



# Advocacy **Advance**



Tools to Increase Biking and Walking

## **Bicycling Means Business:**

The Economic Benefits of Bicycle Infrastructure

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This report is a product of Advocacy Advance — a partnership of the League of American Bicyclists and the Alliance for Biking & Walking.



# Bicycling Means Business

## The economic benefits of bicycle infrastructure

*By Darren Flusche, League Policy Director*

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Bicycling means business.

From revitalizing a disinvested avenue in Memphis to pumping money into the economies of small towns along the Great Allegheny Passage, bicycling is breathing economic life into America's communities. From quantifiable health benefits in Iowa to health insurance cost savings for Bicycle Friendly Business Quality Bicycle Products in Wisconsin, bicycling is boosting America's economic health. From Portland, where the city built its entire bicycling network for the cost of one mile of urban freeway, to Baltimore, where bicycling projects create twice as many construction jobs per dollar as road projects, cities are discovering that bicycling investments are a cost-effective way to build infrastructure and create jobs.

These benefits add up. Every year new studies demonstrate the economic impacts of bicycling – recent examples include Iowa, Minneapolis, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

This report highlights the impact the bicycle industry and bicycle tourism can have on state and local economies, discusses the cost effectiveness of investments, points out the benefits of bike facilities for business districts and neighborhoods, and identifies the cost savings associated with a mode shift from car to bicycle. The evidence demonstrates that investments in bicycling infrastructure make good economic sense as a cost-effective way to enhance shopping districts and communities, generate tourism and support business.<sup>i ii</sup>

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## Introduction: Why is bicycling good for the economy?

Each year several new studies come out that help make the case that investments in safe and attractive bicycling pay economic dividends. We've added dozens of sources (and about 10 pages) to this report since it was originally released in 2009.

The research can get technical, but the principles are simple:

- People who ride bikes buy bikes. This puts people to work in bicycle shops and apparel stores.
- People who ride bikes buy other things, too. Bike-accessible business districts benefit by catering to these customers.
- People on bikes are also more likely to make repeat trips to their local stores.
- People who ride bikes on vacation buy food, have travel costs, and pay for lodging. Bicycling tourists bring millions of dollars to cities and towns across the country that wouldn't otherwise end up there.

All that spending means jobs -- and tax revenue -- for communities. But people who ride bikes also *save* money.

- With the money saved from lower travel costs, people who ride bikes have more of their money to spend on local businesses.
- People who ride bikes can save their companies money on health insurance costs.
- Developers, cities, and individuals can save money on parking costs by providing space-efficient, low-cost bike parking instead of expensive car parking.

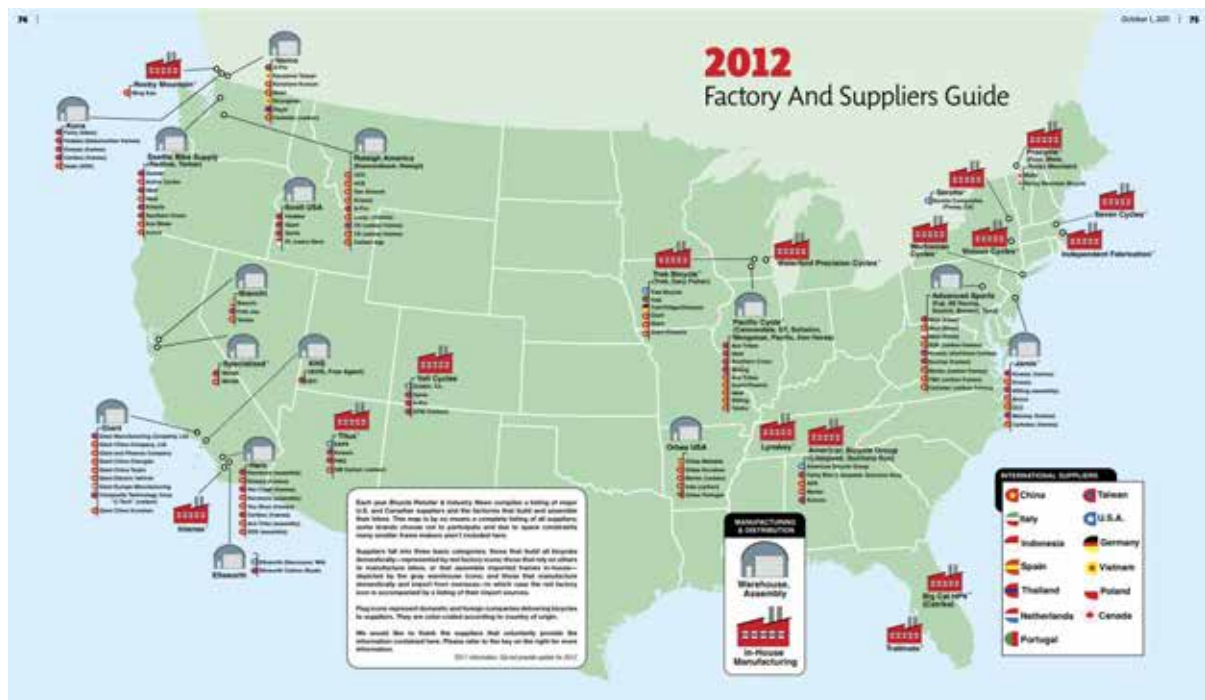
The best way to attract people who ride bikes and accrue all of these benefits is by building infrastructure that makes it more attractive for people to ride. Building that infrastructure creates jobs, and it does so extremely cost-effectively. In fact, there's no better job-creating bang for your transportation buck.

- Road projects are materials-intensive. Much of a road project budget goes to materials. By contrast, bicycling and walking projects are labor-intensive. Bicycling and walking project create more jobs per dollar than road projects.
- A built-up city can add capacity for new bicyclists much less expensively than new capacity for drivers.

## National Economic Impact Studies

Regions that have invested in bicycling have seen tangible economic impacts. Studies show that the bicycle industry, bicycle tourism, and the health benefits from bicycling create jobs, economic activity, and cost savings.

