Trail

Leaders seek input on path to connect communities

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By V. Tom Gardner

If you're interested in having new hiking or cycling trails through Mooresville, then it's time to make your voice heard.

Residents in southern Iredell can attend a public hearing 7-8:30 p.m. Nov. 30 at Pine Lake Preparatory School, 1639 Mecklenburg Highway, to provide input on the final design and location of the area's addition to the Carolina Thread Trail.

The Carolina Thread Trail is a network of interconnected greenways, trails and open spaces that will eventually connect up to 15 counties and 2.3 million people throughout N.C. and S.C.

Launched in 2007, the Carolina Thread Trail is the result of a partnership between the Foundation for the Carolinas and more than 40 community and business leaders who identified the trail as a great way to connect communities, protect green space and give those nearby access to new trails that can be used for hiking, bicycling and sometimes even paddling.

Earlier this year, a series of meetings held in Iredell County, including Mooresville, which drew approximately 120 people and resulted in 450 completed online surveys by those who wanted to learn more and help guide the development of this proposed greenway.

That input has helped to create a rough outline of where the trail will go. The Nov. 30 meeting will help develop a master plan to include where the trail will be, what materials will be used for paving, and the overall design and landscape of the path.

Once the master plan is developed, Iredell County and city governments will then find a way to fund the trail. In most cases, this part of the path is paid for by both public and private funds.

According to Carolina Thread Trail Development and Communications Director Dean Thompson, for every \$1 raised from private funds for the trail, almost \$3 dollars are generated in public funding.

The Iredell County Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation announced in July that it would award a \$250,000 grant to the Carolina Thread Trail to support the development of Iredell County's section of this regional trail network.

This grant is designed to assist with land acquisition and trail construction for segments identified by the residents and leaders of Iredell County as part of the county's Greenway Master Plan.

Generally, those in the Mooresville area have been responsive to idea of bringing the Carolina Thread Trail to the area.

"Folks were supportive," said Mooresville Transportation Planner Neil Burke describing this summer's Carolina Thread Trail planning meeting.

And according to Rebecca Harper, a planner with Iredell County, the biggest hurdles have been working with the community to ensure the County doesn't "step on the toes" of property owners, and making sure that all relevant parties are kept aware of what's going on.

A public survey is available online for input via a link on the county's website at www.co.iredell.nc.us.

Once that information and public comments from the meeting are taken into consideration, Harper expects a final plan to be completed and submitted to the Iredell County Commission within six months.

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2010/11/24/1850787/charting-the-future-of-the-trail.html#ixzz16hC4vRYO>