

Who's on the Trail?

The Canalway Trail User Count, 2006

Client: New York State Canal Corporation



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Introduction

The Trail User Count Survey was conducted to provide information on the number and types of trail users at several different locations along the Canalway Trail within Oneida, Herkimer, and Montgomery counties. These results are helpful in establishing strategies for trail and facility development and can be compared with the results of a similar count conducted in 2005 at multiple locations along the Canalway Trail in Monroe County.

Acknowledgments

Parks & Trails New York and the New York State Canal Corporation are grateful for the excellent job done and the time and effort put in by the volunteers who went out on the trail to conduct the user counts. Additionally several members of the Board of Directors of the Canalway Trails Association New York helped organize the volunteers and undertook some of the counts themselves. We thank all those involved.

Methodology

Introduction

Counts were conducted from August 12, 2006 to September 20, 2006 using volunteers recruited by Parks & Trails New York through the directors of the Canalway Trails Association New York. The volunteers were given a count protocol outlining the steps for conducting the count and count forms with questions about the location, time, weather and types of trail users.

Based on the recommendations outlined by Greg Lindsey's report *Procedures for Estimating Urban Trail Traffic*, data were collected at one hour intervals at times known to have the greatest activity.

Locations

Parks & Trails New York chose the locations after consultation with staff at the New York State Canal Corporation. The locations were selected to obtain information on places believed to represent a mix of high, moderate and low trail use and both paved and stone dust trail surfaces. For ease of access, volunteers chose the exact locations.

Data Collection

A counting form (see Appendix I) was developed to standardize the types of data collected. The form was based on the form used in 2005 but expanded to capture information on bicyclists with and without helmets and trail surfaces (i.e. stone dust and paved). Information requested included: date, time, location, weather, trail surface, and the number and type of trail users. Trail users were broken down into categories including bicyclists, walkers, joggers, baby carriages and horses. Bicyclists included subsets of those with and without helmets.

Completed forms are found in Appendix II. Survey results are summarized in the pie charts in Appendix III. All data entered are available in spreadsheet format in Appendix IV.

Results

Eighteen volunteers completed 25 surveys. The surveys were conducted from August 12, 2006 to September 20, 2006 in three different counties at 14 different locations.

Trail Surfaces

Twenty one out of 25 surveys provided information on trail surface. Thirteen sites were identified as asphalt, seven sites were identified as stone dust. One site indicated having both.

Weather

All 25 surveys indicated weather conditions. Ten surveys indicated sunny weather, seven surveys indicated partly cloudy weather, three surveys indicated cloudy weather, five surveys indicated rainy weather.

Temperature

Twenty three surveys indicated the approximate temperature. The highest temperature recorded was 80 degrees Fahrenheit. The lowest was 55 degrees Fahrenheit. The average was 68.52 degrees Fahrenheit.

User Data

The surveys were to be completed during a one-hour time segment. Of the 25 surveys submitted, one was conducted during a 30-minute time period and one was conducted during a 120-minute time period. To standardize a one-hour time period for all the surveys, the data for the 120-minute survey were multiplied by 0.5 and the data for the 30-minute survey were multiplied by two. Any data that resulted in a fraction due to this standardization were rounded to the nearest whole number.

The first user category in the survey was bicyclist. One hundred thirty three total bicyclists were counted. This represented 43 percent of the users surveyed (see Appendix V). As a subset of this group, the number of bicyclists with and without helmets was also counted. Seventy-six or 57 percent of bicyclists wore helmets and 51 or 43 percent did not wear helmets (see Appendix V).

The second user category was walkers. One hundred ten were counted. This represented 35 percent of the users surveyed (see Appendix V).

The third user category was inline skaters. Zero inline skaters were counted.

The fourth user category was joggers. Sixty-two joggers were counted. This represented 20 percent of the users surveyed (see Appendix V).

The fourth user category counted in the survey was equestrians. Zero equestrians were counted.

The fifth user category counted in the survey was baby carriages. Five baby carriages were counted. This represented two percent of the users surveyed (see Appendix V).

The sixth user category counted in the survey was wheelchair users. Zero wheelchair users were counted.

Usage Comparison

Sorting the survey sites by the greatest number of users counted highlighted that the survey site in Rome at Rt. 365 had the most with a total of 44 users or 14 percent of the total users counted (see Appendix VI). This should be considered an anomaly because a high school track team with 38 members passed the surveyors. If we discount the 38 members of the track team, the site with the greatest number of users is Rt. 291 in the town of Marcy on 8/31/06 from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. and 8/30/06 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. with 25 total users each. The site with the least visitors surveyed was the Herkimer Home.

