

Economic (and other) Benefits of Trails, Greenways and Open Space

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Expenditures by Residents - Spending by local residents on greenway related activities supports recreation oriented businesses and employment as well as other businesses which are patronized by users.

- A 2004 Study of the 45- mile long Washington & Old Dominion Trail, in Virginia, finds that an **estimated 1.7 million adult users put about \$7 million** directly in the northern Virginia economy.
 - ✓ The estimated 1.6 million **local visits** accounted for about **\$5.3 million of spending directly related to the use of the W&OD.**
- A 2012 publication by the Outdoor Industry Foundation states the **outdoor industry pumps \$646 billion** in direct spending into the American economy and fuels traditional sectors like manufacturing, finance, retail trade, tourism and travel... 6.1 million American lives directly depend on outdoor recreation.

BUILD IT THEY WILL COME (STAY) if you don't, they will go (FIND)

Commercial Uses - Greenways provide business opportunities, locations and resources for commercial activities such as recreation equipment rentals and sales, lessons, special events, and other related businesses.

- Most of the businesses **reported increases in sales/revenue ranging from 30% to as high as 85% since the trail was completed** in a 2014 study of the health and economic impacts of the Greenville Hospital System Swamp Rabbit Tram Trail.
- "The West Orange, Little Econ, and Cady Way trails in Orange County **supported 516 jobs and an estimated economic impact of \$42.6 million** in 2010." East Central Florida Regional Planning Council (2011)
 - In a study of Toronto merchants, **patrons arriving by foot and bicycle visit the most often and spend the most money** per month. The Clean Air Partnership, 2009

The \$100 million Carmel, IN City Center mixed use development is bisected by the Monon Trail. The Carmel mayor points to the trail as the catalyst for this development.

Corporate Relocation and Retention - The Center for Regional Economic Issues at Case Western Reserve University defines **five focus areas in a working model for economic development**. One is **Quality Place** which underscores the importance of building sustainable, connected places to live and for businesses to compete **focusing on building places that are competitive, cool, and connected.**

- Survey results from the Michigan's Cool Cities Initiative indicate quality of life is significantly more important than previously thought. **Of the 31 attributes of preferred places to live, participants identified: safe streets as #1, walkable streets as #3, gathering places as #7, sense of community as #9, scenic beauty as #11, and trails and parks as #13**



Approximately **\$1 billion in new private sector investment** during past 10 years - "Our greenway system has been key to revitalizing our city and attracting new businesses."

David Crockett, Chattanooga City Council Chair, Chattanooga, Tennessee

- Ruby Tuesdays, Inc. moved its Restaurant Support Center to a site adjacent to the Greenway Trail in Maryville, TN. The CEO stated, "I was very impressed with the beauty of the park, which helps provide a sense of community to this area, as well as the many benefits it provides to our more than 300 employees."

In a 2009 survey of recent transplants to Portland, OR, 62% said that the city's bike-friendliness was a factor in their decision to move there. BikePortland.org

Tourism – National Park Service states that outdoor recreation and leisure expenditures account for a substantial part of tourist’s discretionary spending, as ecotourism continues to be one of the fastest growing sectors of travel.



Bicyclists on Minnesota's trails **spend \$481 million annually** while recreating, creating 5,880 jobs and \$40.6 million in state and local taxes.

Recreation spending by non-locals visiting the Washington & Old Dominion Trail supported approx. **\$1.8 million of economic output**, about **34 full-time job equivalents**, and around **\$642,000 of personal income** in the northern Virginia economy.

Trails in the Miami Valley of Ohio attract **1 million visitors who spend up to \$16 million** on goods and services related to use of the trails every year. Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission, 2009

Public Cost Reduction – According to the American Planning Association, **“perhaps one of the greatest values of an interconnected green space system is the financial benefit that may be gained through the reduction of the need for the built environment.”**

- The least cost substitute for the water quality services provided the wetlands of Congaree Bottomland Hardwood Swamp in South Carolina would be a water treatment plant costing \$5 million
- The tree canopy in Charlotte, North Carolina, covers 53% of the county’s land. This urban forest removes 17.5 million pounds of pollutants from the air; a benefit estimated to be worth \$43.8 million each year.

Can we afford it? – “... making walking and biking safer and more accessible is relatively inexpensive. For example, we could **upgrade the entire 2,250 East Coast Greenway** for only **one-fifth the cost of a single recent I-95 bridge** over the Potomac.” Ray LaHood, former Secretary of Transportation, 2010

- A 2009 estimate placed **the replacement value of Portland’s entire bicycle infrastructure is close to the average cost of one mile of four-lane urban freeway**: approximately \$60 million.
- The annual economic impact of cyclists at the North Carolina Outer Banks, **9 times the one-time cost of building the facilities.**
- Bicycling projects create an average of **11.4 jobs per million dollars spent, compared to just 7.8 jobs for road-only projects.**

Property Values - In 2001 Dr. John Crompton of Texas A&M University compiled results of 25 studies on open space effects on property values; **20 of 25 studies concluded that open space and parks increased proximate property values** - 4 of 5 other studies reached ambivalent conclusions.



