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# Little Miami Scenic Trail Economic Study

Prepared For:  
The  
Ohio Greenways Initiative

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The greenways initiative has created new and exciting economic and recreational avenues for many people and communities throughout the entire United States, including here in Ohio. The Little Miami Scenic Trail located in southwest Ohio has proven to benefit all those who experience what the trail has to offer. Bicyclist, walkers, runners, and in-line skaters delight in having a safe, convenient, and scenic place to exercise and enjoy the great outdoors. In addition to trail users, residential and commercial property owners near the Little Miami Scenic Trail have welcomed the success and increased quality of life created from building multi-purpose trails. In recent years, communities, rails-to-trails organizations, and other greenway/bike path groups have been curious about the affects that such trails have had on the local economy and properties adjacent to and near the trail corridor. The reason to inquire and study about these affects is to provide interested communities with the needed information for determining whether the creation of such bike/hike trails would prove beneficial both from a quality of life and direct economic benefit standpoint.

As a result of the spreading interest and curiosity in multi-purpose trails, the Ohio Greenways project fathered the initiative for a statewide comprehensive greenway plan. With this initiative, Ohio Greenways retained Pflum, Klausmeier & Gehrum (PKG) Consultants, Inc. to study the economic impacts of the Little Miami Scenic Trail (LMST) on local and regional communities. In addition with the economic study, the Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana (OKI) Regional Planning Commission was retained to conduct a trail user study.

This Little Miami Scenic Trail Economic Study, conducted by PKG, details the effects the trail is having on residential and commercial property located near and adjacent to the

trail. The central focus of this study was to survey residential and commercial property owners and real estate agents about general trail issues, property values, trail related business activity, and the buying and selling of residential and commercial property in the area. The results of this study will help trail managers and planners to better serve trail neighbors and to plan for future trails in southwest Ohio as well as the rest of the state.

This LMST Economic Study is broken into three separate survey sections. The first section focuses on the results of a mailed residential and commercial property owner and occupant survey. The second segment details the results of in-person interviews of businesses located adjacent to and near the trail. The last section details the phone surveys of local realtors and realty companies who have listed and closed on properties in communities along the Little Miami Scenic Trail. Each survey section outlines the methodology and findings.

The residential, business and real estate surveys showed that the trail is considered a valued asset to residential and business interest. Many of those surveyed loved the trail for its beauty, convenience, accessibility and purpose. As an exercise facility, the Little Miami Scenic Trail proves successful and heavily used to improve one's health, even during the "off-seasons." A vast amount of people commented on the joy of hearing and watching visitors enjoying the trail. Seeing everyone laughing and talking shows the enjoyment and appreciation of those using the trail.

This study examines how the Little Miami Scenic Trail can be a strong asset for a community's market viability and can be used as a market enhancement tool. Overall, from an analysis of the surveys, each group surveyed felt that the trail has improved community pride and has provided a successful way to preserve scenic open space. Additionally, the Little Miami Scenic Trail has been perceived to increase property values and the economic activity in all the communities along the trail.

## PROPERTY OWNER SURVEYS

### Methodology

In March 1998, 231 residents and property owners adjacent to the Little Miami Scenic Trail were sent a survey concerning their opinions and feelings toward the trail. The survey was mailed out to people who own, rent or lease residential and commercial property adjacent to and within ¼ mile of the Little Miami Scenic Trail. Property owners within the study area were identified from Clermont County's GIS database by the Little Miami Incorporated. This survey was modeled after the survey used for *The Impacts of Rail-Trails: A Study of the Users and Property Owners from Three Trails* study conducted by the National Park Service and Penn State University in 1990. See Appendix. A comparison between the national study results and this study's results (where applicable) illustrates how the Little Miami Scenic Trail relates to trails of the same nature elsewhere in the United States. The purpose of this survey was to examine how property owners and their households view the affects that the trail has had on their quality of life, property values and their household's usage of the trail. The questions used allowed for straightforward and open-ended responses. Of the 231 surveys mailed, 61 property owners completed and returned this voluntary survey for a 26% response rate. These completed surveys account for 61 separate households representing 195 individuals and an average of three people per household.

### Findings

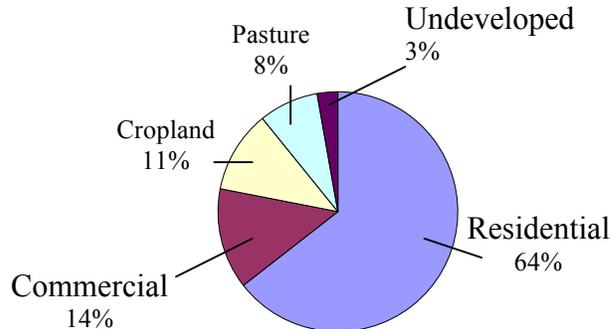
A relatively equal amount of males (27) and females (34) completed the survey which represented a wide range of age groups (28-80 years old) for an average age of 46 years. Of the 195 individual household members represented by the survey, 157 members (81%) have used the trail in the past twelve months. The 61 respondents and their household members have visited the Little Miami Scenic Trail a total of 3,195 times in

the past 12 months for an average of 20 trips per person.