2005 and 2006 Comparison

Locations-In the 2005 report, the location that counted the greatest number of users was “the Village of Pittsford, west side, at railroad bridge” from 10:40 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. with 88.75 users per hour. The greatest number of users in the 2006 survey was at “Rt. 291 Town of Marcy, Oneida County” with 25 users surveyed on 8/30/06 and 8/31/06. (note: The counts have different time periods, that is one is from 10:40 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and the other is 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. However, both data sets have been standardized to one hour. As stated above, we have also considered the survey site at Rt. 365 in Rome with 44 users to be an anomaly).

Users-In both surveys, the greatest percentages of trail users were bicyclist (64% in 2005 and 43% in 2006) (see Table 1). In both surveys, walkers (24% in 2005 and 36% in 2006) and joggers (8% in 2005 and 20% in 2006) represent the second and third largest user groups.

Table 1

Trail User Category	Percentage of Total for 2005	Percentage of Total for 2006
Bicyclists	64%	43%
Walkers	24%	36%
In Line Skaters	2%	0%
Joggers	8%	20%
Baby Carriages	2%	2%
Wheelchair Users	n/a	0%

Location and Use-In an effort to look for correlations between sites with the number of users, the following is an examination utilizing census data from Epodunk.com.

The 2005 site with greatest number of users (89) was the Village of Pittsford in Monroe County. The county has a population of 735,433 with 1,115.35 people per square mile.

The 2006 site with the greatest number of users (25) was the Town of Marcy in Oneida County. The county has a population of 235,469 with 194.17 people per square mile.

By comparing the 2005 and 2006 survey sites with the greatest number of users and county populations, the data shows that the Village of Pittsford in Monroe County had the greatest

number of users surveyed and the greatest number of people per square mile in the surrounding county.

The 2005 site with the least number of users (11) was in Adams Basin (unincorporated), in the Town of Ogden, and in Monroe County. The county has a population of 735,433 with 1,115.35 people per square mile.

The 2006 site with the least number of users (1) was at Herkimer House, in the Town of Danube in Herkimer County. The county has a population of 64,427 with 45.65 people per square mile.

By comparing the 2005 and 2006 survey sites with the least number of users and county populations, the data shows that the Herkimer House site in the Town of Danube had the least amount of users and the least number of people per square mile in the surrounding county.

Next Steps

Automated Counters

Parks & Trails New York again recommends that automated counters be installed at selected locations along the Canalway Trail. Such tools provide accurate and efficient means of counting number of users over a long term.

Demographics

Gathering information about trail users is equally as important as determining how many are on the trail. Future counting efforts should also collect information on individuals who use the trail. Currently the Customer Satisfaction Survey is being used to gather data from trail users on residency, location of use, principal use, and use frequency but no effort has been made to correlate counting data with user survey data. Age and gender should be added to the data collected through the Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Improved Data Collection and Analysis

In Greg Lindsey's report *Procedures for Estimating Urban Trail Traffic*, he notes that reviews of trail use studies, including a review by the U.S. Department of Transportation in 2000, concluded that the overall quality of trail studies is poor. A universal deficiency is that most studies use sampling of trail traffic over short periods of time to estimate traffic on trails. To increase the level of predictability and use, we recommend that future counts incorporate alternative survey methodology as suggested by Lindsey in his 2005 report.

Who's on the Trail? The Canalway Trail User Count – 2006

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Date: _____ Time conducted: _____ to _____ Road intersection name: _____ Town/Village: _____

Trail surface: asphalt stone dust Weather Conditions: sunny partly cloudy cloudy rain Approximate temperature: _____

Make one "tic mark" for each person passing by in either direction engaged in each activity.

