From rails to trails

Doodle Trail open to community members

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PICKENS — The Doodle Trail is different than most trails in the Upstate. Once serving as a railroad running between the cities of Pickens and Easley, the trail is now paved and available to all walkers, runners, rollerbladers and bikers.

The Doodle Trail, once known as the Doodle freight line, gets its name because of the unique way it would run between the two towns. The train could not be turned around, so it was often compared to a doodlebug.

As the trail continues to gain in popularity, community members are encouraged to take advantage of this unique recreation opportunity.

"The Doodle Trail has been wonderful ever since it first opened up," Pickens resident Kathryn Gravely said. "I'm so excited that the city of Pickens and the city of Easley got together and got it up and running."

The entire trail, running between the two cities, is 7.5 miles long and paved for better convenience, ease and safety.

"It's no more than 3-percent grade, so you're never really climbing," Gravely said. "It's a relatively flat trail."

Community members of all ages are encouraged to take advantage of the trail and the recreation opportunities it provides.

"There have been people of all ages on the trail, from the young to a man I spoke with who will be turning 97 on his birthday," said James Bradley, the groundskeeper of the trail.

It not only provides recreation ease to people of all ages, but the trail seems to be especially catered to community elders.

"It's more accessible for a lot of people," Gravely said. "It's easier for older people to walk and take trips because it's safer for them."

Sitting in a convenient location between the two cities, the trail serves a wide range of people.

"It's amazing that it's right at your backdoor," Gravely said. "For a lot of people in Pickens County, you can be there in less than five minutes."

The trail, being one of the more recent hot spots in both communities, has served as a milestone in city involvement and growth.

"It gets people out to be active, and it gets them more involved in the community," Bradley said.

With the recent attraction to the Doodle Trail and the work of the Pickens Revitalization Association, the city of Pickens has seen significant growth. This new growth, including the openings of several restaurants and stores, Gravely credits to the trail.

"It's exciting to see change, a very positive change, in Pickens," Gravely said. "I think Easley is expecting to see the same type of growth."

Because the trail runs between the two cities, members of both manage it. This relationship has created a unique bond between the two.

"We take care of half of it, and the other city (Easley) picks up the other half," Bradley said.

Just as the dedication and work of the maintenance teams is split between two groups of people, the development on either side of the trail is split as well.

"Both of the cities are working toward getting grants," Gravely said. "Easley just got a huge grant, and they're going to be building a park at their end of it."

Residents of Pickens should be expectant that their city will respond to the developments in Easley in the same way.

One of the most popular ways the trail is used is through the hosting of organizational races and runs. The Pickens' Women's Association is just one of the community groups that takes advantage of this unique race location.

"I know Easley does a 5K run, then there's the Doodle Trail Run that they do," Gravely said. "Because it's so new, I think there are going to be a lot more races coming in on it."

In addition to the other benefits it offers to both cities and communities, the scenic beauty of the trail cannot be ignored.

"It's just perfect," Gravely said. "It makes you have a smile on your face when you're out there."

The Doodle Trail can be found between Pickens and Easley. The trail begins near Hampton Ave. and Jewell St. in the city of Pickens.

For more information, including maps, directions and a calendar of trail events, visit the city of Pickens website at cityofpickens.com/doodle.

