Economic Impact

One way to look at the economic impact and benefits of investing in bicycle routes and systems, such as the U.S. Bicycle Route System, is to look at the economic impact of bicycle travel and tourism, both domestically and abroad. Several states have commissioned surveys, reports, and summaries of the economic effects of bicycle travel, while several other such reports have looked at the success of cycling investments abroad. Below are the economic figures from several of those reports.

Europe: $57 Billion Per Year from EuroVelo Bicycle Route Network

The European Cyclists Federation coordinates the EuroVelo network which is signed, numbered, mapped, well promoted and supported by numerous governments across the continent. This economic impact study conducted in 2012 was funded by the European Parliament and shows an impact of $57 billion from 2.295 billion bicycle tourism trips taken on EuroVelo routes.

In June 2013, ECF released another study: Calculating the Economic Benefits of Cycling in EU-27 (PDF) which takes into account everyday cycling and its health benefits. ECF estimates this impact to be well above $265 billion annually, or more than $530 for every person that lives in the EU.

Canada: $134 Million Generated on La Route Verte Network in Québec

La Route Verte cyclists spent a total of $95.4 million in 2000 and estimates brought the impact total to $134 by 2006, which corresponds to over $38 million in government revenues and helps support 2,861 jobs. Retombées économiques de la Route Verte. (March 2003. Read summary.)

Arizona: $88 Million from Non-Resident Bicyclists

In June 2013, Arizona Department of Transportation released a report, An Economic Impact Study of Bicycling in Arizona: Out of State Bicycle Tourists and Exports (PDF), which focused on the impacts from out-of-state cyclists traveling to Arizona for events, guided tours, races, and training camps. The study documented $57 million in retail sales and 721 jobs created across the state.

Florida: $33 Million from Orange County Trails

Between 2010-11, an economic impact survey (PDF) performed on three trails in Orange County Florida estimated 1.7 million people use the trails each year, providing $32.556 in economic impact for the county's economy.

Illinois: $30.40 Per Day Mean Trail User Expenditure

Trails for Illinois studied the triple bottom line (economy, environment, and health) on six trails; 35% of trails users spend money in restaurants/bars and a majority bought accessories for trail use (shoes, bikes, clothing, camping gear, etc.). Most telling: 70% of trail users found out about the trail through word of mouth or happenstance; only 0.3% learned about the trails from tourism or visitors bureau and 3% learn of the trail through a local park or trail agency.

Iowa: $1 Million Per Day from Bicycling

Iowa brings bicycle tourism to their state through RAGBRAI, their developing trail infrastructure, and emerging city networks. The Economic and Health Benefits of Bicycling in Iowa.

Maine: $36.3 Million Per Year from Bicycle Tourism

Maine department of transportation's (DOT) Bicycle Tourism in Maine: Economic Impacts and Marketing Recommendations (Executive Summary, April 2001) documented $36.3 million in economic impact in 1999. Maine's DOT bicycling website which links to their state-wide bicycle touring guide, gets 30,000 visitors; 22,000 unique per year, equaling 67 hits per day.

Michigan: $668 Million Per Year from Bicycling

The Michigan Department of Transportation released Phase I of "Community and Economic Benefits of Bicycling in Michigan" in August 2014. The study shows an estimated $668 million per year in economic benefits to Michigan's economy from employment, retail revenue, tourism expenditure, and increased health and productivity. Phase II will be released in 2015 and will examine economic impacts of bicycle touring and events.

Minnesota: $427 Million from Recreational Bicycling

The University of Minnesota Tourism Center released a 2009 study on the Economic Impact of Recreational Trail Use (PDF) and a 2008 analysis of Minnesota Road Biking (PDF). Putting two reports side-by-side, the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota reports 5,000 jobs and $1 billion in revenue attributed to bicycling.

Montana: $75 - $103 Per Day Spending by Touring Cyclists

The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) at the University of Montana's School of Forestry conducted a study entitled, "Analysis of Touring Cyclists: Impacts, Needs and Opportunities for Montana,"(PDF) which found that multi-day cyclists spend $75 - $103 per day while in Montana, and stay an average of eight or more nights. Researchers queried cyclists who had

visited Adventure Cycling headquarters in 2013, or who had purchased Montana section maps between 2010-2013. Cylists hailed from 48 states and 18 countries.