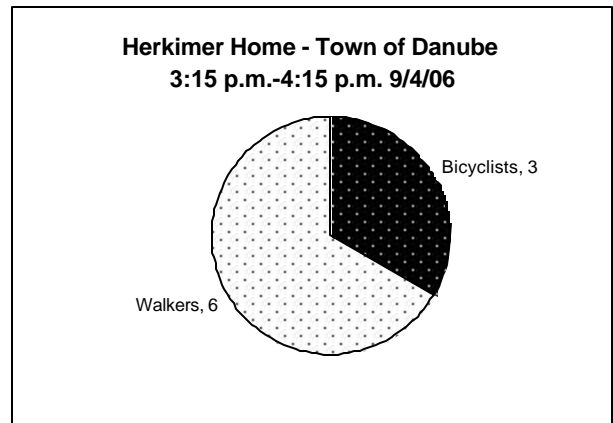
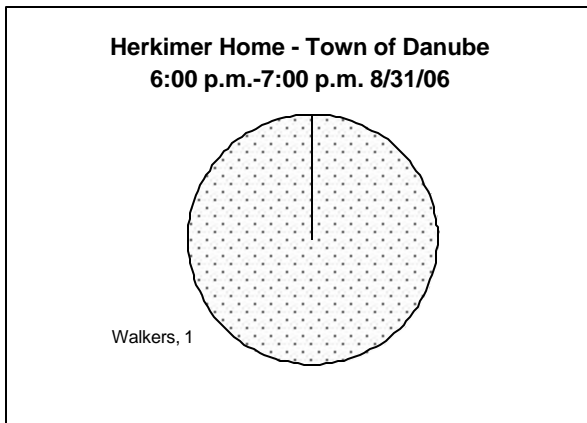
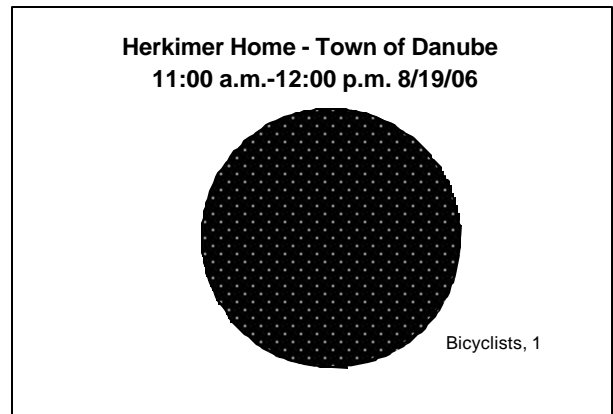
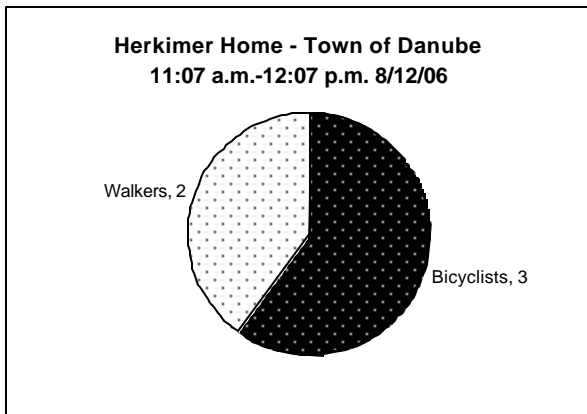
User Type	Counts	
	With helmets	Without helmets
Bicyclists		
Walkers		
In-line skaters		
Joggers		
Equestrians		
Baby carriages/ strollers		
Wheelchair users		

**Thanks for you help!!! Please return the form(s) to:
Canalway Trail User Count 2006, Parks & Trails New York, 29 Elk Street, Albany, NY, 12207, FAX 518-434-1583**

Appendix II Completed Forms

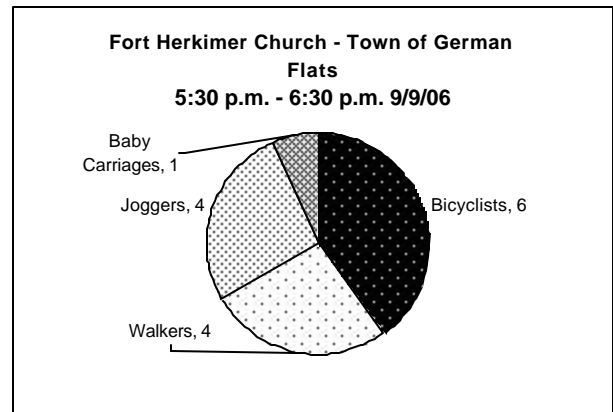
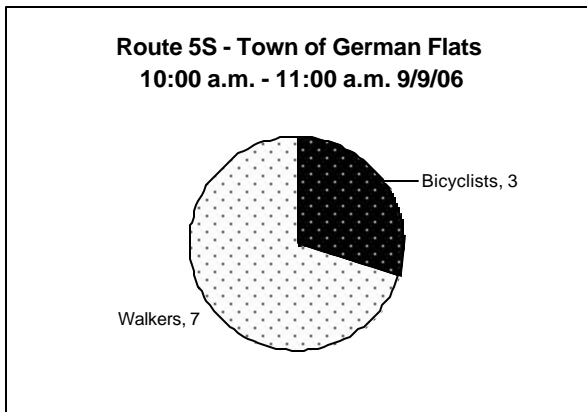
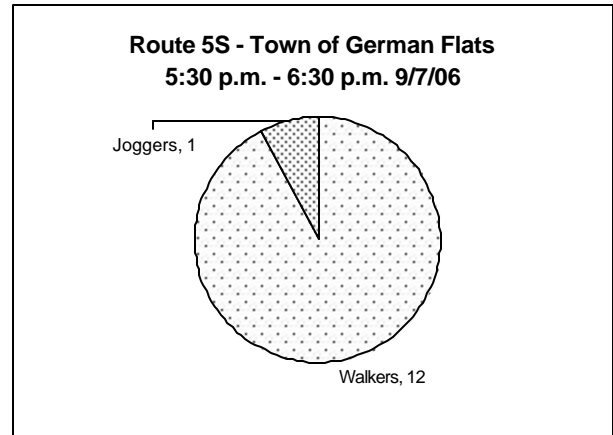
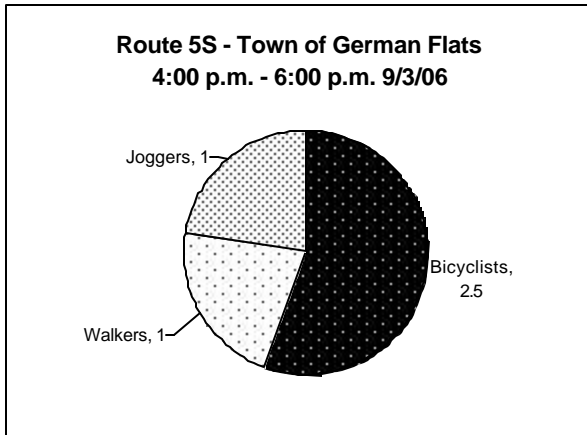
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Herkimer County