*Property Description of Those Surveyed*

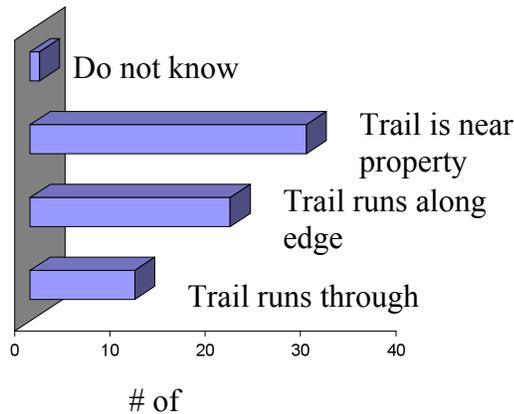
Eighty-seven percent of the property owners surveyed have a house or dwelling unit on their property, of which sixty-nine percent responded that it was their principle residence. Residential rental property accounted for twenty percent of the dwelling types. Respondents were asked to categorize how their property is used. The five categories included residential, commercial, cropland, pasture, and undeveloped. Respondents were instructed to check all that would apply to their property. Sixty-four percent of the land owned by those surveyed is primarily residential. Nineteen percent of the land is used for crop and pastureland. Commercial property accounted for 14% of the land owned by those surveyed.

Graph 1: Part I Question 6--How is your



Most of the residents (46%) live near the Little Miami Scenic Trail, but their property does not immediately abut the trail. Thirty-four percent of the property owners' land runs immediately adjacent to the trail's edge, while 18% have the trail running through their property. The majority (72%) of the homes faces the trail. Most of the homes that face the trail do not abut the trail. Instead their property abuts the road and the trail is on the other side of the road.

Graph 2: Part I Question 8--Where is the Little Miami Scenic Trail in relation to your property?



The distance of a respondent's home range from ten feet to 3000 feet away from the trail, with a median distance of 100 feet. Their property sizes also varied greatly, from a quarter acre to 400 acres, with a median lot size of approximately 2.91 acres.

#### *Property Ownership*

Owning their property before the opening of the trail was true for 72% of those surveyed and the median year of purchasing the property was 1987. The most recent purchase occurred in the beginning of 1998. Of 17 respondents who purchased their property after the trail was built, all viewed the trail to have added to the property's purchase appeal. No property owner felt that the trail detracted from the property's appeal when purchasing the property.

#### *Trail Effects on Surrounding Neighbors*

Most residents identified no problems attributable to the trail. Twenty-six of the respondents reported virtually no occurrences of any problems within the past 12 months. The table below shows the percentage of those surveyed that reported that they had not experienced any occurrences of the problems listed because of the Little Miami Scenic Trail and its users during the past twelve months.

TABLE 1: How many times have you experienced each of the following problems as a result of the Little Miami Scenic Trail And its users during the past twelve months?

|  | Percent who reported no occurrences |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Illegal motor vehicles/motorcycles use   | 70%                                 |
| Litter on/near my property               | 55%                                 |
| Loitering on/near the trail              | 63%                                 |
| Trespassing onto my property             | 82%                                 |
| Users harass my animals                  | 96%                                 |
| Vandalism of my property                 | 93%                                 |
| Cars park on/near my property            | 75%                                 |
| Dog manure on/near my property           | 86%                                 |
| Fruit/vegetables/crops picked or damaged | 98%                                 |
| Users ask to use phone/bathroom, etc.    | 82%                                 |
| Unleashed and roaming pets               | 75%                                 |
| Noise from trail                         | 77%                                 |
| Burglary of my property                  | 95%                                 |
| Discourteous, rude users                 | 82%                                 |
| Lack of trail maintenance                | 84%                                 |
| Loss of privacy                          | 80%                                 |

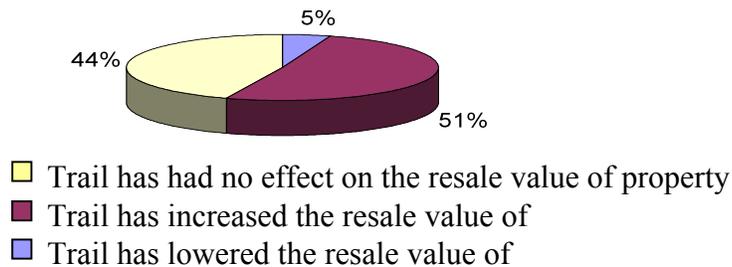
The least frequent problems reported were burglary, animal harassment, and picked/damaged crops. Minor problems identified to be associated with the trail were litter on/near property and loitering on/near the trail. These problems were cited by 25 (45%) and 21 (37%) respondents, respectively. The most actual number of occurrences reported was the loss of privacy, with 4 people (7%) experiencing this problem everyday because of the trail's close proximity. Litter was reported as the second highest problem in terms of actual number of occurrences. Eighteen (18%) felt that a lack of restrooms was a problem associated with the trail. According to the OKI *Little Miami Scenic Trail User Study*, trail users ranked the lack of restrooms as their most important problem.

