

## Thread Trail forum sparks ideas

By Jim McNally

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More than 40 people gathered Tuesday night at the Iredell County Agricultural Center to discuss the making of a trail through the county and, if it comes to fruition, a construction project that may be part of a 500- to 1,500-mile walkway.

A number of ideas were exchanged during the first of three planned meetings in Iredell County aimed at coming up with a plan for the county's portion of a 15-county, two-state foot and bike path called the Carolina Thread Trail.

The citizens, community leaders, business owners and elected officials broke into groups and held mini-workshops about what they wanted the trail in Iredell to look like, what route they thought it should take and what purposes it should serve.

Brian Sohovich said the trail could be one of the ways Statesville could define or brand itself.

"Why couldn't you make the Statesville stamp a city of healthy living, with greenways and walkways and to be outside with nature," Sohovich said. "That could be a vantage point the city could build on."

Iredell County Commissioner Ken Robertson was at the meeting and said he liked the idea of a trail for many reasons, one of which being as a way to get young people outside to get their legs moving.

"The trails could be an effort to kids to start walking to school again," Robertson said. "There are kids in this county being picked up by buses a quarter of a mile from their schools and we wonder why kids are getting fat."

When told by another member that the kids' parents don't want them walking or riding bicycles to school, Robertson said it would ultimately be up to the kids.

"Once it becomes the cool thing to ride your bike to school again, moms won't be able to stop them," he said.

While most comments were positive about the trail plan, some folks had questions. "Once you get out into the county, you get into property rights," said Jeff McNeely. "You get into how it's going to be built and questions like who's going to give and who's going to have to be bought and who is going to maintain the thing once it's built. There are still a lot of questions."

And answering those questions is what these meetings and others in the future are all

about, according to John Cock with Alta Planning & Design, which was hired to get the project off the ground.

Two other meetings on the Carolina Thread Trail, in Union Grove and Mooresville, are slated for mid-July.

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