

Talk about Carolina Thread Trail is definitely worth listening to

By John Anderson
Sunday, Jul. 04, 2010



The distinctive Carolina Thread Trail Marker guides hikers on a thread segment in Fort Mill. Union County residents have the opportunity to learn about the project and express their ideas this month. Photo by NANCY PIERCE

I learned from her that this project had been launched in November 2007, and by the end of 2009, seven counties in North and South Carolina had already adopted master plans. There are already lots of segments that are marked with the "Carolina Thread Trail" signage. Thompson's enthusiasm was contagious when she told me "This is a very exciting time in the process of building the trail system."

I asked Morehead how the meetings in Union County came to be. He told me he had already received 14 "Resolutions of Support" from the towns in Union County.

Most of the plans in our lives have a short time horizon.

What's for dinner tonight? What are we doing this weekend? Where will we go for our family vacation this year?

Likewise in business, time horizons tend to be focused on this month, this quarter, and this fiscal year.

I learned this week of an effort that has a whole different time focus, and I came away a believer.

The Carolina Thread Trail has scheduled a number of community "Listening Sessions" for Union County July 19-22 to unveil its vision and get community ideas on a project of unprecedented scope.

What is the vision? At www.carolinathreadtrail.org, I learned "The Carolina Thread Trail is a regional trail network that will eventually reach 15 counties and over 2 million people. Simply put, it will link people and places."

I contacted the Carolina Thread Organization, an organization led by the Catawba Lands Conservatory, and talked with community coordinator Travis Morehead and development and communications director Dean Thompson.

Thompson captured my imagination in the first 30 seconds of our conversation. She told me this is "a collaborative project of unprecedented scale. The time horizon is 20 years at least."

When I queried him on what our readers might expect when they attended a listening session, I learned that this is a very community-friendly process. "We have no preconceived ideas of where trails should go, or shouldn't go," Morehead said. The meetings are two hours long and are a "drop in, drop out" format in which interested residents can talk with a consultant and discuss "what could be."

Morehead also said there will be a telephone survey before the listening sessions and he hopes that our readers will take the time to respond openly and honestly if they receive a call.

"What could be" fascinates me.

Travis and Dean shared a copy of the Carolina Thread Trail 2009 annual report. In it, there is a map of the Carolinas reminiscent of those circulatory system diagrams we studied in high school biology. The main vessels are the major statewide trails - Mountains to the Sea Trail, Palmetto Trail and Over Mountain Victory trail. Right in the middle are the meandering lines of the Carolina Thread Trail, connecting our region like so many capillaries.

The listening sessions are planned as follows: July 19, the Weddington Swim and Racquet Club (6-8 p.m.); July 20, The Museum of the Waxhaws (6-8 p.m.); July 21, Union West Regional Library (5-7p.m.); and July 22, Union Count Cooperative Extension (6-8 p.m.).

You can get more detailed directions at the Carolina Tread Trail website or by calling Katie Reeves at 707-821-5401 or Travis Morehead at 704-376-2556. If it's not too hot, you might even want to walk there.

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2010/07/04/1540492/talk-about-carolina-thread-trail.html#ixzz0tU5bXdQe>