#### *Trail's Effects on Property Values*

Many property owners feel that the Little Miami Scenic Trail either has increased (51%) or has not effected (44%) the resale value of their property. Virtually no one believed that the trail had or would decrease the resale value of his or her property. The trail is credited

by those surveyed to have increased residential property values by an average of 12 percent. One respondent reported that their commercial property increased in value by 375% due to its close location near the trail.

Graph 3: Part II Question 6—How do you think being located near the LMST has affected the resale



If trying to sell their property, 89% reported that the trail would make it easier to sell. Only 6 of 55 respondents felt that it would be more difficult to sell their property because of their proximity to the trail.

#### *Public Benefits Received from the LMST*

The survey asked respondents about the public benefits that the Little Miami Scenic Trail has offered to its surrounding communities. The following table breaks down the importance of each public benefit that the trail has offered. On scale of 1-7, with 1 being not at all important and 7 being extremely important, respondents were to give each possible benefit associated with the trail a level of importance. Preserving the Little Miami River's beauty and protecting its water quality were rated extremely important. Preserving open space, health and fitness, and bicyclist and pedestrian safety were also considered an important public benefit connected to the trail. These same benefits were ranked the highest in the National Park Service's Study and OKI's *Little Miami Scenic Trail User Study*. Interestingly, although both businesses and residents reported that there were positive economic benefits of the trail, public tourism and business development benefits topped the "not at all important" list.

TABLE 2: On a scale of 1-7, how important are the following public benefits that the Little Miami Scenic Trail might have for its surrounding communities.

|                      | Preserving open space | Recreation opportunities | Aesthetic beauty | Tourism and business dev. |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| Not at all important | 7.4%                  | 7.0%                     | 5.4%             | 18.5%                     |
| ↓                    | 5.6%                  | 1.8%                     | 0.0%             | 7.4%                      |
|                      | 1.9%                  | 5.3%                     | 3.6%             | 11.1%                     |
|                      | 11.1%                 | 8.8%                     | 8.9%             | 7.4%                      |
|                      | 9.3%                  | 19.3%                    | 10.7%            | 20.4%                     |
| ↓                    | 22.2%                 | 26.3%                    | 35.7%            | 13.0%                     |
| Extremely important  | 42.6%                 | 31.6%                    | 35.7%            | 22.2%                     |

|                      | Bicyclist and pedestrian safety | Traffic reduction and alternatives | Education of nature/envIRON. | Health and fitness |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Not at all important | 7.1%                            | 15.1%                              | 7.4%                         | 5.5%               |
| ↓                    | 1.8%                            | 11.3%                              | 3.7%                         | 3.6%               |
|                      | 5.4%                            | 11.3%                              | 11.1%                        | 5.5%               |
|                      | 12.5%                           | 20.8%                              | 16.7%                        | 12.7%              |
|                      | 7.1%                            | 11.3%                              | 18.5%                        | 9.1%               |
| ↓                    | 28.6%                           | 9.4%                               | 11.1%                        | 25.5%              |
| Extremely important  | 37.5%                           | 20.8%                              | 31.5%                        | 38.2%              |

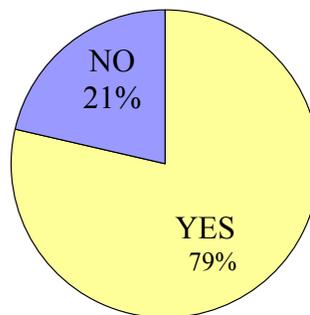
|                      | Access for disabled people | Preserve beauty of river | Protect water quality of river |
|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Not at all important | 7.4%                       | 5.4%                     | 9.1%                           |
| ↓                    | 1.9%                       | 1.8%                     | 7.3%                           |
|                      | 7.4%                       | 1.8%                     | 0.0%                           |
|                      | 22.2%                      | 8.9%                     | 14.5%                          |
|                      | 7.4%                       | 3.6%                     | 9.1%                           |
| ↓                    | 16.7%                      | 32.1%                    | 10.9%                          |
| Extremely important  | 37.0%                      | 46.4%                    | 49.1%                          |

### *The Little Miami Scenic Trail as a Neighbor*

When asked of their satisfaction level of being a Little Miami Scenic Trail neighbor, 72% of the neighbors responded that they are satisfied with having the trail adjacent to their property. Only 16 of 58 respondents reported that they were unsatisfied with having the trail as a neighbor. The majority (84%) said that living near the trail is the same or better than they had expected when compared to their initial reaction to the idea of living near the trail.

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of those surveyed feel that the trail has improved and maintained the quality of their neighborhoods, while seven people feel that it has worsened the neighborhood's quality. Based on their experience with the Little Miami Scenic Trail, 79% would recommend living near a trail to other landowners.