New Jersey: $497 Million Generated by Active Transportation

The department of transportation in New Jersey contracted Rutgers to explore the economic impact of active transportation related infrastructure, businesses, and events on the state's economy.

North Carolina: $60 Million And 1,407 Jobs from Outer Banks

A nearly nine-fold increase on the initial $6.7 million in public funds invested in construction of bicycle facilities. Judson J. Lawrie, Thomas P.Norman, Mary Meletiou, and Sarah W. O'Brien. Bikeways to Prosperity: Assessing the Economic Impact of Bicycle Facilities (TR News 242 January-February 2006).

Oregon: $400 Million Generated by Bicycle Tourism

Travel Oregon commissioned a study, The Economic Significance of Bicycle-Related Travel in Oregon, Detailed State and Travel Region Estimates (2012) to look at the economic impact of bicycling across Oregon, including mountain biking, scenic bikeways and local bicycle amenities.

Pennsylvania & Maryland: $114 Per Day for Overnight Stays on Great Allegheny Passage

A 2012 study of the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) shows that trail users spend an average of $114 for overnight stays, which has increased from $98 in 2008. Businesses along the trail attribute 30% of their gross revenues to the GAP, and about half of the businesses said that the trail affected their decision to expand. The Trail Town Program, Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau (LHVB), and Allegheny Trail Alliance (ATA) contracted Frostburg State University Center for Regional Progress to conduct three phases of research for the 2012 Economic Impact Study, May, 2012.

Vermont: $83 Million from Bicycling

A report from Resource Systems Group and Local Motion shows that in 2009, biking and walking created at least 1,400 jobs, $41 million in personal income (wages) and $83 million in revenue. In addition, their research finds, the health and property value benefits could bump that up by more than $400 million in economic impact.

Washington State: $3.1 Billion from Recreational Bicycling

A January 2015 study, Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State, prepared by Earth Economics and commissioned by the Task Force on Parks and Outdoor Recreation, shows that recreational bicyclists (local and out-of-state) spend $3.1 billion per year statewide and bicycling is the third largest outdoor recreational activity in the state by total expenditures.

Wisconsin: $533 Million from Out-of-State Visitors

Over all, this study tracked in health and economic benefits for bicycling at $1.5 million annually with $924 million (and $533 million in direct impact) attributed to tourism and recreation and $410 million for health. The employment impact, as measured by full-time equivalent jobs, is 13,193. Valuing Bicycling's Economic and Health Impacts in Wisconsin (PDF/876k) (The Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment, University of Wisconsin-Madison, January 2010).

Related Research

Economic Benefits of Trails and Greenways (PDF) is a composite of studies done about rail trails across the U.S. and highlights economic benefits, property values, business investment, and quality of life.

The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) at the University of Montana which conducts non-resident surveys throughout the state of Montana, compiled data based upon visitors in 2012. Road and tour biking impact for Missoula County is estimated at $19.4 million or 8% of the county's nonresident expenditures. Read ITRR analysis and summary (PDF), Cyclists spending per night (PDF), Nonresident spending by cyclists (PDF).

Bicycle Tourism and Rural Community Development: An Asset Based Approach (PDF, 679K) by Sally Broadaway is a graduate study that demonstrates how communities can use existing assets to build bicycle tourism. Case studies of two unique communities, Collinwood, TN, and Farmington, MO, provide the model for other rural communities to meet the needs of bicycle travelers.

Bicycle Tourism as a Rural Economic Development Vehicle (PDF/1.9 MB) by Heidi Beierle, MCPR at University of Oregon. This study examines the different kinds of self-contained bicycle tourists, their spending patterns and the benefits to communities along the TransAmerica Bicycle Trail.

Estimating the Employment Impacts of Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Road Infrastructure (PDF) — The Political Economy Research Institute compiled data provided by the city of Baltimore to write this case study. They found that on-street bike lanes and pedestrian measures created more direct jobs, more indirect jobs, and more induced jobs per dollar than either road upgrades or road resurfacing.

Guidelines for Analysis of Investment in Bicycle Facilities (PDF/4.4m) — A compilation study by the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, includes literature reviews, cost-benefit analysis, etc.

Rural Friendliness Pays Dividends is the story about how the small town of Twin Bridges, Montana, has embraced bicycle tourism and benefited.

Shoppers on Bikes Good for Business (PDF/1.1m) is an article claiming that patrons arriving by bicycle and on foot spend more money than those coming by car.