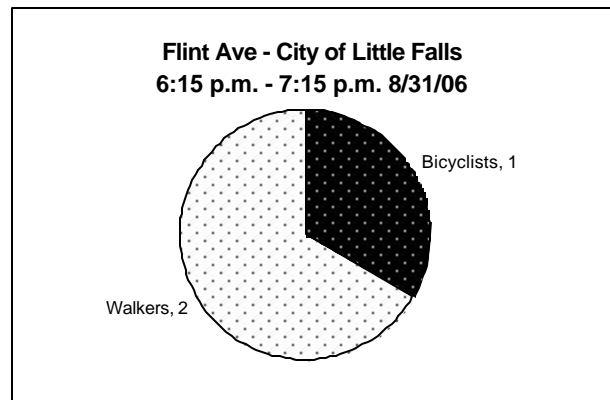
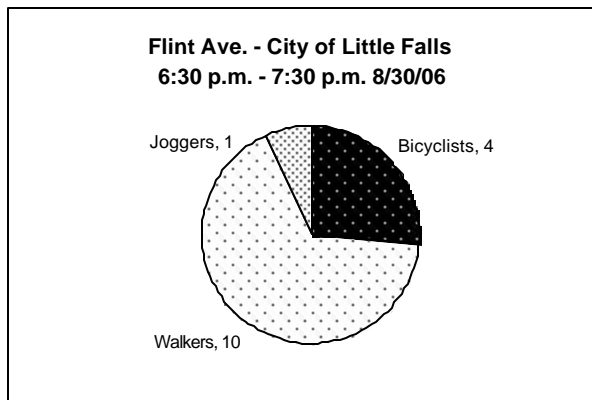
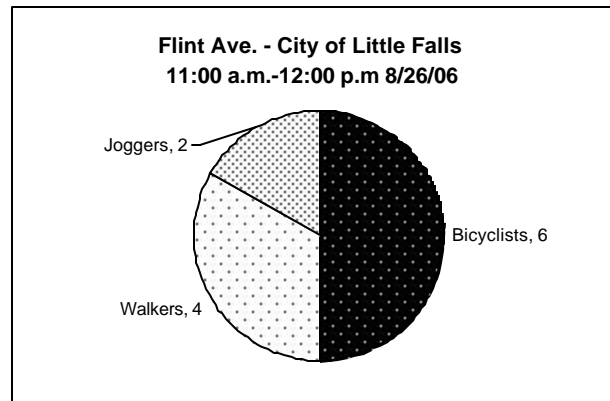


