

Amtrak Bicycle Service Survey Results- Executive Summary

Greater Allegheny Passage

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The Great Allegheny Passage and the C&O Canal Towpath connect in Cumberland, MD, to create a continuous biking or hiking pathway from Pittsburgh to DC. This non-motorized route parallels the rail line that carries Amtrak's Capitol Limited route, which provides service from Chicago to Pittsburgh to DC. This ready-made shuttling service by rail presents a great opportunity for bicyclists who wish to transport themselves and their bikes to a destination and bike back to their starting point, or vice versa.

The Trail Town Program and Allegheny Trail Alliance recently conducted an online survey to determine how much consumer interest there is for Amtrak to expand upon its bicycle service on the Capitol Limited route. The Trail Town Outreach Corps compiled the results from nearly 1,300 individuals who completed the survey. Here is what we learned:

- 99% said yes or maybe to using bicycle service if Amtrak provided expanded service on the Capitol Limited route.
- Pretty much everyone wants to use bicycle service on the Capitol Limited route if Amtrak provides it, even if they have never used bicycle service in the past.
- An overwhelming majority of people ranked roll-on, roll-off bicycle service as their first choice in terms of which type of bicycle service is desired.
- Many people also commented on allowing trailers, tandem, and recumbent bikes onboard.
- This route can be a pilot project for allowing "unusual" bicycles to be rolled on and off, demonstrating an inclusive approach to multi-modal transportation.
- The choices listed in the survey are currently offered on other Amtrak routes
 - o The Capitol Limited route only offers checked baggage service only at Pittsburgh and DC.
 - o Folding bicycles can also be brought onboard as carry-on baggage, which some people said they do.
- Some people also would have preferred bicycle hooks or bicycle cars to be an option.

When asked what is the most they would be willing to pay for bicycle service in addition to their trip tickets, respondents indicated they would spend:

- MEAN (average)- \$23.18
- MODE (most written response)- \$25
- MEDIAN (middle of all responses)- \$20
- People are willing to spend up to half of their ticket price to bring their bicycles onboard. (a DC to Pittsburgh ticket is \$44 if purchased in advance)

- People are willing to pay more for the convenience of roll-on, roll-off bicycle service than checked baggage service (only \$5 to check baggage and \$15 additional to buy a box).
- These stations were chosen to be included in the survey due to their close proximity to the Great Allegheny Passage and C&O Canal Towpath.
- The two trails connect in Cumberland, and people want to start or finish their ride there, so that demonstrates a need.
- Service in Cumberland will positively impact the economies of towns along both trails.

Additional Comments

- There were 532 responses for additional comments, including:
 - “Most users of this trail aren’t really prepared to "partially disassemble" and reassemble their bikes. So we really, really need roll-on/roll-off service. In addition the increasing numbers of people riding recumbents, trikes, tandems, etc and the number of people pulling trailers for camping gear and kids mean that the service must accommodate the full range of bikes, not just single upright diamond frames.”
 - “Roll-on, roll-off service would be a WIN-WIN for Amtrak & the increasing number of bicycle tourists using this route. Many, many cyclists using the GAP and C&O trails are also train buffs and would choose this shuttle method over any other just for the experience of riding the train. I am mystified by Amtrak's inability to recognize the economic benefit from increased ridership it would receive by providing this service.”
 - “This would be a wonderful option and would help stimulate economic development via tourism in communities that desperately need the help! Thank you for considering this option.”
 - “I have provided shuttle service for people who probably would have used AMTRAK if it had been available.”
 - “The C&O and GAP bike trails are without question the finest tours in the US. Running car shuttles is difficult, time-consuming and environmentally questionable. I would use Amtrak at least twice a year if not more to do my favorite sections of the trails.”
 - “I run a B&B in Harpers Ferry, and I know roll-on bike service would gain you a fair amount of business here in Harpers Ferry.”

Background Information

- 1,292 completed responses out of 1,357 people who started the survey
- The survey was open on Survey Monkey for 3 weeks: July 21, 2009 to August 10, 2009.
- Advertising this survey was concentrated on the Great Allegheny Passage/C&O Canal Towpath corridor, which parallels Amtrak’s Capitol Limited route from DC to Pittsburgh, PA.
 - o The majority of responses were from zip codes in the immediate area between Pittsburgh and DC, but we had responses from 35 states and DC, Canada, and the UK.

State # of Responses

PA 326

MD 264

DC 222

VA 157

NC 75

OH 34

IL 30

MA 28

WV 21

NY 20

CA 17

MI 16

DE 10

NJ 9

MO 7

RI 7

CT 5

IN 4

SC 4

WA 4

AL 3

AZ 3

FL 3

MT 3

WI 3

CO 2

GA 2

IA 2

OR 2

TX 2

KY 1

ME 1

NH 1

NM 1

TN 1

UT 1

Ontario, Canada 3

Manchester, UK 1

The Great Allegheny Passage is already a significant economic generator in southwestern PA and western MD and is a national and international draw. Expanded bicycle service on Amtrak would allow the trail to become a feasible multi-modal travel and vacation experience, expand the trail market to the benefit of trail businesses and the regional economy, and increase revenue for Amtrak.