

BY THE NUMBERS

\$12 MILLION



gross revenues

Trail users spent \$12 million along the Great Allegheny Passage in 2008, contributing to 25% of gross revenues.



40% of TOURISTS

value bicycle tourism

40% of tourists in Colorado's off-season would have altered their vacation destination if bicycling was not available. Bicycle tourism is an important industry for many of Colorado's ski towns during the off-season.



12% of SENIORS

do not have vehicles

12% of rural seniors do not have vehicles compared to 8.9% in all rural households. Many roads lack sidewalks, and services are often too far to walk to even if sidewalks existed.



Rural areas and small towns can benefit from diverse transportation options, just like urban and suburban areas. However, some of the specific needs and opportunities for economic benefit are different. Some rural areas are increasing in population, especially among retirees and senior citizens, who depend on transportation options. A growing trend of bicycle tourism has created a need for new services and has been a financial boom for small towns and rural areas. Specialized transit, trails, and sidewalks can increase property values, attract tourists, and improve the quality of life for residents.

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/health_in_transportation/

RURAL AND SMALL TOWN TRANSPORTATION

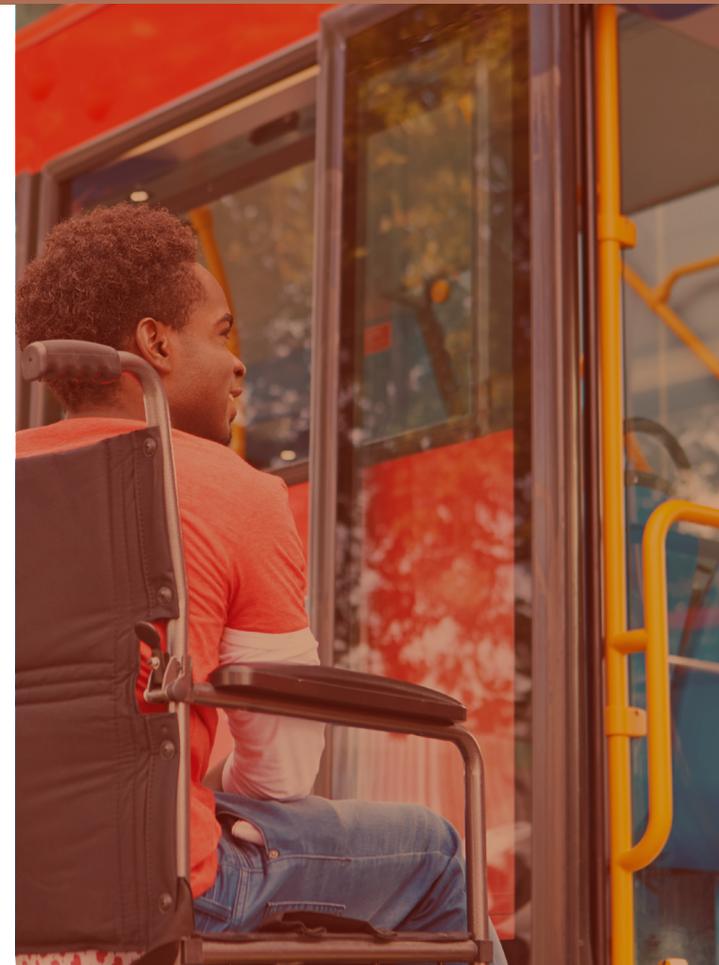
MAKING CONNECTIONS

What can you do to support your local economy?

Reach out to other towns in your region that had success in developing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure or transit services. There may be similar options in your area and buy-in from your community. Look for opportunities to connect hotels or residential areas to shops and services using trails, bike lanes, sidewalks, and crosswalks. Talk to residents and local business owners about improving existing trails or linking them to nearby towns or tourist attractions. Do residents include senior citizens or people with disabilities who may need transit services or walking routes? You can work with aging, veteran, or health and human service agencies to identify good options to help people travel.



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration



What are the economic benefits of supporting rural transit and trails?



FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Increases tax revenues

More money from retail sales and increased commercial property values can mean more tax revenue for local government. As trails and transit draw tourists, new residents, and generate jobs from new businesses, money flows to local governments - providing essential services or improving local infrastructure.



FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Jobs to support trail users

According to America's Adventure Cycling Association, bicycle tourists tend to be affluent and educated, willing to spend money to support their trip and enhance their experiences. Along the Great Allegheny Passage multi-use trail, one-quarter of businesses hired more workers to handle the increased business resulting from the trail, and wages for existing employees increased. The bicycling industry in Colorado employs 700 full-time workers with an annual payroll of over \$16 million.

Provides services to help residents maintain independence

Access to healthcare has become a challenge in some rural areas due to hospital closings and/or consolidation of medical facilities. Thirty percent of veterans live in rural areas and tend to require more healthcare services. Seniors that want to live in rural areas may have mobility challenges. People without car access face challenges getting around, including to medical appointments. Transit service, wayfinding, and a strong, safe sidewalk network can help them overcome these challenges.

Increased neighborhood desirability and property values

According to a survey from the National Association of Realtors, over 80% of people look for a home with sidewalks and places to walk, and 76% of respondents live in neighborhoods with sidewalks. Several studies have also shown increased property values of homes located near trails.



Improves wellbeing of residents

Exercise, including walking and bicycling, improves a person's overall health, and can reduce illness and related medical expenses. People living near a trail were shown to be more likely to exercise.

FOR BUSINESSES

Supports tourism and related spending

Bicycling is now a growing and lucrative industry in many small towns and rural areas. Whether catering to touring cyclists or vacationers hoping to get a little exercise and fresh air, trails and other bicycle facilities can draw visitors and create opportunities for services and retail.

Transit connects visitors to national parks and other destinations which often have limited parking and congested access. Transit also provides easy access for visitors who may not have a personal vehicle or who want to avoid the stress of driving in an unfamiliar place.

Comfortable sidewalk and pedestrian friendly streets encourage people to linger and explore shops and restaurants.

Sources in this brief include: Bicycling and Walking in Colorado (2000), Boamet (2017) Economic Benefits of VMT, Campos (2009) Allegheny Passage Economics, Flusche (2012) Bicycling Means Business, LGC (2013) Walk to Money, Michigan DOT (2014) Conner Creek Case Study, Moore (2011) Bike Boosts Business, NAR (2017) Transportation Preferences, Wisconsin DOT (2005) Economic Impact of Bicycling, New Walking and Cycling Routes and Increased Physical Activity, American Journal of Public Health (2014), Guide to Bicycle Tourism Success, Cycle Life HQ (2018), Improving Veteran Mobility in Small Urban and Rural Areas, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (2014), Housing an Aging Rural America, Housing Assistance Council (2014), Rural Demographic Change in the New Century Slower Growth, Increased Diversity, Carsey Institute (2012). Photos: Shutterstock.