Appendix III Individual User Count Charts

Herkimer County

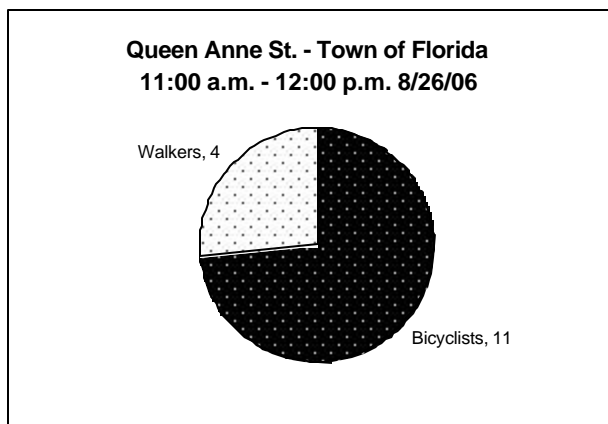
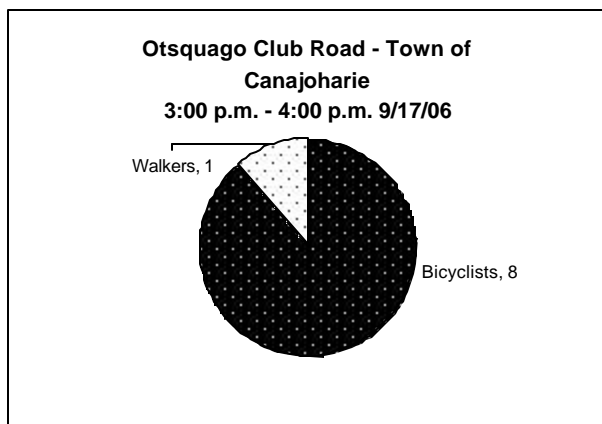
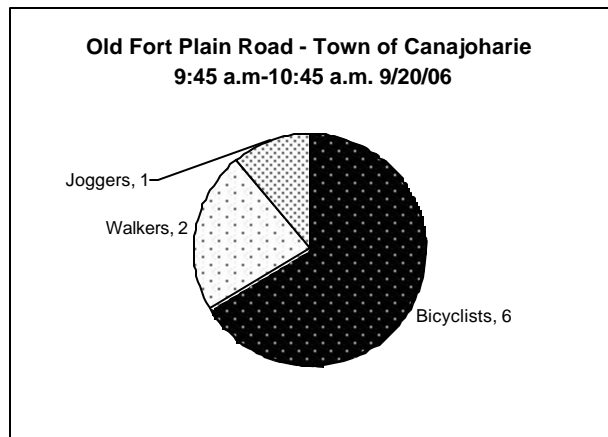
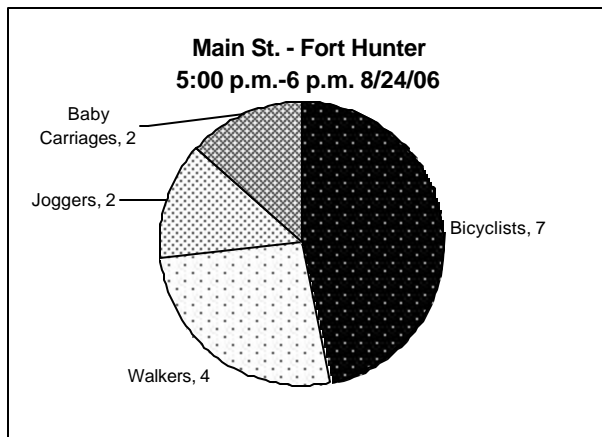
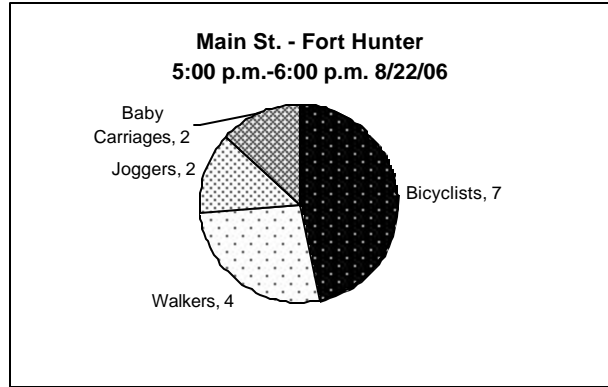
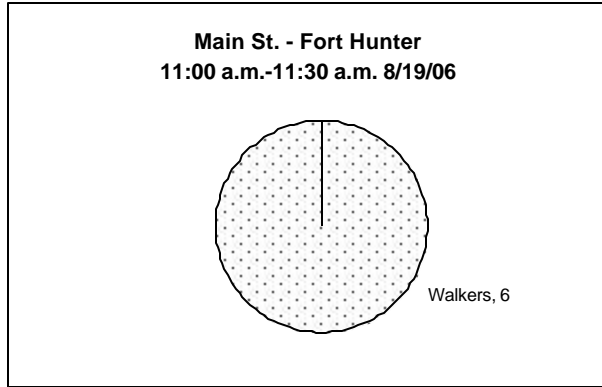


Herkimer County



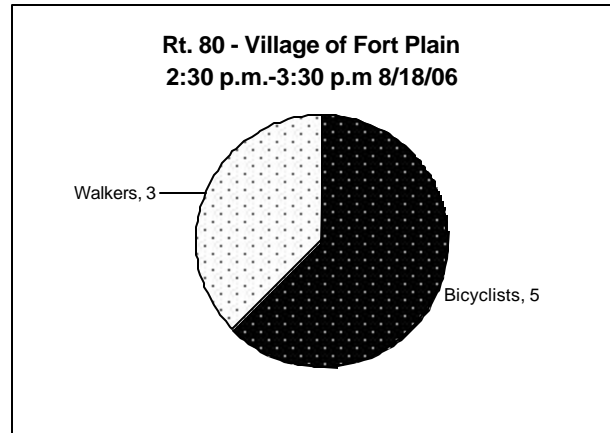
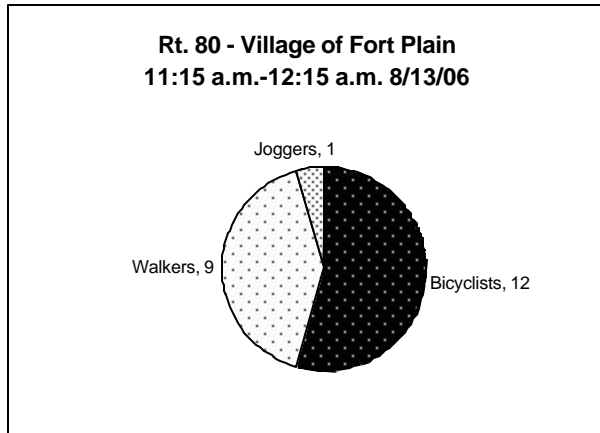
Appendix III Individual User Count Charts