Today bicycling manufacturing is a \$6 billion **national industry**.<sup>iii</sup> But the economic benefits associated with riding extend far beyond that number. The nation's 60 million annual recreational bicyclists spend \$46.9 billion on meals, transportation, lodging, gifts and entertainment. One study estimates that the **spill-over effects** of all bicycling-related activities could be as large as \$133 billion, supporting 1.1 million jobs and generating \$17.7 billion in federal, state, and local taxes.<sup>iv</sup>



A map of bicycle manufacturing factories in the United States, 2012, produced by Bicycle Retailer and Industry News (BRAIN)<sup>v</sup>

## State Economic Impact Studies

The bicycling industry and bicycle tourism measurably benefit state, regional, and local economies. **Wisconsin** accounts for 20 percent of the bicycle manufacturing in the U.S. Overall, according to a 2005 study, the bicycling industry – **manufacturing, distribution, retail, and other services** – contributes \$556 million and 3,418 jobs to the Wisconsin economy. In addition, a 2010 study found that bicycle **recreation and tourism** contributes \$924 million to the state’s economy and estimates that “the potential value of health benefits from reducing short car trips and increasing bicycling total \$409 million.”<sup>vi</sup>

Inspired by the powerful Wisconsin report, the Iowa Bicycle Coalition commissioned the University of Northern Iowa to produce an economic impact study of its own in 2011. The report, “**Economic and Health Benefits of Bicycling in Iowa**,” found that commuter and recreational bicycling in **Iowa** generates more than \$400 million in economic activity in Iowa, resulting in health savings of \$87 million.<sup>vii</sup> (For more on the creation of this report, see page 8.)

<b>Economic and Health Benefits of Bicycling in Iowa</b>	
<i>Bicycle Commuters</i>	
Estimated bicycle commuters	24,921
Economic activity	\$51,965,317
Health savings	\$13,266,020
<i>Recreational Riders</i>	
Estimated riders	149,916
Economic activity	\$364,864,202
Health savings	\$73,942,511
<i>Source: Economic and Health Benefits of Bicycling in Iowa, University of Northern Iowa, Fall 2011</i>	

**Minnesota** has captured similar data. In 2009, the **Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development** found that bicyclists were the second most active trail users in the state after walkers/hikers. The value of all goods and services produced in the state attributed to bicycle riders’ spending came to \$261 million. This spending supported more than 5,000 jobs and helped generate \$35 million in taxes.<sup>viii</sup>

**Colorado** has capitalized on its reputation as an outdoor recreation destination to attract tourists and active residents, and manufacturers who want to be close to their customers. A study commissioned by the [Colorado Department of Transportation](#) in 2000 determined that bicycling contributed \$1 billion to the economy from manufacturing, retail, tourism and bike races. Retail and manufacturing employ 1,213 people with an annual payroll of \$34.1 million. Half of all summer visitors at Colorado ski resorts spend time bicycling. Of those 699,000 people, 70 percent are from out of state and 40 percent said they would have altered their vacation destination if bicycling were not available. <sup>ix</sup>

Even a small state like **Vermont**, where locals joke that summer lasts just two weeks, biking and walking provide a significant boost to the local economy. The “[Economic Impact of Walking and Biking in Vermont](#),” by Resource Systems Group, Inc., Economic and Policy Resources, Inc., and Local Motion Advocates shows that in 2009, biking and walking created at least 1,400 jobs, \$41 million in wages and \$83 million in revenue. In addition, the health and property value benefits could bump that up by more than \$400 million. The researchers tapped into data from the [Vermont Agency of Transportation](#) on road project expenditures, accessed statistics on visitor spending related to biking and walking events, used economic models from the [Victoria Transport Policy Institute](#) and correlated information from [Walk Score](#) with real estate sales. Bicycling advocates at Local Motion distributed more than 150 surveys to bicycle- and pedestrian-related businesses across the state.

<b>Economic Impacts of Trip Spending by Bicycle Riders in Minnesota</b>	
(thousand \$)	
Trip spending by bicycle riders	\$427,478
<b>Output (net of imports)</b>	
Direct Effect	\$298,331
Indirect Effect	\$107,469
Induced Effect	\$93,128
<i>Total</i>	\$498,928
<b>Gross State Product</b>	
Direct Effect	\$152,418
Indirect Effect	\$56,289
Induced Effect	\$52,536
<i>Total</i>	\$261,243
<b>Employment (# of jobs)</b>	
Direct Effect	3,736
Indirect Effect	733
Induced Effect	795
<i>Total</i>	5,263
<b>Employee Compensation</b>	
Direct Effect	\$87,468
Indirect Effect	\$30,931
Induced Effect	\$26,743
<i>Total</i>	\$145,142
State and Local Taxes	\$35,845
<i>Source: Economicact of Recreational Trail Use, Ernesto Venegas, Ph.D., 2009</i>	

Benefits to Vermont included:

- Construction and maintenance of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects and programs brought \$17 million in funding to the state, resulting in more than 230 jobs and \$10 million in wages.
- Bicycle- and pedestrian-related businesses brought in more than \$56 million in revenue, generating more than 1,000 jobs and \$26 million in wages.
- Forty major events related to biking and walking attracted more than 16,000 participants who brought with them 45,000 additional family and friends. \$9.5 million in revenue and 160 jobs, which resulted in \$4.7 million in wages.
- Using models from the Victoria Transport Policy Institute, RSG calculated that the vehicle miles avoided by the 68 million miles walked and 28 million miles biked resulted in as much as \$85 million in consumer and public health savings.
- The property values of homes in walkable neighborhoods were \$6,500 higher than those in car-dependent areas. Add all those homes together and walkability added more than \$350 million to the local economy.<sup>x</sup>

**Maine** has also seen the benefits of attracting bicycling visitors. Since 1991, the top-ten Bicycle Friendly State has made a concerted effort to improve its bicycle infrastructure by widening shoulders and creating shared-use paths, generated \$66 million a year in bicycle tourism as of 2001.<sup>xi</sup>