Graph 4: Part V Question 3— Based on your experience with the LMST, would you recommend living near a trail to other landowners?



Of property owners prior to the trail's construction, 88% considered themselves supportive of the initial Little Miami Scenic Trail idea. Three respondents felt that they were initially opposed to the trail. Overall, 93% feel that living next to the Little Miami Scenic Trail is better than living near the previous abandoned right-of-way. Less than one percent believe that living near the trail is now worse than before its construction.

*Respondent's Additional Comments*

Those surveyed were also asked to offer any additional comments, concerns, or recommendations. Many took the time to write down additional comments about their feelings, attitude, and opinions surrounding the Little Miami Scenic Trail.

Positive comments were offered more than negative comments were. Many of those surveyed love the trail for its beauty, convenience, accessibility and purpose. As an exercise facility, the Little Miami Scenic Trail proves successful and heavily used to improve one's health, even during the "off-seasons." Those that take care of and maintain the LMST also received gratitude from some of those surveyed. For example, one respondent wrote that "the trail maintenance people and the park rangers are doing a great job and should keep up the great work."

A vast amount of people commented on the joy of hearing and watching visitors enjoying the trail. Seeing everyone laughing and talking shows the enjoyment and appreciation of those using the trail. Some residents love meeting new people due to the proximity of the trail to their home. However, a handful of residents viewed this a strong negative against living near the trail. These respondents felt a major loss of privacy as a result of trail users being so close to their homes.

The trail is a great place for all family members, especially children. The Little Miami Scenic Trail is "like owning your own Central Park." It is a safe place for walking, biking, or walking your dog. Some said that the trail had "no disadvantages" and that "only positive experiences" had been had.

The environmental preservation aspect of the trail pleases many of those surveyed. Land protection and control comments show the awareness of residents to the trail's natural benefits. Many commented on the greatness of preserving and maintaining the natural

features of the trail's surroundings.

#### *Business Related Comments*

Others also commented that the trail is “good for small businesses” opportunities. One respondent also wrote that the trail has “helped a ‘dead’ section of town (Morrow).” One business, The Capricorn Refresh Shop, surveyed in this part of Morrow, believes that his business patronage and revenues have increased 100% and more than 20% respectively due to the trail. In addition to helping local businesses, several of those surveyed offered the additional comments that the trail has “increased the value of my property” and was “part of the reason for buying the property.”

#### *Problem Related Comments*

A small amount of negative comments surrounding the trail were also given on a handful of surveys. These comments referenced the loss of privacy and the rudeness of trail users. Other complaints included trail users littering and stealing, increased traffic, and the operation of a street sweeper in the early morning. In addition, one respondent commented that the trail does not “raise funds for local towns like we were promised to lower property taxes.” Two residents stated that there are “no advantages to living near the trail” and that the “trail is too much trouble.” Despite these few negative comments, nearly half reported virtually no occurrences of problems in the survey.

#### Recommendations

Those surveyed were asked to write down any recommendations for improving the management of the Little Miami Scenic Trail that would make a better neighborhood for them. Many offered suggestions for the trail including improved maintenance, trail improvements, new and improved signage, animal restrictions, and community trail programs. Mowing and weeding around the trail has been suggested to be done more often. One resident suggested solving this problem by allowing trail neighbors to mow

along the trail when doing their own lawns. Clearing the trail of leaves and snow during the fall and winter months was suggested by a few respondents. Upkeep of the trail itself by resurfacing it when needed should be considered in the near future. Other maintenance suggestions include topping off trees, which block neighbors evening sunlight, and picking up litter more often.

General trail improvements recommended by those surveyed to improve their life as a trail neighbor and user include adding trash barrels, public restroom facilities, resting areas, more parking locations and emergency phones. More specifically, one residents wrote that more trees are needed at the trail's entrance in Morrow and speed bumps on both the road and the trail where the two intersect to "make both parties aware of the dangers" ahead of them. Also, the "Caesar Creek view is completely obliterated as a result of the trail bridge construction... This view should be re-opened." Safety and visual concerns are a high priority for many residents.

Better signage is a concern for many of those surveyed. Suggestions for new and improved signs include no littering signs, road crossing signs, trail do's and don'ts, clearly designated parking, and yield or stop signs for bikers at all crossings to reduce the risk and number of accidents with farm machinery and vehicles. Making and posting rules regarding leashed animals and cleanup after animals should also be considered.

A handful of those surveyed were very interested in promoting and helping with trail related issues. One recommends that "trail management should annually or biannually visit trail neighbors to ask about problems or suggestions." Also recommended is a community group to help with the incoming trail suggestions and problems and perhaps a volunteer patrol team. These groups, as recommended by those surveyed, could promote the trail more and start "Community Clean-up/Fix-up Day or Green-up Day" throughout the entire year. One respondent in particular stated that "as a Juvenile Court Judge, I have

had youth clean parts of the trail, but I recommend that more public interest be taken in cleaning up the trail through groups like ‘Adopt-a-Mile.’” Similar trails across the country do have volunteer groups to help share general maintenance. Another suggested offering advice or guidance on how to protect the river and the property along the trail.

