Community leaders planning 'Gr8 Exchange' on Gwinnett transportation

Massive dialogue planned for week of Aug. 24

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Gwinnett County community leaders are planning to get

exchange is to have a week-long, county-wide dialogue

about transportation issues in Gwinnett. (Special Photo)

residents involved in a 'Gr8 Exchange on

Transportation' later this month. The goal is the

About 150 Gwinnett County community leaders are planning to nudge their fellow residents to participate in one of at least 25,000 conversations about transportation issues in the county later this month.

The community leaders are coming together to stage the weeklong "Gr8 Exchange on Transportation," during the week of Aug. 24. Residents are encouraged to sit down in their living rooms or at their dining tables to talk with their friends and neighbors about the kind of transportation improvements they would like to see in Gwinnett County.

The effort is the brainchild of Gwinnett Village Community Improvement District Executive Director Chuck Warbington, who told the Daily Post on Tuesday that he only wants to get an idea of what residents are thinking.

"We're not asking people to support anything, we're not asking people to advocate or educate people," Warbington said. "It's all about, 'Just go have a conversation about transportation in any way you want to talk about your frustrations, talk about what Gwinnett County should be doing or what the federal government should be doing."

The plan is to have each of the about 150 leaders recruit 10 team captains each by Aug. 24. Each team captain will, in turn, commit to host group conversations with 10 people in attendance. Those

to host group conversations with 10 people in 10 people will ideally pledge to have conversations with five of their friends and text in their survey responses.

The idea is to have team captains target the people in their social circles, whether it be their book or tennis club, rather than their business colleagues, according to Warbington.

The plan is to have at least 500 hosted conversations.

"Before we start advocating for something, we need to find out what the heartbeat of Gwinnett County is — what do they feel?" the CID director said. "Is it more sidewalks? Is it more development with live-work-play or is it more transit? Is it a specific intersection that going to bubble up through this process? That's kind of what this is about."

Other CID leaders are also getting behind the idea of a massive community conversation about modes of transportation and local needs which residents feel should be addressed. Gwinnett Place CID Executive Director Joe Allen offered his support in a statement, saying it will help leaders get a better idea of what transportation needs the county really has.

"We can't reach everyone on our own," Allen said. "For this effort to be a success, we need people from all over Gwinnett to take ownership of this program and use the tools we've created to reach their own networks."

http://www.gwinnettdailypost.com/news/2015/aug/04/community-leaders-planning-8216gr8... 8/5/2015

The Gr8 Exchange comes as county leaders are preparing to launch their own, separate and unrelated effort to solicit public input later this year for a major overhaul of the county's comprehensive transportation plan.

The feedback gathered by the county will be poured into a concrete plan for where Gwinnett will be headed transportation-wise in the future. Warbington said the responses gathered through the Gr8 Exchange, though, will be mainly used to show trends of what types of transportation residents are thinking about.

"I anticipate looking at the trends and seeing 20 trends come out of this," Warbington said. "I don't anticipate there being a mandate. This is not something that says 'OK, people said we need sidewalks more, so Board of Commissioners, we need to focus only on sidewalks."

The data gathered from the Gr8 Exchange will be made available to any group in the county who wants to pull ideas from it, including the county government, cities and CIDs.

The idea has support from business leaders, political groups and homeowners associations.

Warbington said he has also met with representatives of the United Tea Party of Georgia, the Gwinnett County Republican Party, Gwinnett Democrats and the Sierra Club.

"We had the tea party, the Sierra Club, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party sitting down together, talking about transportation, and there wasn't any yelling," Warbington said.

Organizers have set up a special phone number where residents can send a text message to join the survey and will release it to the public the week of Aug. 24.

They are also launching a Facebook and Twitter hashtag, #theGr8Exchange, to make the conversation go viral on social media. A website, www.theGr8Exchange.com, has also been created.

"We're trying to make sure, that week, it's basically in front of you everywhere you go," Warbington said.

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