*Maine makes a concerted effort to attract bicycle tourists.*

*Photo: Bicycle Coalition of Maine*

**Québec, Canada** has also seen a measurable impact of bicycle tourism on its economy. In 2000, province-wide spending by bicyclists totaled \$166 million. The Québec bicycle industry generated sales over \$181 million, supporting 2,800 jobs and generating \$17.2 million in tax revenues for Québec and \$13.6 million in national taxes. To draw tourists and encourage cycling, Quebec developed a network of 2,702 miles of bicycle paths and roadway routes called **La Route Verte**, which is promoted as the “best bicycle route in the world.” In 2000, when only part of the route was complete, La Route Verte cyclists spent a total of \$95.4 million, corresponding to approximately 2,000 jobs and \$15.1 million in tax revenue for Québec and \$11.9 million for the Government of Canada.<sup>xii</sup> In 2005, **bicycle tourists** spent \$83 per day, more than other tourists’ average of \$66.<sup>xiii</sup>

### Developing an Economic Impact Study

Policy-makers increasingly demand hard numbers on the impacts of proposals before making significant investments or undertaking major policy changes. Savvy bicycling advocates understand this and are responding by working with professionals to produce such numbers.

For example, advocates in Vermont assisted with data gathering by distributing surveys to businesses throughout the state (page 6). In Iowa, the Iowa Bicycle Coalition saw the need for an economic impact study and found the resources to commission one by University of Northern Iowa.

Mark Wyatt, the Coalition’s executive director, attended the National Bike Tour Directors Conference in Madison and heard Amanda White, the associate director of the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin, speak about her state’s economic impact study. Wyatt took the Wisconsin report to the University of Northern Iowa, authors of an earlier economic impact study of RAGBRAI, the statewide bicycle ride. They gave him a proposal. Wyatt submitted the proposal to Bikes Belong to apply for a research grant that was available for this sort of work. They received the grant and commissioned the study. Once completed, the Bicycle Coalition helped publicize the results.

Wyatt learned some good lessons that can help others following this path:

- Use an academic institution to do the study. University researchers have more credibility than advocacy organizations. Wyatt says, “It’s always great to hear that Dr. Sam Lankford is reporting bicycling is worth \$x.xx, rather than the advocate.”
- Use an existing model. Iowa used the Wisconsin report as a template. That allowed them to make an apples to apples comparison with another state.



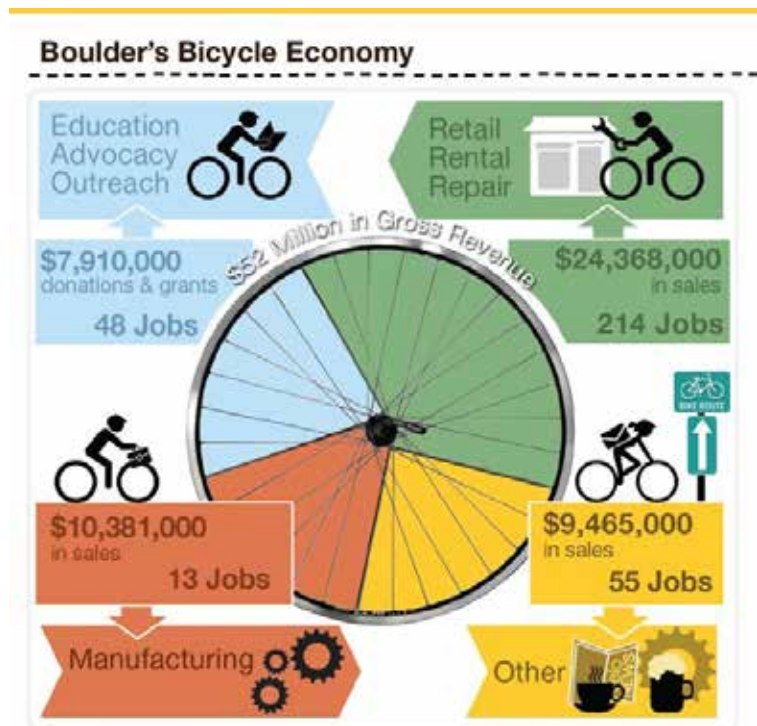
## Regional and City Economic Impact Studies

One of the most celebrated examples of regional economic impact is **North Carolina's Outer Banks**. By a conservative estimate, the Outer Banks generates \$60 million in economic activity through bicycle tourism. The one-time investment of \$6.7 million on bicycle infrastructure has resulted in an annual nine-to-one return. The types of visitors drawn to bike on the Outer Banks add a boost to the economy with their ability to spend money. A study on the Outer Banks shows bicycle tourists tend to be affluent (half earn more than \$100,000 a year, 87 percent earn more than \$50,000) and educated (40 percent have a masters or doctoral degree). Expenditures by the 680,000 annual visiting bicyclists support 1,400 jobs in the area. The quality of bicycling influenced vacation planning: More than half of survey respondents said bicycling had a strong influence on their decision to return to the area. The facilities themselves were well-received, too: Two-thirds of respondents said that riding on bike facilities made them feel safer and three-quarters said that more paths, shoulders and lanes should be built.<sup>xiv</sup>

Some locations focus more on quality of life for their residents than on tourism. **Portland, Oregon**, which has been designated a Platinum-level Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists, in part for its investments in infrastructure, saw \$90 million in bicycle-related activity in 2008. Nearly 60 percent of that activity came from retail, rental, and repair. Manufacturing and distribution, bicycle events, and professional services (bike messengers and coaching and legal expertise) made up the rest.<sup>xv</sup>

**Boulder, CO**, another Platinum Bicycle Friendly Community, sees \$52 million in economic activity from the city's bicycle industry, which supports at least 330 full-time jobs.<sup>xvi</sup>

These communities show the impact that relatively modest investments in paths, expanded shoulders, and trails can have on the local economies by attracting visitors, residents, and businesses.