Recommended services to be done for the trail neighbors and the surrounding community include offering building materials (similar to the existing trail fences) to homeowners along the trail to build a fence to ensure privacy and prevent trespassing while still keeping with the scheme and look of the trail. To ensure safety, restricting the hours of trail usage, such as dawn to dusk hours, has been suggested. Lastly, one resident suggested that planners should get input from landowners about future trail planning decisions.

## **SURROUNDING BUSINESSES SURVEYS**

Obtaining the opinions business owners and managers have toward the trail is important in examining the areas' market viability and how the trail acts as a market enhancement tool. In order to grasp how businesses are affected by the trail, businesses near the trail were targeted for an in-person survey. Businesses in Loveland, South Lebanon, Morrow, Mather's Mill, Oregonia, and, Corwin, all along the Little Miami Scenic Trail, were included.

### Methodology

An inventory of the businesses located adjacent to and within ¼ mile of the trail was conducted in late September 1998. A total of 32 businesses were identified and recorded within the specified study area. Eighteen of these 32 businesses took part in the voluntary survey. The remaining 14 businesses did not partake in the survey because they refused, did not have the time or were not open at the time of the survey.

Once identified, businesses were surveyed between October 1998 and July 1999. The time period was extended because some businesses are trail oriented, only open during the spring and summer seasons. All 18 surveys conducted were in-person interviews and were given without prior notice. Surveyors were instructed to ask for the business owner or manager on duty. The short survey contained 13 questions pertaining to their business's relationship with and their feelings toward the Little Miami Scenic Trail. This survey was taken from the *Indianapolis Greenways Use and Management Project Data Report* conducted by the Graduate Planning Workshop Team from Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, which studied the Monon Trail in Indianapolis. The questions were slightly modified to accommodate the Little Miami Scenic Trail study. See Appendix for the full survey. Businesses were also questioned about their perceptions of how the trail has affected their patronage, revenues, and property values.

### Background

Morrow and Loveland, two major staging areas, contain the most businesses relatively close to the trail and offer the widest variety of businesses. Morrow contains the typical trail oriented shops and cafés including the Little Miami Canoe Rental, Capricorn's Refresh Shop, Short Stop Deli, and numerous convenient stores. Morrow has several local businesses such as a grocery store, drug store, hardware store, and a few gas stations. Full service restaurants such as Vic's Food and Spirits and Prime Cut Steak House are also located approximately two blocks off the trail. Many restaurants and businesses in Morrow are not immediately adjacent to the trail. However, most are still visible from the trail itself and its parking locations. The trail in Morrow runs right down the center of what used to be the town's main downtown street. Along this stretch are numerous vacant storefronts, which would be an ideal location for trail-oriented businesses and shops. One successful business, The Capricorn's Refresh Shop, is conveniently located here and relies solely on the trail for business.

In Loveland, more businesses are connected directly to the bike trail than in the other towns along the trail corridor. Like Morrow, Loveland has a wide variety of stores and eateries including the Kool Kow Café, Antiques Unique, and Trailside Café. Loveland has the oldest and most heavily used part of the trail running through the its historic downtown. Many antique stores are located in Loveland's historic downtown area, which many trail users visit during their trip to the area. According to the owner of Path Through the Attic Antique, trail users often come back when not using the trail to make purchases.

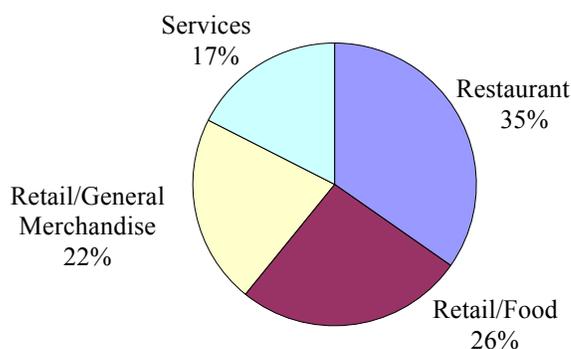
South Lebanon, Oregonia, and Corwin each contain two small retail businesses respectively. All of these businesses were little cafés or pizza shops, with the occasional

rental/recreational purpose combined within the eatery. Most of these cafes look new or recently updated and have bicycle racks in front for their patrons.

### Findings

Most of the businesses (48%) near the Little Miami Scenic Trail can be described as small retail businesses that sell food, refreshments or general merchandise. Eight of the 18 businesses surveyed are generalized as an eatery, restaurant or tavern. Four business are service oriented businesses providing a variety of services including gasoline, video games, billiards, bicycle and in-line skate rentals, and canoe rentals.

Graph 5: Question 1—What type of business do you own or manage near the Little Miami Scenic Trail?

