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Chester ready to talk trails
County to hold meeting about greenway network
By Charles D. Perry · cperry@heraldonline.com
Updated 09/04/08 - 7:27 AM |

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CHESTER -- Hoping to dispel rumors of a government takeover, Chester County leaders are asking residents to come to Fort Lawn tonight to talk about building a system of trails in the county.

The county-sponsored meeting offers residents a chance to discuss their opinions about trails in the county -- specifically the Carolina Thread Trail, a proposed 15-county network of greenways and trails in North and South Carolina.

One fear leaders have heard is that the county will seize private land to use for the trail.

"If I thought that were the case, I definitely would not be for it," said Chester County Councilman Brad Jordan. "The county's not going to come in and take anyone's land."

The Thread Trail has been billed as a project that is driven by the communities involved.

In fact, part of the reason Chester County paths weren't included in the initial Thread Trail's map was because trail planners wanted local residents to share their thoughts about where the greenways should go, said Ann Browning, the Thread Trail's project director.

The idea is that the Thread Trail will serve as a backbone for the network while local leaders design their area's natural thoroughfares.

Tonight's meeting at the Fort Lawn Community Center is another step in that process.

"It's really a listening session," Browning said. "Elected officials will be there to hear what people's concerns are."

But the meeting isn't just about the Thread Trail, said Glinda Coleman, executive director of the Great Falls Hometown Association and a proponent of the Thread Trail.

Great Falls has been talking about building trails for seven years,

and tonight's event is an opportunity for folks to inquire about all recreational trails.

"It's just to give people a chance to talk about it, to say what they feel," she said. "Hopefully, we can give them some information, too."

Public input is critical, Jordan said.

"They've got questions," he said. "The only way you're going to get answers is to participate."

Thread Trail planners want the project to go where it's wanted, Jordan said:

"If the community decides that they just don't want the trail ... For my two cents worth, I don't think it'll come."

WANT TO GO?
What: Public forum on building trails in Chester County.
Where: Fort Lawn Community Center.
When: 6 to 8 tonight
Details: The forum offers people a chance to talk to Chester County leaders and representatives of the Carolina Thread Trail about the pros and cons of developing natural pathways throughout the county.

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