## Business Districts and Business Impacts

Often the decisions about whether or not to build bicycling infrastructure come down to neighborhood, or even block-by-block, considerations. What's the economic impact on neighborhoods and business districts? Surveys of business owners, demand for retail space, and demand for bike parking confirm that businesses benefit from investments that attract people on bikes.

Along **San Francisco's Valencia Street**, two-thirds of merchants said that new bike lanes had a **positive overall impact on their business**. Two-thirds of the merchants also supported more traffic calming measures on the street. All of the merchants said they could be supportive depending on the project.<sup>xvii</sup>



*Ample parking in a small space means more customers for local business.  
Photo of Valencia Street, San Francisco, CA by Andy Clarke.*

A 2009 study of **Bloor Street**, a commercial street in **Toronto, Ontario** showed that encouraging bicycling is good for business: people who had biked and walked to the area reported that they **spent more money** in the area per month than those who drove there. The study concluded that the addition of bike lanes would be unlikely to harm local business and predicted that commercial activity on the street would increase.

Critics sometimes express concern that eliminating on-street car parking to make room for bike lanes would harm local business. However, business districts are discovering that attracting customers requires more than a few on-street car parking spaces. Three-quarters of merchants surveyed on Bloor Street believed that business activity would improve or stay the same if a bike lane replaced half of the on-street parking.<sup>xviii</sup>

### Green Dividend

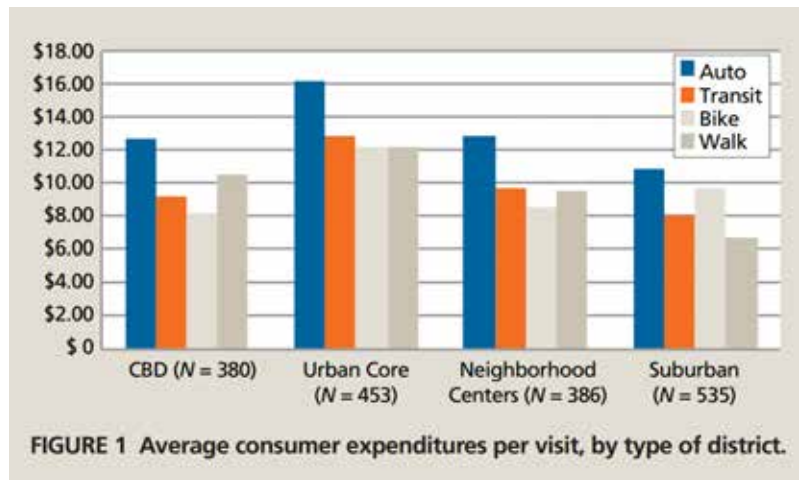
The majority of the economic impact studies mentioned in this report refer to states. But cities are doing their part as well. Joe Cortright, senior policy advisor for CEOs for Cities, has published a series of reports called the “Green Dividend,” in which he analyzes the savings that city-dwellers realize from shorter commutes and access to transit and, often, favorable bicycling conditions.

**Portland.** As a result of policies to encourage bicycling and maintain urban density, which reduce auto-dependency, Portland residents **save on transportation costs** and have more money to spend on things they value (like locally-brewed beer!). Compared to the distance and time spent commuting to work in the median American city, Portlanders travel 2.9 billion fewer miles and spend 100 million fewer hours, saving \$2.6 billion a year.

**New York City.** The average person in a large US metropolitan area drives 25 miles a day. In New York City the average is nine miles. New Yorkers thus drive **48 billion fewer miles** than average, with annual savings of up to \$19 billion.

**Chicago.** Chicago area residents drive an average of 2.2 miles less per day than those in the median large city. According to Cortright, this alone saves Chicagoans \$2.3 billion.

A study of **greater Portland** also found that bicycling customers spend more per month. “Customers who arrive by automobile spend the most per visit across all of the establishments, but cyclists spend the most per month,” writes Kelly Clifton, associate professor at Portland State University. “These results suggest that marketing to cyclists is likely to generate a positive expenditure return for businesses in the right context.”<sup>xix</sup>

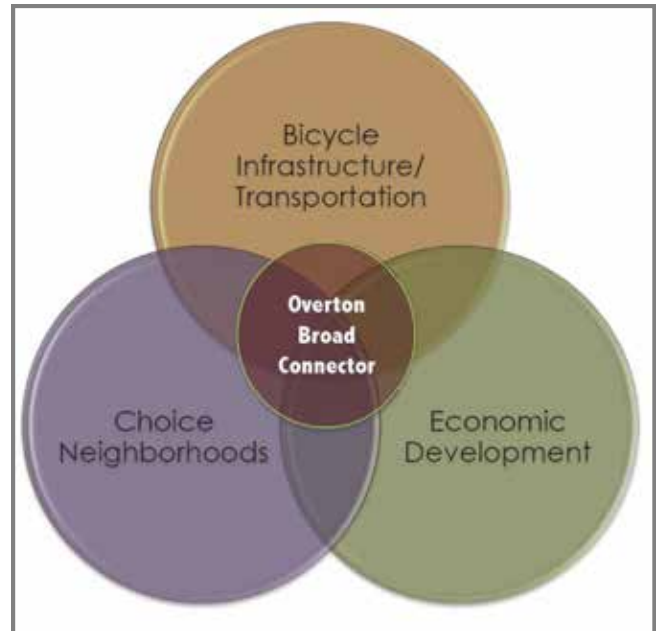


**TABLE 1 Average Customer Expenditures by Mode of Travel and Type of Establishment**

Mode	Establishment	Trips per Month	\$ per Trip	\$ per Month	N
Auto	Bar	1.6	25.55	40.21	88
	Convenience	9.9	7.98	79.37	543
	Restaurant	2.2	18.74	41.16	409
	Total	4.5	13.70	61.03	1,040
Bike	Bar	4.9	14.08	68.56	42
	Convenience	14.5	7.30	105.66	63
	Restaurant	3.5	12.08	42.52	48
	Total	7.1	10.66	75.66	153
Transit	Bar	1.8	19.54	35.35	13
	Convenience	10.9	6.91	75.62	53
	Restaurant	3.5	11.52	40.68	36
	Total	5.7	10.15	58.16	102
Walk	Bar	3.1	22.17	68.42	53
	Convenience	12.6	6.13	77.34	254
	Restaurant	2.6	16.74	43.77	131
	Total	5.9	11.25	66.22	438
Total	Bar	2.5	21.78	53.59	196
	Convenience	10.9	7.36	80.40	913
	Restaurant	2.4	17.39	41.78	624
	Total	5.0	12.60	63.46	1,733

NOTE: N = number of respondents.

