

Ground broken for first phase of Green Crescent Trail

BY GREG OLIVER
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CLEMSON — A groundbreaking for the first phase of the Green Crescent Trail project has finally taken place at Clemson Park.

The network is designed to tie the city of Clemson, Clemson University, Central and Anderson and Pickens counties together.

"It's been a big relief for everyone who's worked on it," said Chad Carson, a member of Friends of the Green Crescent Trail. "The community members started working on this in 2014-15, and there's been a lot of efforts behind the scenes with building plans and designs. When you actually see bulldozers out there digging ground instead of looking at some maps, that's really satisfying to know that's becoming a reality."

The first section will be a quarter-mile, hard-surface loop around the perimeter of the park.

"It will be designed for walkers, runners, dog walkers, bikers, wheelchairs and skaters of all ages," Carson said.

He said the loop will connect to two other paths in different directions — potentially as soon as later this year, with easements and engineering work ongoing. Foothills Construction



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was awarded the winning bid for the project.

The first phase is expected to be completed by the summer, but Carson expects people will be able

and to the core of campus into the Hundred Acre Wood. A public bicycle and hiking path already exists in that location.

"The idea is that, within a mile and a half or two, you could walk from downtown Central and be in the forest and be at Southern Wesleyan Uni-

to start using the walking trail within the next couple of months.

Overall, the 10-year Green Crescent Trail network is set for completion in 2030. The network is set to cover nearly 26 miles.

In addition to Clemson and Central, the network will include Clemson University and the town of Pendleton at

a total cost, including existing segments, of nearly \$16 million. The project is being paid for through grant funding and private fundraising efforts.

Along with Clemson Park, Carson said more funding is needed to begin the trail work in Central.

"All along, the Central plan has been a top priority as well, it's just been a bigger fundraising effort," Carson said. "The total project cost (for this project) is around \$1.4 million, and we can't start until we raise that last \$300,000. I think we're going to do it, but we're going to push it

to get this done."

The Central route will begin downtown at the railroad caboose and Bolick Field and travel along S.C. Highway 93, ending at the edge of the Southern Wesleyan University campus. The sidewalk will be widened to allow for more pedestrian and bike traffic, and Carson said the plan is for SWU to continue the path between the school's athletic fields

versity and walk back," Carson said. "It's going to be a very important connection to the town."

Officials plan to break ground on the Central route at the end of this year, with the segment completed by early 2022.

"The ultimate goal is to have the towns be better connected, because so many people go between there, live in Central, live in Clemson and vice-versa, and just making that physical connection between

Clemson, Central, Pendleton and all the kind of natural areas outside of town — that's the big-picture goal of the Green Crescent Trail," Carson said.

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