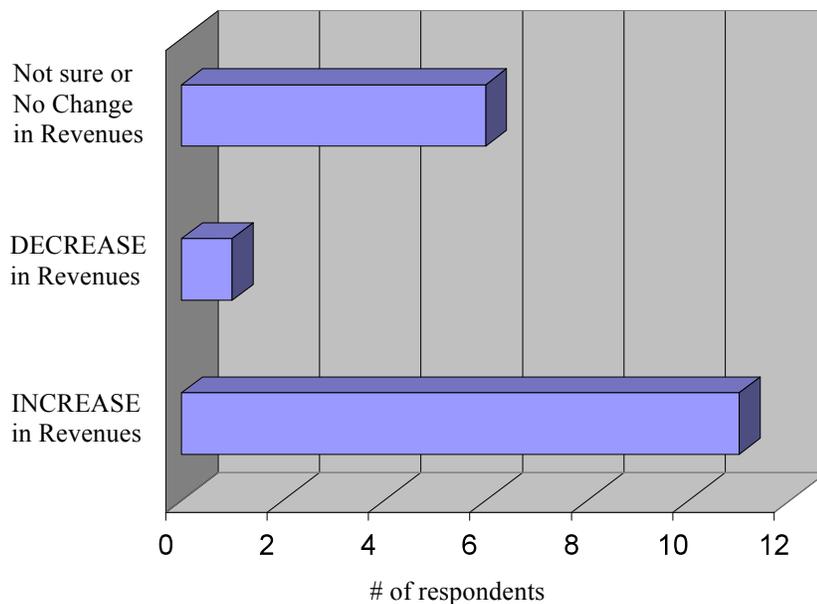


Sixty-one percent of the businesses surveyed have been at their location for more than 5 years. Several of the surveyed businesses have been opened for numerous years; two businesses in have been open for at least 30 years or more. Seven of the 18 businesses have been open for less than three years, all of which opened after their respective part of their trail had opened. Five of out these seven businesses are trail-oriented eateries offering quick meals, snacks, ice cream, bicycle racks, and recreational rental equipment for their customers. When asked for any additional comments, these five businesses attribute the trail as the only or a main reason for opening their business. Because of this, the trail can be credited with bringing new jobs and new economic activity to their

respective communities. The other two businesses opened after the trail made no connection between the existence of the trail and the opening and location of their business.

The survey asked each business how the trail generally affected their patronage, revenues, and property values. Sixty-one percent believe that the trail has increased their patronage and revenues. Specifically, one out of three business owners believe that their patronage was increased by more than 20%. Most of those who believed that the trail increased their patronage by more than 20%, actively market their business toward trail users. One out of every four businesses believes that their revenues increased by more than 20% as a result of the trail. This belief is supported by OKI's *Trail User Study*,

Graph 6: Question 4—Generally, how do you think the trail has affected your business revenues?



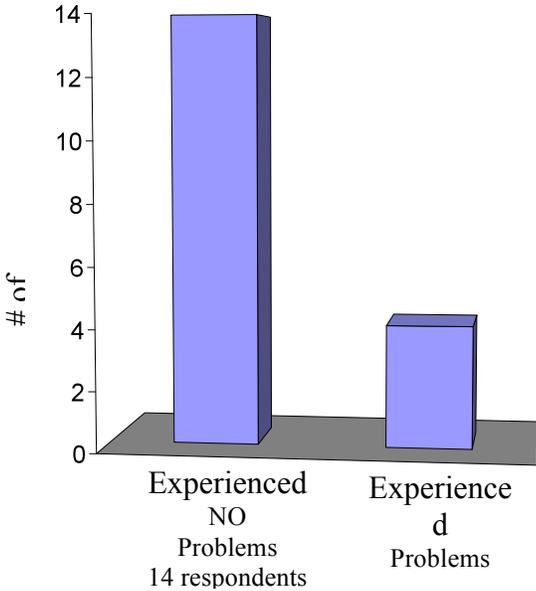
which found that trail users spend an average of \$17.47 per person per visit at the Little Miami Scenic Trail. Of this amount, \$6.11 is spent on food and beverages either at restaurants or convenient stores.

One out of every four businesses believes that their property values increased by more than 20% as a result of the trail. Overall, nearly half (45%) of those surveyed agree that the trail has caused their property values to increase. One business, The Capricorn Refresh Shop, surveyed in Morrow, believes that his business patronage and revenues have increased 100% and more than 20% respectively due to the trail.

Marketing tactics used by various businesses range from elaborate Web sites, to simple flyers, brochures, and advertisements in bike magazines. Seven of the 18 businesses do use marketing strategies specifically targeted at trail users. Capricorn's Refresh Shop, located in Morrow, sponsors bike races throughout the year, has a Web site, and has advertised in a cyclist magazine. The Corwin Peddler, which has been featured with the trail in the *Cincinnati Enquirer's Weekend* section, actively contacts church groups and corporations to use the trail and the café for group activities.