In **Memphis, TN**, bicycle lanes are part of the city's Broad Avenue Arts District initiative, which has revitalized a struggling commercial and residential area. The revitalization of Broad Avenue began with a focus on attracting arts-related businesses. However, according to local business leaders, the popularity of the project exploded when the focus was expanded to include bicycles. The bike lanes include "temporary" bike lanes, painted by volunteers and kept by the city, and plans for the Overton Broad Connector cycle-track. Local leaders now talk about the ABCs of becoming an urban magnet: Art + Bikes + Community.



*The vision behind the Memphis Broad Avenue Arts Business District and the Overton Broad Connector connects bicycle infrastructure, vibrant neighborhoods, and economic development.*

Business owners on Broad Avenue see the connection between bike lanes and business growth. "The lanes slowed down traffic and people started noticing the businesses more," said Pat Brown, co-owner of T Clifton Gallery on Broad Avenue. "Our business revenues have grown on average 30 percent per year – yes, an art-related business in a tough economy."<sup>xx</sup> "It was probably one of the best things to happen for my business," Katelynn Meadows, owner of Sweetly, told the Commercial Appeal about the new bike lanes in front of her children's clothing store.<sup>xxi</sup>

Since the beginning of the project, the district has seen 16 new businesses, 29 property renovations (17 at blighted locations), and 40,000 visitors to the Arts Walk.<sup>xxii</sup> Restaurants have reported a growth in business from bicycle riders. The Memphis Food Truckers Association recently began weekly Food Truck Rodeos on Broad Avenue.

*Volunteers paint a bike lane in Memphis' Broad Avenue Arts District. The lane has helped spark interest in the revitalizing community. The district has already seen new and expanded businesses. (Photo courtesy of Livable Memphis)*



The understanding that bicycling is a fast and cheap way to cultivate business is spreading. **Long Beach, CA**, is pioneering Bicycle-Friendly Business Districts, commercial areas in which the merchants encourage customers and employees to bike to the area to shop and dine. Bicycling is incorporated in the district's operations, events, and promotions.<sup>xxiii xxiv</sup>



*One hundred and fifty Long Beach businesses participate in the Bike Saturdays Discount Program and give discounts and promotions for bicyclists every Saturday.*

### *Working with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)*

Advocates can work with BIDs to improve/increase bike access to shops and restaurants. They should advocate for bike racks and bike corrals, provide valet bike parking at festivals and farmers markets, organize community bike rides and events, and promote the “*Bike Local-Shop Local*” message, said Andy Hanshaw, executive director of the San Diego County Bicycle Coalition, at the 2012 National Bike Summit.<sup>xxv</sup>

### *Bike Corrals*

Businesses that attract people on bikes need to accommodate them. Cities like Columbia, Mo., Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh, Pa., Brooklyn, NY, and Chicago, Ill., have used space on the street to install bike parking in what are known as bike corrals. Bike Corrals provide up to 12 bicycle parking spaces in place of one car parking space. They are typically installed in front of businesses that request them.

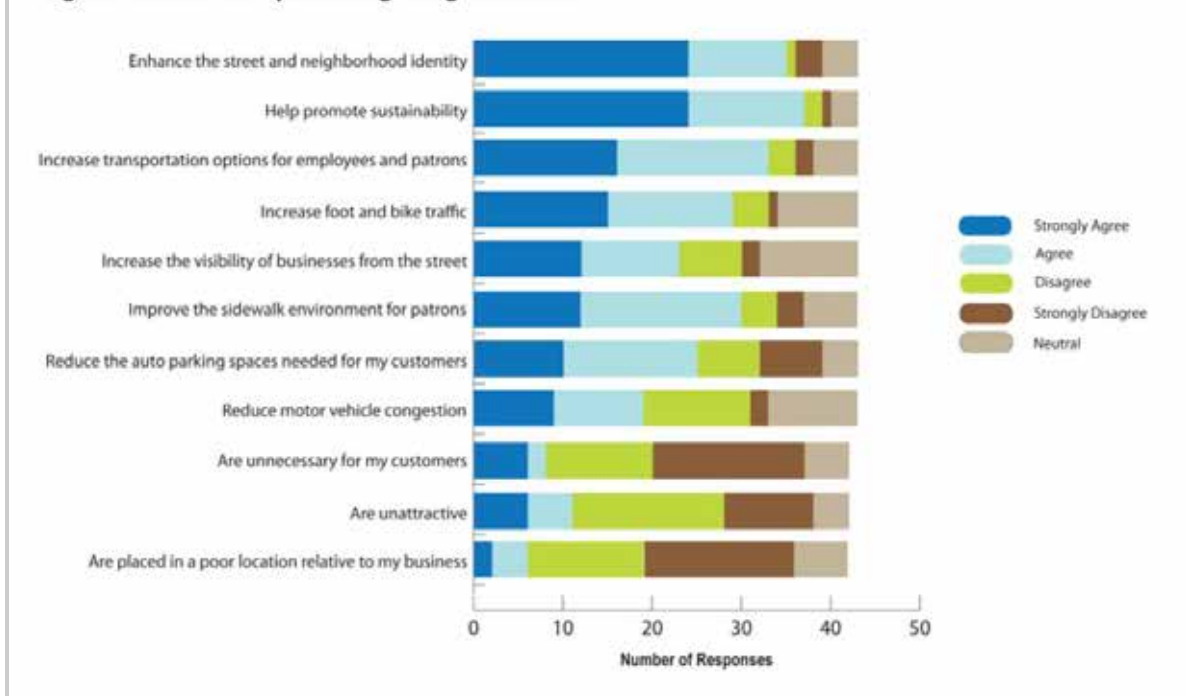
The high demand for bike corrals by business that are willing to give up on-street car parking in return for plentiful on-street bike parking is a clear sign that businesses benefit from bicycling investments. The City of **Portland, OR**, has not been able to keep up with the demand from businesses since they launched their bike corral program in 2004. In 2011, they had 72 requests for corrals.



