



**-CATAWBA-**  
**LANDS CONSERVANCY**  
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**CAROLINA**  
**THREAD TRAIL**

# **Request for Proposals**

## **Region-wide Update of Carolina Thread Trail Master Plans**



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RFP Issue Date: Monday, August 4, 2025

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Pre-submittal virtual meeting (optional): Tuesday, August 12, 2025 at 11:00 am (EDT)

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Proposals due: Tuesday, September 16, 2025 at 5:00 pm (EDT)

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# Request for Proposals

## Region-wide Update of Carolina Thread Trail Master Plans

### I. Purpose

The Catawba Lands Conservancy, doing business as Carolina Thread Trail, is seeking firms ("Proposers") to submit proposals for the Region-wide Update of Carolina Thread Trail Master Plans covering the 15 counties in the Thread Trail footprint (Appendix A). The process may address the footprint by grouping counties according to a rationale. (Please see additional explanation in Section V: Preliminary Scope of Services). Because this is an update of existing plans rather than creation of new plans, it is anticipated that the result of this procurement process will be the selection of a single firm ("Consultant") to update all of the master plans. The objective for this Request for Proposals ("RFP") is to provide Proposers with the necessary information so that they can submit a written proposal for updating the master plans.

Proposals must be submitted electronically. **The deadline for submission is 5:00 pm (EDT) on September 16, 2025.** (Please see Section VIII: Procurement Schedule and Process for submittal instructions.)

Additional details regarding the submissions and schedule are included in other relevant sections below.

### II. Terminology

Herein, these terms are used as follows:

- *Trail* – A general term meaning a linkage for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other users who are not travelling by motor vehicle. A trail may be paved or unpaved; it may be off-road or along a road; it may combine user types or may separate user types. The term encompasses facilities widely known as greenways, multi-use paths, shared use paths, sidepaths, sidewalks, bike lanes, bike paths, and cycle tracks, among others.
- *Thread Trail* – Carolina Thread Trail, which may be the organization or the trail network itself, depending upon the context of the sentence or paragraph.

### III. Background

The Catawba Lands Conservancy and the Carolina Thread Trail are two arms of a single non-profit, dedicated to saving land, connecting lives to nature and linking communities to each other. Catawba Lands Conservancy permanently conserves and manages land for public benefit in the Southern Piedmont of North Carolina. Organizationally, the Thread Trail plays a catalytic role in advancing land trails and water trails in the 15-county area surrounding Charlotte, NC, which includes four counties in SC in addition to 11 counties in NC. The effort is a collaborative, locally-driven one, carried out in partnership with local governments primarily, but also with other entities in some cases.

As a vision, the Thread Trail is a regional network linking towns, cities, parks, nature preserves and other destinations throughout 15 counties. (Specifically, the counties are: Anson, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly and Union counties within North Carolina, and Cherokee, Chester, Lancaster and York counties in South Carolina.) Of the 1630 miles of trail envisioned in the entire network, 435 miles of land trails now exist. A total of 170 miles of water

trails are open to the public. Once completed, the system essentially will connect 2.3 million people and be the second largest trail network in the U.S.

When the Thread Trail was established as an organization in 2007, master planning was a major focus. The Thread Trail worked with the counties, cities, towns and key stakeholders in each of the 15 counties to create separate county-specific plans, using the services of multiple consulting firms. The Board of County Commissioners in each county adopted their Thread Trail master plan between 2009 and 2015. The Thread Trail's Governing Board also adopted the plans. The proposed trail corridors have since been incorporated into other local, regional and state plans pertaining to a variety of needs, such as transportation, trails, parks and health, among others. Over time, the Thread Trail and the counties have jointly amended certain segments within some of the master plans, as needed, due to changing circumstances, such as emerging opportunities for trail on an alternative alignment. Given that the plans are at least ten years old and other route adjustments are no doubt needed, the Thread Trail now aims to update all of the master plans through a collaborative process with the applicable local governments and key stakeholders.

It is important to understand how implementation of the Thread Trail network occurs and what the roles are for various organizations and agencies. The Thread Trail (or Catawba Lands Conservancy) built, and continues to maintain, only a few of the existing trails in the network (on preserved properties and conservation easements). Other entities also have built some of the segments and continue to maintain them. The majority of existing Thread Trail segments have been constructed by local governments. In many cases, the Thread Trail provided grants to these outside agencies and organizations for feasibility studies, design, acquisition and/or construction. In some cases, land developers have built trail segments and then the applicable town, city or county accepted it for maintenance (if local standards were met). A major benefit of the Thread Trail master plans is raising and maintaining awareness among all actors about where the communities expect and desire regional trails.