The majority (78%) of businesses surveyed had not experienced any problems attributed to the trail. Similar to the National Parks Service Study, the majority of owners had reported no increase in problems after the trail opened. A minimal amount of problems were reported by business owners along the Little Miami Scenic Trail. Two of the 18 businesses that experienced problems cited insufficient customer parking and traffic congestion. These problems cited are similar to those experienced on other trails across the country including the Monon Trail in Indianapolis (Indianapolis Greenways Data Report). Two other businesses also reported experiencing problems related to the Little Miami Scenic Trail. One business cited that a stolen sign was attributable to the trail. The other cited vandalism to be a problem.

Graph 7: Have you experienced any problems that you attribute to the trail?



Business owners and the on-duty managers were also asked if their business is informed of upcoming special events at the trail. Informing businesses of upcoming events would allow owners and employees to prepare for a higher influx of customers and specially market or advertise their business on that day. With active participation, businesses could target the more than normal amount of people, therefore, increasing their patronage and, in turn, possible revenues.

The results of this question proved similar to the Monon Trail Study in Indianapolis. The majority (56%) felt that they were not informed about the trail's special events. Seven of the 18 business felt that they were informed about the special events and one respondent was not sure. However, this could depend on which city or town the business was located

in. Eight of the 9 businesses in South Lebanon and Morrow felt that they were not informed; the other was not sure. In Oregonia, Corwin and Loveland, 7 of the 9 businesses felt that they were informed. The other two felt that they were not. The majority (56%) believes that special events did not affect their business activities. Five businesses believe that special events had a positive affect on their business, while two believed that its affect was negative. The more businesses are aware and warned of upcoming special events, the better prepared receptive they can be. Knowledge of such events could provide businesses with the ability to run special sale prices or rental packages targeted toward those involved in the events nearby.

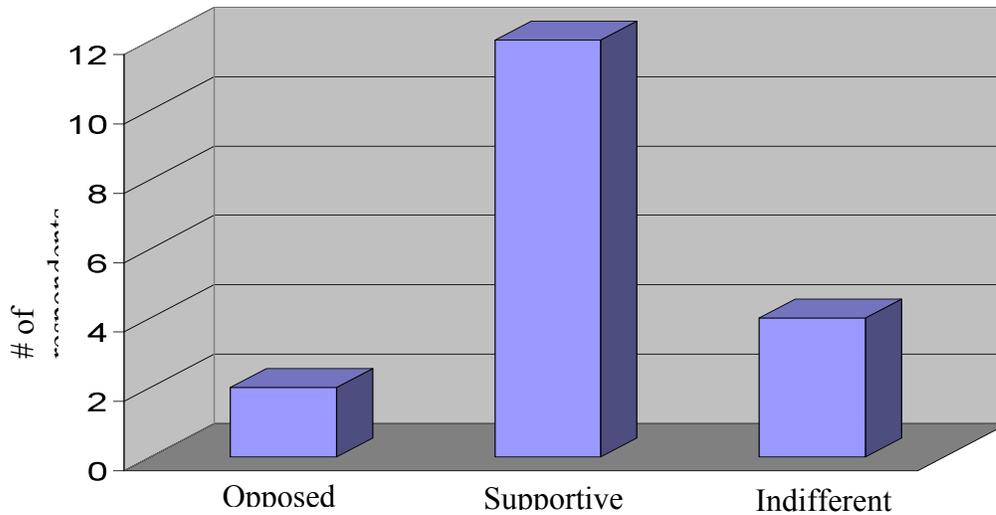
Business owners were questioned on how supportive they generally were to the trail before and after it opened. Eleven of the 18 (61%) business respondents were generally supportive of the trail before it opened in their respective community. Only one respondent was opposed to the trail prior to its opening. This objection was not toward the idea of a recreational multi-use trail, but instead was opposed to the actual conversion of the railroad lines and using semi-tractor trailers instead of rail cars to transport goods. The remaining six respondents were indifferent to the trail or the question was not applicable.

Similarly, 67% (12 respondents) are generally supportive of the trail now. The respondent opposed prior to the opening of the trail is still opposed to the trail. One other business owner is now opposed to the trail, in part because of the increase of traffic in front of his business generated by trail users.

Overall satisfaction of having the trail near their business was questioned. Most (65%) were satisfied with having the Little Miami Scenic Trail as a neighbor to their business.

The only unsatisfied business was once supportive of the trail but is now opposed. Five respondents claimed that they were undecided.

Graph 8: Are you generally opposed or generally supportive of the trail now?



Generally, businesses immediately adjacent to the trail were oriented toward trail users and tried to accommodate the needs and request of their patrons. Most were pleased with the trail as a neighbor. It was noted that more public restrooms and more parking for the trail would eliminate the minor problems that some businesses are currently facing.