Montgomery County

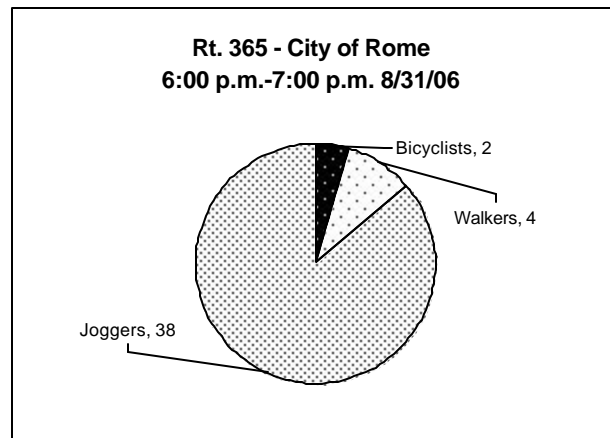
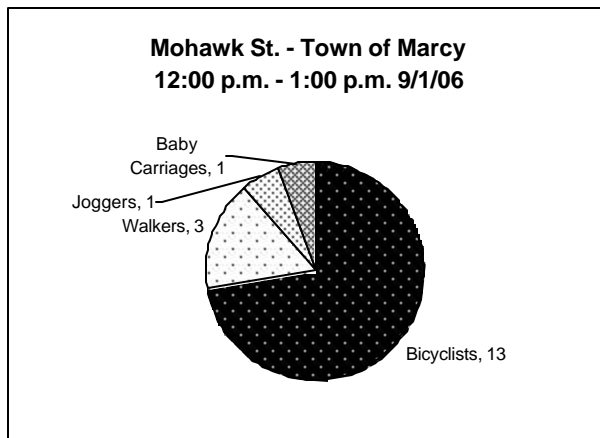


Appendix III Individual User Count Charts

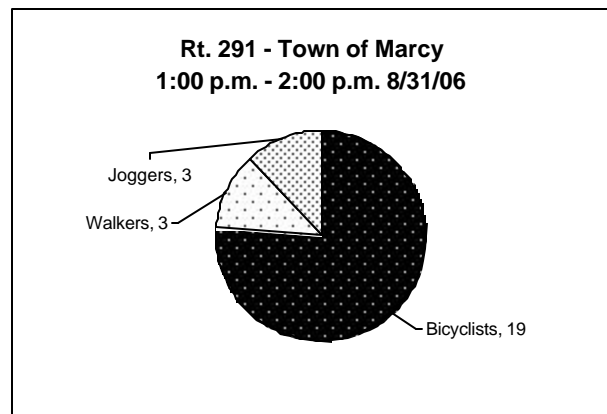
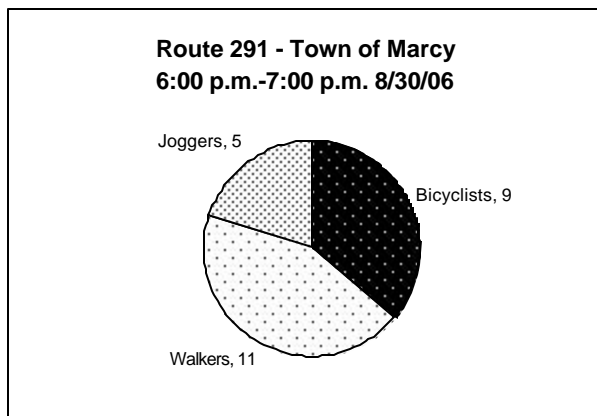
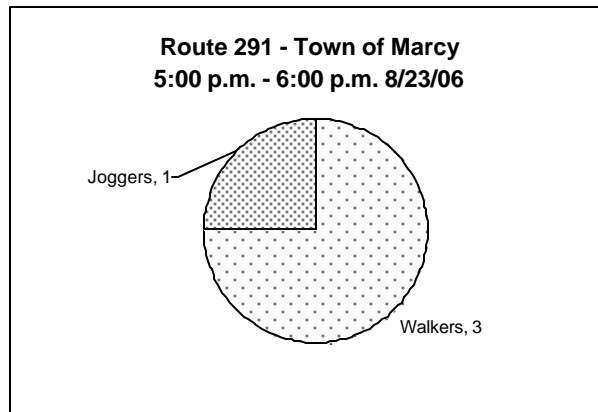
Montgomery County