A study of Portland's bike corrals revealed that near-by businesses appreciate the bike corrals as a pro-business amenity. A majority of businesses responding to a survey said that bike corrals enhance the street and neighborhood identity, help promote sustainability, increase transportation options for employees and patrons, increase foot and bike traffic, increase the visibility of the businesses from the street, and improve the sidewalk environment for patrons.<sup>xxvi</sup>



Figure 2: Business responses regarding bike corrals



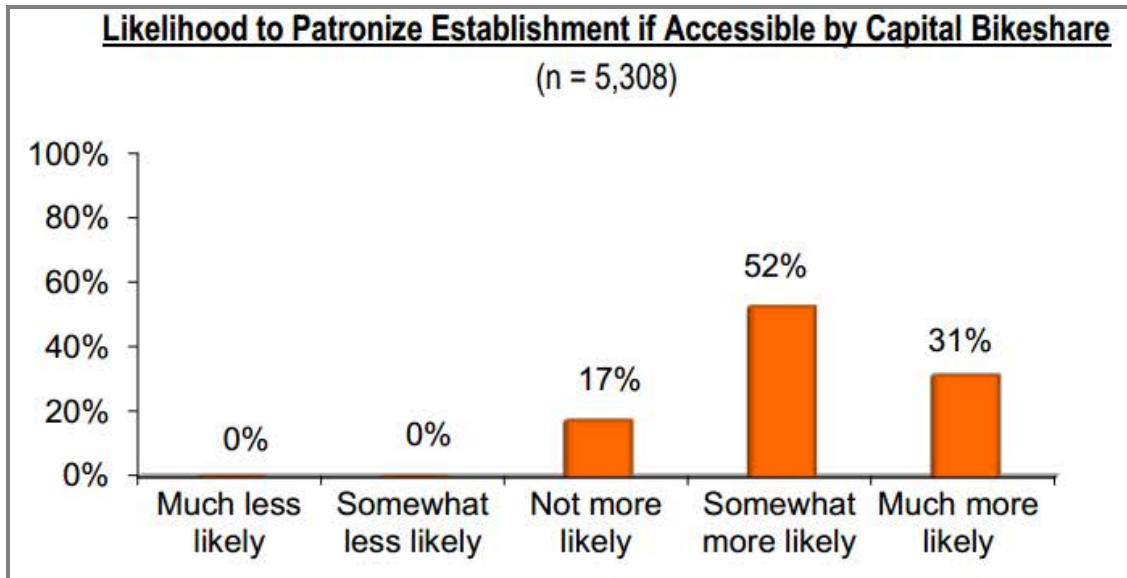
A survey of Portland businesses near bike corrals shows that they create neighborhood identity, promote sustainability, provide transportation options, and increase foot and bike traffic.

The City of Chicago also notes that businesses like bike corrals because their storefronts become more visible, lots of bikes parked out front makes the business look popular, they attract the attention of bicyclists, drivers, and pedestrians, they open up the sidewalk to foot traffic, and they provide a buffer between vehicles and people at sidewalk cafes.<sup>xxvii</sup>

### Bikeshare

Investments in bikeshare programs also benefit businesses. In a recent survey of Capital Bikeshare users in the **Washington, D.C.**, metropolitan area, 83 percent said that they are more likely to patronize a business if it is located near a Capital Bikeshare station. Users that said they were “much more likely” also tended to take more bikeshare trips overall. Capital Bikeshare is helping many customers access businesses. In less than two years, the Capital Bikeshare system saw two million trips on their fleet of 1,500 bicycles at more than 165 stations in the District of Columbia and Arlington County.

*Bikeshare members are more likely to patronize a business if it is located near a bikeshare station, like this one at the Safeway grocery store on 17<sup>th</sup> Street in Washington, D.C. (below). Photo: Bike Snob NYC*



### *Bicycle Friendly Businesses*

Individual businesses are making investments to be bicycle friendly to attract customers, enhance employee wellness programs, create an appealing identity, and accrue the economic benefits, too. The League's Bicycle Friendly Business program recognizes the efforts of companies to promote bicycling — and the response has been impressive.



*Map of Bicycle Friendly Businesses, 2012.*

As of spring 2012, 409 companies in 42 states and the District of Columbia have been designated Bicycle Friendly Businesses for their efforts to encourage bicycling. Another 111 businesses received honorable mention. Collectively, these businesses employ over 630,000 workers and draw countless customers.

Bicycle Friendly Businesses do things like provide bike parking, choose bike-accessible locations, and provide incentives for their employees to ride to work. The list of Bicycle Friendly Businesses includes the General Mills plant in Albuquerque, NM, the Microsoft offices in Richmond, WA, and Boise, ID, the Google offices in Pittsburgh, PA, and Random House offices in New York City. It also includes small businesses like 212 Market Restaurant in Chattanooga, TN (40 employees), Peace Coffee in Minneapolis (20 employees), and Wiebenson & Dorman Architects in Washington, DC, (2 employees).<sup>xxviii</sup>