#### IV. Guiding Principles

Principles that are fundamental to the philosophy of the Carolina Thread Trail guide the work of our Board of Directors, volunteers, staff and partners. The principles are:

- **Connectivity and collaboration:** By continuing to encourage municipalities and counties to work with each other, we can achieve our goal of *regional* connectivity. While towns, cities and counties understandably focus their efforts within their jurisdictions, the Thread Trail connects jurisdictions to each other, as well as linking certain destinations within jurisdictions.
- **Inclusiveness and free access:** The Thread Trail will be an asset available for the use of diverse types of people in urban, suburban and rural settings. The process by which it is built needs to include many different voices.
- **Leverage:** Private capital can stimulate activity and attract state, federal and other sources that require matching funds.
- **Respect for the land and respect for the landowner:** As segments of the Thread Trail are planned, designed and constructed, it is critical to educate landowners about the project and include them in the process.
- **Contextually appropriate trails:** The Thread Trail uses the term "trail" (as defined above) to speak of many types of facilities. The types of planned and existing segments vary according to the characteristics of the surrounding natural and built environment and the standards of the controlling entity. Thus, segments of the Thread Trail network may be: paved, natural surface, improved natural surface, gravel, boardwalk, sidewalk/bike facility combination, water trails between launch/take out points, etc. In less constrained areas, the appropriate type of trail may be determined during implementation stages rather than during the master planning process.

## V. Preliminary Scope of Services

For purposes of the update process, the proposer may consider grouping certain counties according to a rationale, and applying the process to each group. However, the deliverables will consist of 15 separate updated plans for consideration by the appropriate county commissions.

The project will involve the following tasks:

1. Project kickoff and administration
  - Kick-off meetings (in-person), one for each group of counties as applicable: The consultant will organize and attend the meetings, which will include consultant staff, Thread Trail staff and appropriate other staffs from within each county in the given group. The meetings will cover at a minimum: project purpose, process, schedule; information exchange regarding opportunities and barriers as related to the current Thread Trail planned network; data needs and sources; next steps.
  - Administration during the project:
    - Bi-weekly meeting of project team, consisting of key Thread Trail and consultant staff (virtual or in-person)
    - One interim steering committee meeting per county grouping, as applicable (virtual)
    - Monthly progress reports/invoicing
2. Understanding of trail network progress and plans
  - Review Thread Trail's current GIS file of existing and planned network
  - Review the maps of the 15 originally adopted Thread Trail master plans
  - Review trail-focused corridor plans and feasibility studies in the region since adoption of master plans
  - Review other relevant plans by local, regional or state partner agencies, including trail plans from counties or regions adjacent to the Thread Trail region
  - Review developed greenway networks within each county, whether or not currently designated as Thread Trail
3. Development of draft network
  - Verify that existing Thread Trail segments are reflected in the Thread Trail network GIS file
  - Map the existing or in-progress trail segments that are located *off* of the current Thread Trail network within each county (which may involve incorporation of existing GIS data from trail managers and/or creation of new GIS features)
  - Determine whether proposed future segments in the Thread Trail network have significant obstacles for implementation
  - Determine whether opportunities exist to create a better Thread Trail corridor using other built or planned trail networks within each county
4. Stakeholder and community engagement
  - Public surveys and/or public meetings, as proposed for initial input or review of recommendations
  - Stakeholder meetings (number depending upon proposer's potential grouping of counties) to review draft networks (virtual)
5. Recommendation for network revisions
  - Display and/or list of revised segments: prior connections versus newly proposed connections
  - Rationale for routing adjustments
  - 15 updated countywide network map exhibits

## 6. Final deliverables

- 15 plan update documents for adoption by appropriate county, with content to include: Thread Trail master planning background, reason for updating the master plans, brief description of plan update process, appropriate displays of recommended updates (illustrating where and how routes differ from current network), rationale for major changes in the network and brief narrative of how the network addresses the Guiding Principles
- Updated Thread Trail regional GIS layer, including relevant attributes such as trail status

Presentations to Boards for adoption of the updated plans are **NOT** assumed to be part of the scope of services.