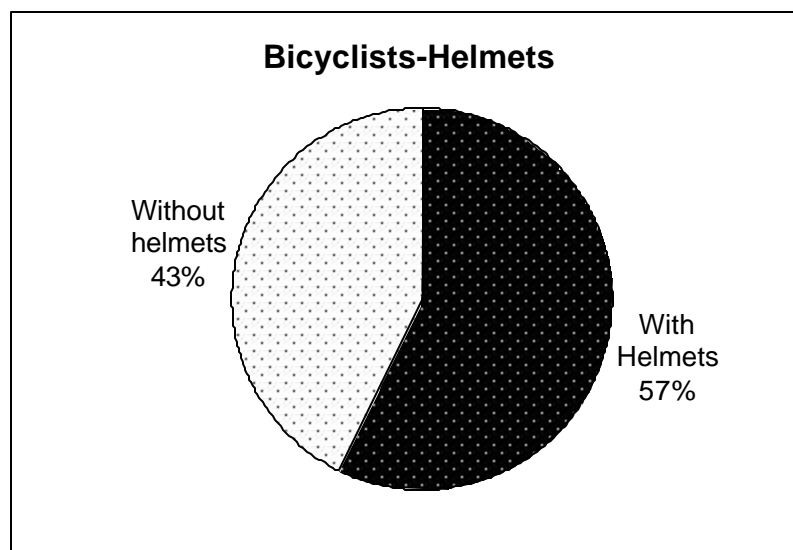
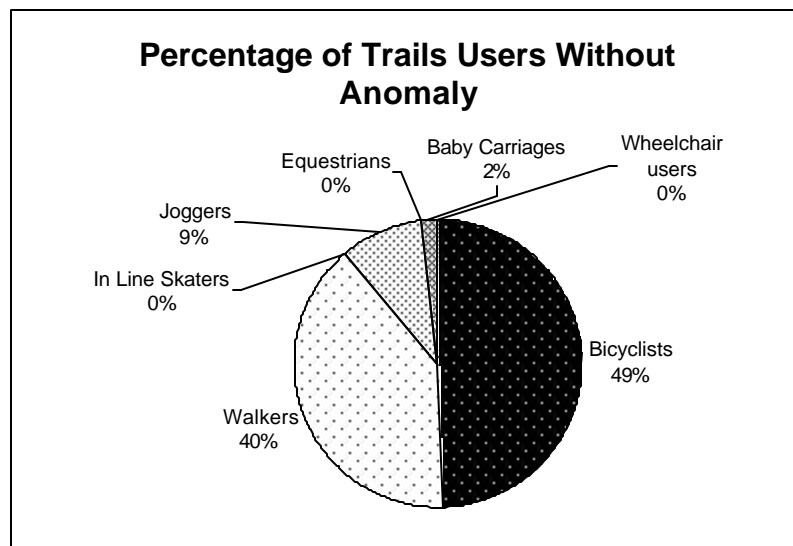
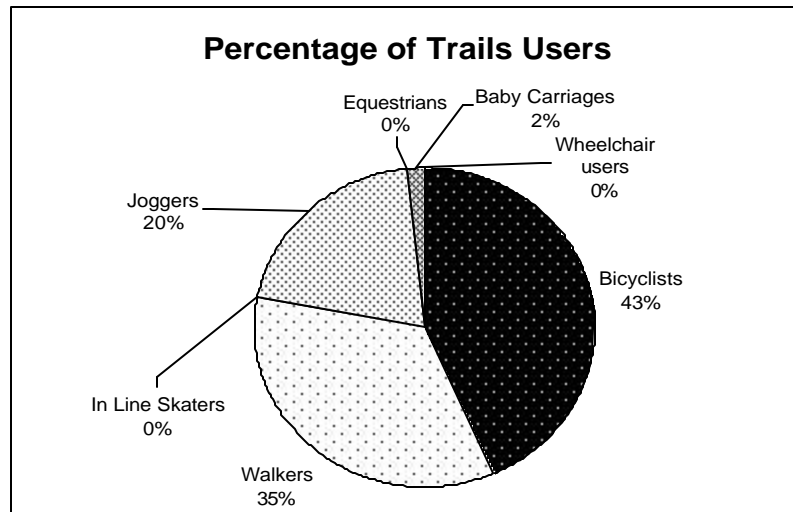
Oneida County