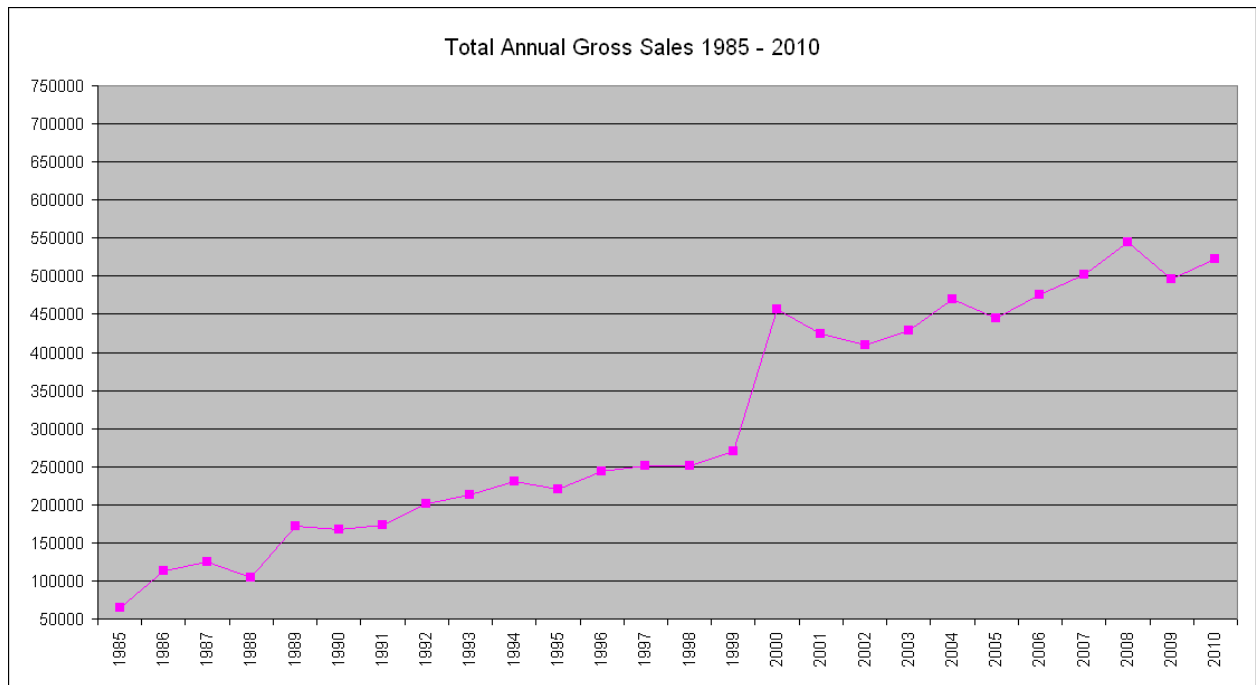
That these companies make investments to become bicycle-friendly shows the difference that it can make on the bottom line.

*Bike Businesses*

There are particular and direct economic benefits for bicycle shops. When more people ride, there are more customers for bike shops. There are nearly 16,000 bicycle retail shops in the United States, which employ more than 70,000 people. Bike shop employment numbers for states and congressional districts are available on the 2012 National Bike Summit webpage.<sup>xxix</sup>

Many bike shops have benefited directly from federal investments in bicycling facilities. Moore’s Bicycle Shop in **Hattiesburg, MS**, for example, saw a dramatic spike in sales when the **Longleaf Trace** multi-use trail was built using federal Transportation Enhancement funds.

“For the first 16 years [of my business] it was a one-man operation with the occasional part-time employee,” wrote James Moore, owner of Moore’s Bicycle Shop. “Things started to change in 1994 after our region received a Transportation Enhancement grant to create the Longleaf Trace multi-use trail. As a direct result of this federal investment in our local community, my small business has generated an additional \$175,000 in sales tax for the state of which \$31,500 (18%) was returned to the city of Hattiesburg.”<sup>xxx</sup>



*Sales figures for Moore’s Bicycle Shop in Hattiesburg, MS. Note the spike in 2000 when the Longleaf Trace was constructed and drew bicyclists to the area. Graph courtesy of James Moore.*

## Trails

Longleaf Trace isn't the only trail that has impacted its nearby economy. Trails draw visitors, customers, and residents to their regions, supporting businesses and boosting real estate values.

The 132-mile Great Allegheny Passage, which connects **Cumberland, MD to McKeesport, PA (near Pittsburgh, PA)**, draws visitors from all over the country to businesses along its route. Surveyed business owners attributed an average of one-quarter of their gross revenue directly to trail users. Two-thirds said that they saw some increase in gross revenue due to their proximity to the trail. "Trail users from 670 unique postal codes were surveyed; this included nearly every state in the continental United States and parts of Canada," according to the Great Allegheny Passage Economic Impact Study. "On average, these overnight trail users spent \$98 a day in the trail communities and on lodging. Over one-third of the overnight trail users reported household incomes of \$100K or more."<sup>xxxix</sup>

Elsewhere in Pennsylvania, along the Schuylkill River Trail, which follows the Schuylkill River from **Pottsville to Philadelphia, Pa**, 78 percent of surveyed trail users said that they had purchased "hard goods," like bikes, accessories, and clothing in the past year to use on the trail. Most were bicycle-related purchases and they averaged \$406. The trail has converted many early skeptics. Thirty-seven percent of trail users said that their opinion of the trail had changed – 92 percent now say that "feel more favorable toward the trail than they had previously."<sup>xxxix</sup>



More studies on the impacts of trails and paths can be found at the [National Trail Training Partnership](#)<sup>xxxix</sup> and the [Rails to Trails Conservancy](#),<sup>xxxix</sup> including a comparison of over a dozen trail economic impact studies.<sup>xxxix</sup>

## Organized Rides & Bicycle Tourism

Organized rides and races are often major events, drawing thousands of people to the host communities. Once there, riders need food and lodging, and often need ride-related supplies. All of these purchases, by people who wouldn't otherwise be there, boost the local economy.

The Registers Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, better known as RAGBRAI, is one of highest profile bicycle rides in the United States. It is an annual seven-day bicycle ride across Iowa. It calls itself the "oldest, largest and longest bicycle touring event in the world."<sup>xxxvi</sup> For nearly 40 years, the economic impacts of this ride have been felt by the communities along the route.

