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For The Brunswick News

Island trail to be built on Lawrence Road

The St. Simons Land Trust held its fourth and final community forum Thursday to get input from island residents on their preferred areas of focus for land conservation. A highlight of the meeting was the announcement that an anonymous donor had contributed \$500,000 toward construction of a trail along Lawrence Road.

Some 50 islanders attended the meeting at Golden Isles Presbyterian Church, located on Lawrence Road along the proposed path of the trail.

Ed McBrayer, executive director of the Atlanta-based PATH Foundation, made the announcement of the gift. "One of our donors who lives in Atlanta and has a home here came to us with this offer," he said. "The donation provides seed money to get this thing started."

McBrayer said the trail would extend from the roundabout at the intersection of Lawrence and Frederica roads up to the fork at Hampton Point, a distance of 4.9 miles. He said the PATH Foundation is proposing an eight- or 10-foot concrete trail to run up the west side of the road. At the suggestion of the Sea Island Co., part of the trail would be routed through the Frederica community's 100-foot buffer with its beautiful tree canopy.

A trail alongside Lawrence Road was included in the island's 2005 Master Trail Plan, created by the Land Trust in partnership with the PATH Foundation. County Commissioner Uli Keller, noting that the Lawrence Road trail was Phase 4 of the trail plan, said "With the portion of money that has become available, that kind of jumped ahead." Keller also indicated that the county has some money set aside that could possibly be added to the \$500,000 gift.

McBrayer estimated the total cost at \$1.6 million to \$2.0 million and said that about a third of the trail, running north from the roundabout, could be built with the initial \$500,000 gift.

Land Trust President Russ Marane said that the Land Trust's role will be to raise funds for the whole Master Trail, including the Lawrence Road portion. He added that, for the Land Trust, the preservation of greenspace and the development of parks is equally as important. "Would you like to get on a trail and ride from one shopping center to another – or from one park to another," he asked the crowd.

The PATH Foundation will design and build the trail. Keller said that, once the trail is complete, Glynn County will maintain it.

The Land Trust has scheduled an island-wide meeting for March 25 at St. William's Catholic Church to present the final version of its updated Greenprint strategic plan.