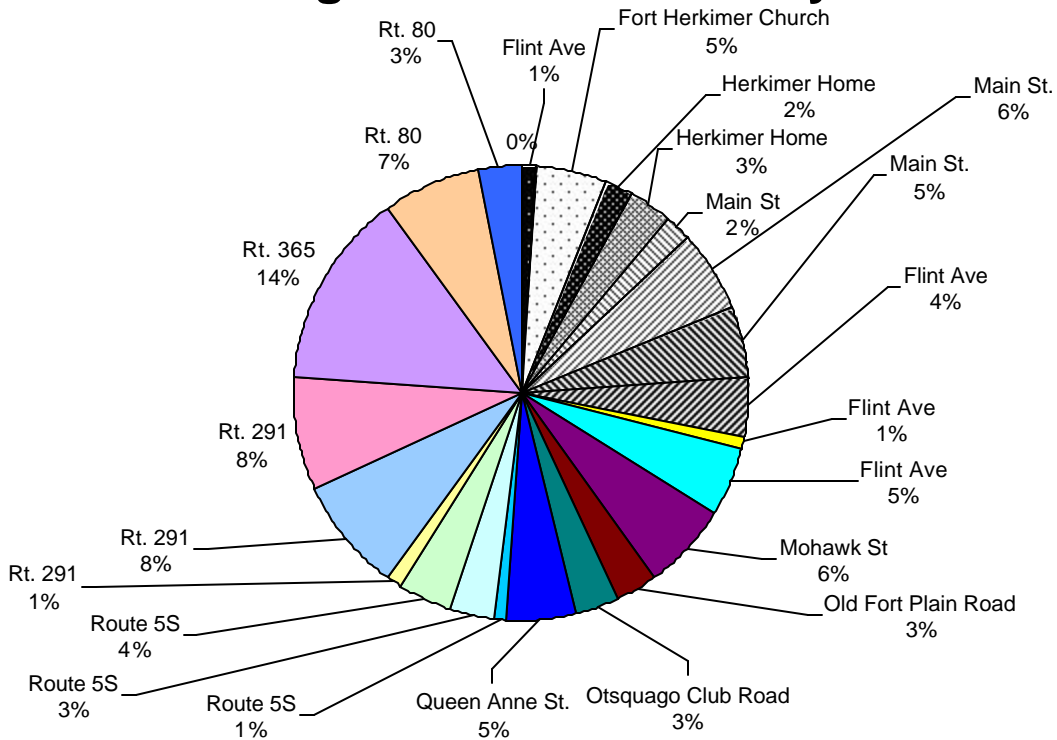
Oneida County



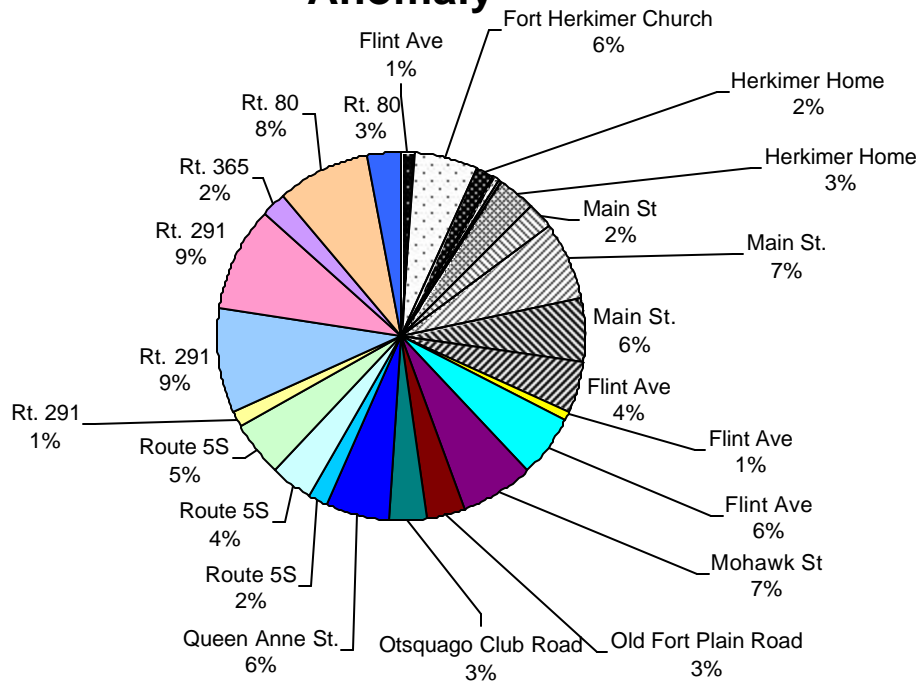
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Percentage of Users at Survey Site



Percentage of Users at Survey Site Without Anomaly



Works Cited

Lindsey, Greg, et al. Procedures for Estimating Urban Trail Traffic. Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning. Conference Paper. Kansas City. 28 October 2005.