

COMMISSION REPORT

The following are from the Jan. 11 Board of Commissioners meeting

Board Accepts Multi-Use Trail Plan

The board accepted, but did not approve, the Master Plan for Multi-Use Trails in DeKalb. The plan, created by the PATH foundation in connection with the DeKalb Parks and Recreation Department, proposes to build 127 miles of inter-linking bicycle and pedestrian trails throughout DeKalb County. PATH officials say the "DeKalb Greenway Trail Plan" will promote cleaner air, calmer traffic and a renewed sense of community.

Several speakers at the meeting, while supporting the idea of a system of trails throughout the county, objected to certain aspects of the plan such as their placements in stream corridors and the lack of public input on the plan.

"I do support green space and greenway corridors but those which contribute to the sustainability of the natural environment," said Dell MacGregor, supervisor for the DeKalb Soil and Water Conservation District. "Multi-use recreational roadways are but one type of greenway that have a place in the larger scheme of greenway planning, but the placement of those roadways is crucial." MacGregor went on to note scientific findings from the University of Georgia that state the need for 100 foot stream buffers to ensure water quality. "Therefore, DeKalb County, in its desire to be a leader for the state of Georgia in greenway planning, should adopt a policy of not allowing impervious surface within 100 feet of the banks of its creeks and streams," she said.

Joe Arrington, co-president of the DeKalb Civic Coalition, said his organization supports the concept of greenway trails, but wants to see the plan "available to public review and subject to one or more public hearings before adoption."

Bryan Hagar of the Sierra Club submitted a letter to commissioners from the environmental organization. While stating the need for public review and 100 foot stream buffer requirements, the organization also said the county should use the plan as a contribution to developing a greenway plan and an alternative transportation plan. The organization also urged the county to require sidewalks in all subdivisions and commercial developments.

Board members said the plan would be entered into the record, but will need to undergo public review and, perhaps, modifications before it is acted upon.