In 2008, they were quantified by a researcher at the University of Northern Iowa: Total direct spending (dollars paid for services by travel parties for the event) while in Iowa for the event was estimated at \$16,908,642 (8,802 travel parties paying an average of \$1,921) in Iowa... The total direct, indirect and induced spending for RAGBRAI in 2008 is somewhere in between \$24.5 and \$25.7 million."<sup>xxxvii</sup>

RAGBRAI may be the best known, but it is not the only ride to bring important dollars into local communities. In 2011, the National Bicycle Tour Directors Association, now the Bicycle Tour Network, conducted a pilot study of 11 large bicycling rides and events. Spending related to the 11 events reached over \$32.5 million. The survey shows why communities are so eager to attract these visitors: 57% of rider had household incomes over \$100,000.<sup>xxxviii</sup>



### Economic Impact

#### Total:

Event-related purchases	<b>\$14,582,547.36</b>
Bicycle shipping expenses	<b>\$ 510,064.10</b>
Travel to/from event	<b>\$ 9,321,762.22</b>
Personal spending at event	<b>\$ 6,110,698.67</b>
Support spending at event	<b><u>\$ 2,070,526.35</u></b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$32,595,598.70</b>

In a more wide-ranging survey, Bikes Belong found the following:

- More than **1,700** U.S. recreational road riding events were organized in 2008
- More than **1 million** Americans participated in recreational road riding events in 2008
- Total 2008 revenue from recreational road riding events topped **\$240 million**
- Two-thirds of these '08 rides were tied to a cause, raising nearly **\$200 million**
- Riders spent nearly **\$140 million** on food, lodging, and other purchases at these events<sup>xxxix</sup>



*Ride in Sioux City, photo by Sioux City Chamber of Commerce<sup>xl</sup>*

## Home Values

Many communities have recognized the broad appeal of bicycle facilities and the impact they can have on real estate values. **Arlington County, Va.**, a silver-rated **Bicycle Friendly Community**, has set the goal of ensuring that all residents live within a quarter-mile of a bike facility and has currently achieved 90 percent coverage.<sup>xli</sup>

Bob McNamara, a Senior Policy Representative for the National Association of Realtors (NAR), a 1.2 million member professional organization, emphasized the importance of transportation choice at the 2009 National Bike Summit. Realtors sell not just houses, he said, they sell communities. Increasing transportation choice increases livability.<sup>xlii</sup> In 2008, NAR revised its policy statement on transportation to call for the **consideration of all transportation types**, including bicycling, in every transportation project.<sup>xliii</sup>

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By mapping real estate transactions, researchers have been able to show that bike facilities can have positive, statistically significant impacts on home values. The design identifies the value placed on home proximity to urban bicycle greenways with a statistical formula that controls for other housing features. A study of home values near the **Monon Trail in Indianapolis**, Ind. measured the impact of the trail on property values. Given two identical houses, with the same number of square feet, bathrooms, bedrooms, and comparable garages and porches – one within a half mile of the Monon Trail and another further away – the home closer to the **Monon Trail** would sell for an average of 11 percent more.<sup>xliv</sup>

A study of property values near **trails in the State of Delaware** found that properties within 50m of the bike paths **sell for \$8,800** more than other similar homes. The average sale price was \$197,000.<sup>xlv</sup>

Bicycling's sister travel mode is walking. Often, good environments for one are good for the other. It turns out that walkable places are desirable places. Just look at real estate prices. An economic analysis of a sample of neighborhoods in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area by the Brookings Institute found that: "More walkable places perform better economically. For neighborhoods within metropolitan Washington, as the number of environmental features that facilitate walkability and attract pedestrians increase, so do office, residential, and retail rents, retail revenues, and for-sale residential values."<sup>xlvi</sup>





## Conclusion – A Good Investment Within Reach

Bicycling is popular across America among all types of people. Communities that have fostered that popularity by providing bicycle infrastructure for transportation and recreation have seen considerable economic benefits by attracting businesses, tourism, and active residents.

Neighborhoods become more desirable when traffic slows down and residents have more transportation choices. Businesses can encourage shopping among loyal, local customers by making getting there by bike more appealing. Individuals benefit from increased levels of fitness and health that result in real cost savings and employers have healthier employees who miss fewer days of work.

There are so many good economic impact resources coming out that we can't fit them all in one update. Stay tuned for more information on efficiency and cost-effectiveness, job creation, cost savings, parking & congestion, household cost savings, public health, and benefit/cost analyses.

<sup>i</sup> Garrett-Peltier, Heidi, “Estimating the Employment Impacts of Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Road Infrastructure,” [http://www.bikeleague.org/resources/reports/pdfs/baltimore\\_Dec20.pdf](http://www.bikeleague.org/resources/reports/pdfs/baltimore_Dec20.pdf); “The Cost Effectiveness of Active Transportation Investments,” <http://www.bikeleague.org/blog/2011/02/the-cost-effectiveness-of-active-transportation-investments/>; Valuing Bicycling’s Economic and Health Impacts in Wisconsin, [www.bfw.org/uploads/media/Valuing\\_Bicycling\\_in\\_Wisconsin\\_Final\\_Report\\_January\\_2010\[1\].pdf](http://www.bfw.org/uploads/media/Valuing_Bicycling_in_Wisconsin_Final_Report_January_2010[1].pdf); Bike Corrals, [http://bikeportland.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/PDX\\_Bike\\_Corral\\_Study.pdf](http://bikeportland.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/PDX_Bike_Corral_Study.pdf); Minnesota Trails, [http://www.tourism.umn.edu/prod/groups/cfans/@pub/@cfans/@tourism/documents/asset/cfans\\_asset\\_167538.pdf](http://www.tourism.umn.edu/prod/groups/cfans/@pub/@cfans/@tourism/documents/asset/cfans_asset_167538.pdf); Physical Activity and the Intertwine, <http://bikeportland.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/IntertwinePAObesityAssessment.pdf>; Costs and benefits of bicycling investments in Portland, Orego, <http://www.zora.uzh.ch/43289/1/Gotschi1.pdf>.

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