- **Economic impact of bike lanes** - Pittsburgh, found that bike lanes not only influenced residential real estate activity, but ignited commercial and business activity as well.
 - In North Carolina, realtors found that 40 homes adjacent to the Shepherd’s Vineway Bikeway saw **property increases of \$5,000 and up.**
 - A developer in Front Royal, VA, who donated a 50-foot-wide, seven-mile-long easement along a popular trail **sold all 50 parcels bordering the trail in four months.**
 - In Minneapolis-St. Paul, for every **400 meters closer a median-priced home is to an off-street bicycle facility, its value increases by \$510.**

Monon Trail, Indianapolis - Otherwise identical houses are **worth 11% more for every half mile closer to the trail!**

“It may not have sand and crashing waves, but the Monon Trail is the equivalent of beachfront property in the Indianapolis area.”

Bill Ruthhart Indianapolis Star

Intrinsic Value - Humans benefit from access to recreation that can improve physical health and fitness, improve quality of life and increase community pride and sense of regional character. 2001 Indiana Trails study found;

- On average, 79% of trail users indicated they participate in their preferred activity more because of the trail.
- Over 70 % of trail neighbors reported using the trail during the prior 12 months.
- Over 65 % of the users identify health and fitness as their reason for being on the trail.

Q and A from the Rural Assistance Center – <http://www.raconline.org/>

What are some factors contributing to rural obesity?

...**A lack of exercise also contributes to rural obesity.** Rural residents tend to be less physically active than urban residents... Rural areas may also face challenges in terms of the "built environment," which consists of buildings, sidewalks, parks and other physical aspects of a community.

Enhancing features of the rural environment, such as playgrounds, parks and recreational facilities, and diminishing barriers, including isolation, climate, safety fears, cost, lack of transportation, and lack of access to physical activity areas, are both key in addressing active living and obesity in rural communities.

Anush Yousefian Hansen, MS, David Hartley, PhD, Maine Rural Health Research Center



“Rural communities may want to develop a wellness center, bike trails, or walking paths to encourage healthy lifestyles.”

Trails and Health - US Physical Activity Guidelines - CDC recommends that children and adolescents do 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of physical activity each day and adults do 150 minutes (2 and a half hours) of aerobic activity every week.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

“Walking is a tremendously good activity for senior citizens. It's cheap, it's simple, almost anybody can do it and it has a multitude of health benefits for everyone. It helps seniors... maintain mobility and independence.”

Dr. Michael Pratt, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

“If American adults each drove one mile less per day, it would reduce the adult obesity rate by 2.16 percent over six years.”

Transport Policy, 11 May 2011

“Portland, Oregon's regional trail network saves the city approximately \$115 million per year in healthcare costs.”

2011 Physical Activity and the Intertwine



Create safer neighborhoods - Neighborhoods that provide trails, greenways, parks, sidewalks, neighborhoods increase opportunities to be out and active and interact in a shared environment.

- 85.5% of trail users responding to the IN Trails Study viewed trail as safe.
- An average of 69% indicated that the trail IMPROVED their neighborhood.

(Summary of Indiana Trails Study can be found at www.in.gov/dot/projects/trails)

Water Trails? - The overall economic impact from river recreation along 73 Iowa river and stream segments supports more than 6,350 jobs with \$824 million in sales and \$130 million of personal income.



Value of Open Space - Proposals to “develop” land as open space should be scrutinized as much as proposals to build subdivisions and shopping centers.

Increasingly, proponents of preserving open space have successfully persuaded local officials that the benefits of not developing the land for homes and businesses are greater than converting the land to developed uses.

Social Benefits

- Trails are the community's front porch
- Everyone is welcome
- Connect segments of communities together, provide a place for neighbors to meet and interact
- Diversity in trail uses/users promotes tolerance
- Common positive interest in the welfare of trail
- Different motivations for trail use
- Trails are a link, not a barrier
- Trails allow people to re-reconnect with nature



Psychological Benefits

- Confidence from competence
- Trail users choose how they want to use trail
- Opportunity to develop skills, voluntary activity
- Family/group friendly setting
- Facilitates individuality while part of a group
- Opportunity to volunteer/give back
 - Safety patrol
 - Friends group
 - Maintenance, fund raising, special projects

Knowledge Benefits

- Environmental knowledge - Use interpretive signage/brochures to promote discovery learning
- Relate trail connectivity to environmental interdependence
- Community awareness
- Better acquaintance with businesses, neighborhoods, etc.
- Historical sense - Most trails use former railroads, waterways, Native American foot trails, etc.



Bicycling and walking are important elements to integrated, intermodal transportation systems that improve quality of life by providing access to jobs, education, health care, and other essential services. The construction of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, shared use paths, and trails; installing curb cuts and ramps; providing bicycle parking at transit; developing bike sharing systems; reducing single occupancy vehicle travel; and teaching children to ride and walk safely **all contribute to our national transportation goals of safety, mobility, livability, economic growth and trade, improved health, enhancement of communities and the natural environment, and national security.**

FHWA Guidance: Bicycle and Pedestrian Provisions of Federal Transportation Legislation 9/15

Through Green Infrastructure (trails, greenways, parks and open space) we;

- **enrich habitat and biodiversity,**
 - **maintain natural landscape processes,**
 - **clean the air and water,**
 - **reduce the cost of community services,**
 - **increase recreational & transportation opportunities,**
 - **improve health,**
 - **provide connection to nature and sense of place and...**
- enhance economic vitality!**