## REAL ESTATE SURVEY SUMMARY

### Methodology

In order to gain a better understanding of how the Little Miami Scenic Trail has affected property values in the surrounding areas, local realtors were surveyed about its effects. Realtors were selected by calling realty companies listed in the telephone book, specifically those who were located or advertise property within the study area. These realtors and realty companies were also asked to recommend additional realtors and realty companies familiar with the area to be surveyed. Twelve of the fifteen realtors contacted have had or currently have property listed adjacent to and near the trail. The short telephone interview consisted of questions concerning selling ease, selling price, and selling speed of residential, commercial and farmland properties immediately adjacent and within two blocks of the trail. The two-block distance off the trail has been traditionally used in other greenways studies. The survey was taken directly from the National Park Service's *The Impacts of Rail-Trails: A Study of the Users and Property Owners from Three Trails* conducted in 1990. See Appendix for full survey.

### Findings

When considering residential property, 27% felt that property immediately adjacent to the trail is easier to sell and sold at a higher price than those farther away are. Similarly, 25% agreed the same is true for property within two blocks of the trail. Two realtors surveyed believe that the trail causes a nearby property to sell faster than those farther than two blocks do. The following table breaks down the realtors responses of how they perceive the trail has effected residential property immediately adjacent to the Little Miami Scenic Trail.

Table 3: Part II Questions 1, 2, 3—If a home is immediately adjacent to the Little Miami Scenic Trail, will the trail make the home:

| Homes immediately adjacent to trail  |               |                                       |               |                                       |               |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Question 1                           | # of realtors | Question 2                            | # of realtors | Question 3                            | # of realtors |
| <b>Easier</b> to sell                | 3             | <b>Faster</b> to sell                 | 2             | Sell for <b>more</b>                  | 3             |
| <b>Harder</b> to sell                | 0             | <b>Slower</b> to sell                 | 0             | Sell for <b>less</b>                  | 0             |
| Has <b>no effect</b> on selling ease | 8             | Has <b>no effect</b> on selling speed | 9             | Has <b>no effect</b> on selling price | 8             |

The table below details how realtors perceive the trail’s effect on residential property within two blocks of the trail, but not immediately adjacent to the trail. Nine out of 12 realtors surveyed said the trail has no effect at all on the selling ease and selling price of residential property within two blocks of the trail. Ten of 12 realtors also felt that the trail had no effect on the selling speed of properties within two blocks. All the realtors surveyed feel that the Little Miami Scenic Trail has a no negative effect on a residential property’s selling ease, price or speed.

Table 4: Part III Questions 1, 2, 3—If a home is within two blocks of the Little Miami Scenic Trail, but not immediately adjacent to the trail, will the trail make the home:

| Homes within two blocks of trail     |               |                                       |               |                                       |               |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Question 1                           | # of realtors | Question 2                            | # of realtors | Question 3                            | # of realtors |
| <b>Easier</b> to sell                | 3             | <b>Faster</b> to sell                 | 2             | Sell for <b>more</b>                  | 3             |
| <b>Harder</b> to sell                | 0             | <b>Slower</b> to sell                 | 0             | Sell for <b>less</b>                  | 0             |
| Has <b>no effect</b> on selling ease | 9             | Has <b>no effect</b> on selling speed | 10            | Has <b>no effect</b> on selling price | 9             |

Realtors’ intrinsic feelings about how the trail affects neighboring and nearby properties showed a high level of no effects on the selling ease, speed and price. However, many felt that the trail was considered an asset to a property and often advertise the trail in relative listings. One way to explain this is that no data is currently available to determine

the direct effects that trails have had on these factors. Attempts were made in this study to analyze property transfer data to determine the trail's direct affects. Unfortunately, the factors involved in gauging what makes a property's value rise are numerous. Similar greenway studies have also encountered this same problem.

When asked about commercial property near the trail, half of the realtors who have listed and closed such properties feel that property adjacent to the trail resulted in a higher selling price because of the trail's proximity. One realtor commented that the trail's affect on "property values depends on the area. For example, Corwin's values are up around town, but not in the country." None of those surveyed believed that the trail caused farmland or commercial properties to depreciate in value or sell for less. Eight out of 9 realtors who have listed and closed farmland properties believed that the trail has had no affect on the selling price of farmland.

Close proximity to the trail is considered by realtors an asset to a listed property. "People have called requesting property near the trail, many horse owners." When asked, eight out of ten realtors stated that they do advertise the trail when listing a property because it "is an asset to the property" and "enhances the community." See Appendix for sample listings advertising the trail. In addition, some stated that the trail does enhance and raise property values of nearby properties. "In Oregonia, the trail has improved the area and given them a sense of pride." One realtor credited the trail for drawing in businesses to available commercial properties.

Realtors were also asked for any additional comments concerning the overall effect of the Little Miami Scenic Trail to the adjacent properties. The consensus was that the trail has had a "positive impact" on the surrounding communities and properties. One realtor stated that "people have taken more pride in their home's visual appearance because of their proximity to the trail." Many of the realtors surveyed actually use the trail and enjoy

having the trail as a recreational facility. Similar to some of the surveyed property owners' comments, one realtor expressed that the trail is "like having a park in the back yard."