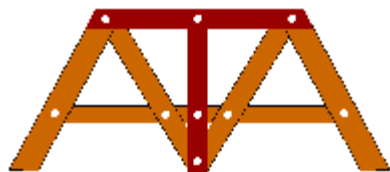


Allegheny Trail Alliance News



1998 Study: Trail System Has Major Economic Impact

[Overview Map](#)

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2/22/99: Economic Impact Study Completed: Over \$14 Million of Direct Spending Documented in 1998.

Pittsburgh to Cumberland Trail System has Major Economic Impact

STUDY DOCUMENTS DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT OF PITTSBURGH TO CUMBERLAND TRAIL SYSTEM EXCEEDED \$14 MILLION IN 1998

BOSTON, PA/ROCKWOOD, PA February 22, 1999 --

The study estimated that trail users spent between \$5.4 million and \$14.1 million near six trail heads last year, and that their annual expenditures on bicycles and bike equipment allocable to the trail over the past two years were between \$8.9 million and \$12.2 million. Combining both sets of numbers shows a total, direct annualized impact of \$14.3 million to \$26.5 million.

The study was based on surveys of both users and businesses, and demonstrated the positive economic impact the trail is having on the economy of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Key findings include:

- An estimated 356,278 trips were made on the trails, including 300,069 biking trips and 56,209 hiking trips.
- Mean local spending per trip ranged from \$12.01 to \$15.33 per person per trip based on mail-in surveys completed by almost half of the surveyed trail users, indicating that total spending by users ranged from \$5.4 million to \$14.1 million. These expenditures were made on bike rentals, bike equipment, clothing, lodging, food and drink, gasoline and sundries near the trail. The reason for the broad range is that many trail users who filled out surveys did not indicate how much they had spent; if it is assumed that these users spent nothing, then the impact is \$5.4 million, but if the spending patterns of those who identified their spending accurately reflect spending by all trail users, then the impact exceeds \$14 million.
- Mean total expenditures on bicycles and bike equipment during the past two years ranged from \$302 to \$373 per person. Using the percentage of time spent biking on the trail system, estimated bike and equipment expenditures allocable to the trail system ranged from \$150 to \$220 per person. Based on these numbers, annual expenditures over the two years allocable to the trail ranged from \$8.9 million to \$12.2 million.
- A survey of 156 businesses near the trail documented receipts ranging from \$4.6 million to \$8.0 million. Again, the reason for the broad range is that the receipts at the 89 businesses responding to the survey was \$4.6 million; and, if it is assumed that receipts at the other 67 businesses are similar, then the total receipts are \$8.0 million.

The Economic Impact Study was a joint project of the Pennsylvania Economy League and Stephen Farber, Ph.D. of the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh. Users were counted and surveyed at Boston, Connellsville, Montour, Ohiopyle, Rockwood and West Newton.

"We're extremely pleased by the findings of this baseline study showing that the impact exceeded \$5 million while another \$9 million or more was spent per year on bikes and equipment—and the trail's only half done," said Linda McKenna Boxx, president of the Allegheny Trail Alliance, which includes seven local trail organizations developing segments of the trail. "Even the low estimates demonstrate a powerful economic benefit, and if we used the high-end

numbers, we can say the impact may exceed \$26 million a year.”

Ms. Boxx released the study results in Boston, PA. At the same time, Hank Parke, ATA board member and president of Somerset Rails to Trails, released the results in Rockwood, PA. Both Boston and Rockwood are seeing new businesses established in connection with the trail.

The study data will enable the ATA to show the increasing economic impact as more trail sections are completed.

The survey of businesses revealed a tremendously bullish attitude about the trail, with almost half indicating they have plans to expand and 74% projecting that the impact of completing the trail on their businesses will be positive or extremely positive.

Current trail users indicated that, when the trail is completed, they would make on average nearly three more trips per year, which would generate additional spending ranging from \$4.3 million to \$8.0 million. Users also estimated that they would spend an additional \$2.2 million to \$4.3 million per year on bikes and bike equipment. This study made no attempt to estimate how many people who are not currently using the trail would use it if it were completed.

The trail system, when finished, will provide a continuous path of 398 miles stretching from Pittsburgh to Washington, DC. The trail system includes the existing Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Towpath run by the National Park Service and the Allegheny Highlands Trail in Maryland, and the Steel Valley Trail, Three Rivers Heritage Trail, Montour Trail, Youghiogheny River Trail North and South, and the Allegheny Highlands Trail, all in Pennsylvania.

Approximately 3,000 mail-in surveys were distributed at trailheads from July 1 through October 1, 1998. Survey response rates were high: 47%. Approximately 156 businesses were contacted and 89 returned completed surveys for a 57% survey-response rate.

The impact in each county, based only on data from the 89 businesses that returned surveys, is:

County	Wages	Receipts
Allegheny	\$179,792	\$1,718,933
Fayette	\$153,359	\$1,497,316
Somerset	\$155,238	\$873,715
Washington	\$47,946	\$192,420
Westmoreland	\$27,989	\$272,987
Total	\$564,324	\$4,55,371

Using trips per person estimates from the sample, the total number of distinct individuals using the trail was estimated at 110,416 bikers and 18,652 non-bikers, which amounts to five percent of the total population of the eight Southwestern Pennsylvania counties.

At Allegheny and Westmoreland County trailheads—Boston, Montour and West Newton—attracted between 93 and 96 percent of their users from the local area, indicating that the trails are an important recreational asset in the community. As more contiguous sections of trail are completed in the Allegheny County area, more users from other areas are expected to travel to use them.

Three trailheads in Fayette and Somerset Counties—Connellsville, Ohio pyle and Rockwood—attracted 60 to 90 percent of their users from other counties, indicating that the trail is both a local recreational asset and an important addition to the tourism industry.

Non-Pennsylvania residents comprised 9.1 percent of trail users and their spending ranged from \$0.5 to \$1.3 million. Persons traveling at least 15 miles to reach a trailhead were responsible for 40 percent of the local spending, or \$3.6 million to \$9.4 million. Persons traveling at least 25 miles to reach a trailhead were responsible for 28 percent of the

local spending, or \$3.4 million to \$8.9 million.

OVERVIEW OF USAGE BY TRAILHEAD

Trailhead	Est'd Total Expenditure	No. Of Users	Average Spending per person per trip	Median distance traveled	..% From other counties
Ohiopyle	\$3,701,249- \$9,943,480	183,949	\$19.54 to \$21.72	50	90%
Rockwood..	\$213,138- \$518,219	17,882	\$13.00 to \$16.55	25	60%
Connellsville	\$708,068- \$1,683,156	56,624	\$12.07 to \$13.90	26	80%
Montour	\$420,458- \$1,184,301	51,870	\$8.00 to \$13.38	8	5%
Boston	\$284,566- \$635,188	34,941	\$8.85 to \$10.61	12	17%
West Newton	\$75,446- \$182,513	11,011	\$6.39 to \$8.66	15	71%*

*Only 7% are from outside Westmoreland, Allegheny, Washington, or Greene counties.

Contact: **Allegheny Trail Alliance (724) 853-2453**

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