

Trail group happy with public meeting

Leaders say concerns will be used to strengthen master plan

By SARAH POST
Staff Writer

Members of the organization Friends of the Preston Ridge Trail said they were happy with the results of a public meeting Thursday despite the many concerns expressed about trail maintenance, safety and the environment.

Leaders said input from about 65 people who live along the new 4½-mile North Dallas trail would be used to strengthen the master plan and prioritize beautification projects.

"This is really the kind of thing that makes communities stronger," Friends vice president Rodney Schlosser said.

Residents said they were concerned about upkeep, which was taken over by the Dallas Park Department when TXU Electric dedicated the utility easement for the project. They said that it isn't mowed often enough, that drainage is a problem and that patches of wildflowers have been destroyed.

Some said they worry that high voltage lines pose health risks. Others expressed concerns about safety at road crossings and at a shopping area at Belt Line and Coit roads, where visibility is poor.

Friends has \$1 million in city of Dallas bond money and Collin County grant money to help alleviate some of these concerns. It's not clear how far those dollars will go, and the organization is planning an intensive capital funds campaign.

They want to turn the utility easement into a parklike setting, with benches, signs, drinking fountains, lighting and landscaping.

But the trail is not a Dallas

park, said Mike Hellman, a senior parks planner. That's why no money has been set aside for upkeep. Mr. Hellman said the Park Department is committed to mowing there every 21 days.

Architects presented ideas for sprucing up the trail and said they would use residents' input to prioritize projects.

"You've got a jewel here," architect Karl Von Bieberstein said. "Granted, it's got some rough edges, but it can really be some-

thing special."

He said the trail has an "engineered look to it that lacks a warmth of design."

He suggested a common theme should be chosen to decorate the intersections at Belt Line, Arapaho and Campbell Roads and crossings at McCallum and Frankford when the trail is extended to the Bush Turnpike next year.

Lucie Bellew, president of the North Dallas Neighborhood Alli-

ance, said she is thrilled to see plans for beautification take shape and also happy to see so much interest from the community.

"When the alliance was asked to form a friends group, we envisioned the people claiming this as their project, and that is happening" Ms. Bellew said. "It's going to take major fund raising."

E-mail spost@dallasnews.com
or call 469-330-1613