## VI. Submittal Requirements

Proposals shall consist of the following elements in the order shown below. The *maximum* number of pages for the entire submittal shall be no more than 30 pages.

- Title page: Show the RFP subject, name of proposing firm, address, telephone number, federal identification number, name of contact person and the date of submittal.
- Letter of transmittal: Include a brief explanation of why the firm deserves to be selected and the name and title of the project manager.
- Proposer Description:
  - Describe the proposer's history, capabilities and 1-3 examples of proposer's prior similar or relevant experience, as related to the Preliminary Scope of Services and deliverables. In listing or discussing the prior experience, include the name, title and contact information of the client's project manager or point of contact during the project.
  - Provide information on the qualifications of key personnel, covering relevant work experience. Include resumes. Include an organizational chart.
- Project Approach: Written narrative describing the proposer's understanding and approach to the project, based on the Preliminary Scope of Services.
- Schedule: Provide the anticipated timeline, by proposed task.
- Cost: Show the total cost of services and cost of each work element or task. Assume the maximum project budget is \$170,000.

## VII. Selection criteria

Proposals will be evaluated as follows:

Criteria	Maximum Pts
1) Firm's experience and expertise, as shown in proposal's description of the firm, its prior work and capabilities	20
2) Qualifications of key staff: Experience with planning methods and practices for various types of trails or bicycle and pedestrian facilities; experience with data analysis, stakeholder involvement and public engagement	20
3) Project approach	25
4) Timeline to complete work	15
5) Total cost of proposed services	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

## VIII. Procurement Schedule and Process

<b>8/4/2025</b>	<b>Thread Trail releases RFP</b>
8/12 (Tue) at 11:00 am (EDT)	Pre-submittal virtual info meeting, open to any interested firm
8/27 COB (Wed)	Deadline for firms to submit questions
<b>9/16 (Tue) at 5:00 pm (EDT)</b>	<b>Deadline for proposers to submit written proposals</b>
Week of 10/13	Finalist proposers notified
<b>Week of 11/3</b>	<b>Interviews with finalist proposers (in person)</b>
<b>No later than 11/11 (Tue)</b>	<b>Notification of Selection</b>

Pre-Submittal Conference – The Thread Trail will host an informational meeting (virtual) for interested firms. The meeting details and access link are as follows:

**Pre-Submittal Conference**  
**Tuesday, August 12, 2025 – 11:00 am (EDT)**  
 Microsoft Teams meeting: [Join the meeting now](#)  
 Meeting ID: 225 344 239 278 8  
 Passcode: 7bw2Bx9X  
 Dial in by phone:  
[+1 980-505-7953,858725949#](#) United States, Charlotte  
[Find a local number](#)  
 Phone conference ID: 858 725 949#

Pre-Submittal Questions: From the RFP release date through close of business on August 27, prospective proposers may submit written questions **only to** Jane Love, Trail Development Manager, at [jane@carolinathreadtrail.org](mailto:jane@carolinathreadtrail.org). The Thread Trail will respond to inquiries via email as soon as practicable. In addition, the questions received and responses provided will be posted on an ongoing basis at <https://www.carolinathreadtrail.org/master-plan-rfp> until the deadline for submitting questions passes and final responses are posted.

Proposal Submittal Deadline: **The deadline for submission is 5:00 pm (EDT) on September 16, 2025.** Proposals must be submitted electronically. **To submit a proposal, first request a file transfer link from Jane Love, Trail Development Manager, at [jane@carolinathreadtrail.org](mailto:jane@carolinathreadtrail.org). (The link can be requested multiple days ahead of actual submittal, and should be requested no later than 4:30 pm on September 16, to ensure sufficient time for response and upload.)** Incomplete proposals will be eliminated from consideration.

Selection Committee: The committee consists of, at a minimum, Thread Trail Director and staff and two members of the Board's Carolina Thread Trail Committee.

*While the Thread Trail intends to select a firm after evaluation of the Proposals, the Thread Trail reserves the right not to proceed with the project if it determines the project is not in the best interest of the Thread Trail. The Thread Trail reserves the right to select more than one firm if it is determined to be in the best interest of the Thread Trail.*

## Appendix A

### Map of the footprint of the Carolina Thread Trail network

