Economic Benefit of Trails

Success Case Stories

Root River Trail

Lanesboro, MN, in Southeastern Minnesota, is home to the Root River Trail. Converted from an abandoned railroad, the paved trail stretches 60 miles and runs through numerous rural communities along its path. Approximately with 800 residents, Lanesboro boasts 12 bed and breakfast establishments, 8 restaurants, an art gallery, a museum, and a thriving community theater. This is contributed to the development of the Root River Trail. A more specific example is that a bike shop within the community sold 60 tandem bicycles in a single year, which was more than the Twin Cities largest multi-store bike retailer that same year. This is an indication that people are willing to spend the money to spend quality time on the trail. Nationally, trail-related expenditures range from less than $1 per day to more than $75 per day, depending on mileage covered. For Lanesboro, a trail can mean an annual economic impact of more than $5 million.

Source: National Trails Training Partnership "Economic and Social Benefits of Trails"
http://www.americantrails.org/resources/economics/MNecon.html

Ohio's Little Miami Scenic Trail

The Little Miami Scenic Trail is the single longest trail in the Miami Valley trail network, stretching 75 miles in length. The trail passes through numerous cities in Southwestern Ohio. Statistics have shown that visitors to Ohio's Little Miami Scenic Trail spend an average of $13.54 per visit on food, beverages and transportation to the trail. In addition, they spend an estimated $277 per person each year on clothing, equipment and accessories to use during these trail trips. Evidence has also suggested that property values have increased due to their close proximity to the trail. Home sale prices where the trail was constructed increased $7.05 for every foot closer a property was located to the trail. This suggests that trails can have a positive effect on the economic well-being of the surrounding community.

Sources: Rails to Trails, "Economic Benefits of Trails and Greenways"
http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/resource_docs/tgc_economic.pdf

The Loop, "Economic, Environmental, Community and Health Impact Study"
https://webcms.pima.gov/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/Government/The%20Loop/2.LOOPeconomicbooklet2013PROOF13_20130329103152.pdf

Mispillion River Greenway

Milford, DE is the home of the Mispillion River Greenway, which runs through the historic downtown on both sides of the Mispillion River. The Greenway is primarily surfaced with brick and concrete, providing scenic views of the waterway while linking city parks with various historic sites and cultural amenities. Before development of the Greenway, downtown Milford was host to vacant storefronts and a polluted river. Transportation Enhancements (TE) funds inspired a group of citizens to work with the City to develop a downtown revitalization plan. TE awards were used for construction of a greenway and downtown streetscape projects. As a result the Mispillion River Greenway and related streetscape projects have inspired downtown reinvestment. Milford has demonstrated a net gain in new businesses with annual retail sales figures exceeding $200 million over the last ten years. More than 250 people work in downtown offices, stores and restaurants. Additionally, the Farmers Market, the Bud and Bug Festival and other events are centered on the Greenway each year.

Sources: TrailLink, "Mispillion River Greeway" http://www.traillink.com/trail/mispillion-river-greenway.aspx

Provision of Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities, "Mispillion River Greenway" http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/resource_docs/mispillionRiverGreenway.pdf

Mineral Belt Trail

The Mineral Belt Trail is 12.5 mile rail-trail which runs through the City of Leadville, CO. The Trail passes through the historic town of Leadville linking three public schools, recreation areas, and other important destinations located within the City. After the closure of the Asarco Mine in 1999, the town suffered a devastating economic blow. Following construction of the Mineral Belt Trail, the pathway has drawn tourists to the area year-round, boosting economic viability to the former mining area. Months after the trail was open, Leadville reported a 19% increase in sales tax revenues. Owners of restaurants and lodging facilities reported that they were serving customers who had come into to town to specifically ride the trail. The Mineral Belt Trail helped Leadville prevent an economic recession by contributing to the town's revitalization efforts successful development as a recreation and tourism destination.

Source: Preservation of Abandoned Railway Corridors, "Mineral Belt Trail" http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/resource_docs/mispillionRiverGreenway.pdf

Maryville-Alcoa Greenway Trail

Located in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee, the Greenway Trail is an 8 mile paved path that provides a safe, viable method of travel between neighborhoods, schools, businesses and retail areas. It also connects the Cities of Maryville and Alcoa together. The Greenway Trail helped instill a strong sense of community pride and support. For example, the Blount Memorial Hospital, Alcoa Inc., and other businesses contributed more than $300,000 worth of funds and easements to enhance the trail. The Mayor and his family donated $300,000 towards construction of an outdoor theater encircled by the trail system. The Theater in the Park and the Greenway Trail hosts the Foothills Fall Festival, which approximately 140,000 people attend the annual event, attracting arts and crafts booths as well as food vendors that line the trail. The trail had encouraged a major corporation to relocate to Maryville. After considering several cities, Ruby Tuesday, Inc. moved its Restaurant Support Center to a site adjacent to the Greenway Trail.

Source: Provision of Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities, "Greenway Trail"
http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/resource_docs/GreenwayTrail.pdf