

# Trail User Survey Workbook

How to conduct a survey and win support for your trail

Sample Surveys and Methods

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# I. Overview

## Trail User Surveys

The purpose of this manual is to help you implement a trail user survey and determine the economic impact that your trail has on your community. Let's begin by looking at the steps involved in a survey project.

- Establish the goals of the project - what do you want to learn?
- Determine who you want to interview
- Choose a data collection methodology
- Create your questionnaire
- Collect the data - ask the questions
- Analyze the data
- Produce a report

## Establishing Goals

The first step in conducting a trail user survey is to determine precisely what information is to be gathered and how it is to be used. If you do not have clear goals for your project, the survey results will be unclear and their usefulness will be limited. Therefore, begin by determining who will be surveyed, what they will be asked, and how their responses will assist you in attaining the survey goals. Some typical goals include learning more about:

- Trail usage characteristics - what trail visitors do, when and why they do it
- Demographics of trail users or visitors - age, gender, residence, etc.
- Trail users' perceptions of the trail - maintenance, security, cleanliness
- Spending related to trail activities - bike or equipment purchase, food, water, etc.

## Sample Selection

- **Who to Survey**

In most cases, you will be interested in gathering information from individuals who actually use your trail. After all, we are conducting a trail user survey. But, you may also be interested in gathering information from adjacent property owners, businesses that are adjacent to the trail or businesses that provide products and services for trail users (bike shops, B & B's, motels, restaurants). Who you want to gather information from is referred to as the **target group**.

- **How many to Survey**

You also need to determine how many people will be surveyed. This is called your **sample size**. The larger the sample, the more accurately the results will reflect the target group. A decision about your sample size should be based on such factors as: project timeline, budget and necessary degree of precision. Consider 300 completed surveys to be a minimum number for your sample size.

- **When to Survey**

Most trail user surveys are conducted between May and October; these are the months when most trails see their heaviest usage. However, if you are also interested in winter usage such as snowmobiles or cross-country skiing, you may want to collect data over a 12-month period. Your decision as to when to survey will depend upon the goals of the survey and the observed seasonal usage of the trail.

## II. Methods of Collecting Data

Even before you begin developing your trail user survey form, it is important to decide how you are going to collect the data and how you are going to analyze it. The following describes both of these aspects of your trail user survey.

There are several ways that you can collect the information you desire from your trail users. Pay particular attention to which method will be manageable for you over a several month period and which method will not be burdensome to the trail users. Each of the methods described below has been successfully used by other trail groups. Each provides very similar results.

### Methodology 1 - Self Selecting - Drop Box

This data collection methodology is the least expensive and easiest to implement. You will need two items that can be placed at trail access points or at trailside establishments.

One is a holder for survey forms. Brochure holders can be obtained at any office supply store. The preferred style holds an 8 1/2 x 11 inch survey form folded three times (like you would fold a letter). They usually have a hole in the top so that they can be attached to a wooden post with a screw. Most do not include a cover to protect the survey forms from rain, so try and place them under cover at trail information boards.



The second item is a trail survey collection box. This is a box for the deposit of completed surveys. They can be either purchased ready-made or constructed to your specifications. The lid should be secured in a way that prevents unauthorized access to the completed survey forms. The collection boxes should be placed close to the survey form holders. Trail users take one of the survey forms, complete the form, and place it in the survey collection box. Periodically during the course of the survey period, authorized personnel collect the completed survey forms and deliver them for data input.

## **Methodology 2 - Self Selecting - Mail Back**

This data collection methodology is similar to the first method described but somewhat more expensive to implement. The primary difference is that instead of using trail survey collection boxes, completed surveys are mailed to a central location.

As with the first method, you will need some brochure holders to hold the survey forms at trail access points and trail related businesses. You will also need to obtain a reply mail permit from the local post office. You will have to pay for each survey form that is mailed back to you. The cost of the permit and the cost per returned survey vary with the volume of completed surveys you anticipate on an annual basis. Check with your local postmaster regarding current rates and the plan that best fits your anticipated volume.

The completed forms are received at a designated address, usually a post office box, and collected periodically during the survey period for data input.

## **Methodology 3 - Personal Intercepts**

This data collection methodology provides the greatest degree of control but is the most expensive and difficult to implement.

This method involves “intercepting” trail users and asking them to complete a survey. Staff, college interns or volunteers are stationed at trail access points. As users exit the trail they are asked to participate in the survey. The survey form can be completed by the trail user or the individual who is administering the intercept (questions would be read to the trail user like an interview). Completed survey forms are collected at a central location for data input.

To be effective and obtain a cross section of trail users, intercepts must be conducted randomly across all daylight hours and every day of the week. Over the course of a survey period, this will entail hundreds of hours of effort. Those conducting the intercepts must be trained in advance on how to be effective in asking for trail user participation. If the survey is going to be conducted like an interview, additional training needs to be conducted on how to elicit responses so as not to bias the results.

## **Other Methodologies**

The following methodologies require an existing database and professional assistance is advised. For those reasons, these are not recommended for trail user surveys.

- ◆ Direct Mail
- ◆ Web Site Based
- ◆ E-mail

# III. Designing a Survey Form

Four sample survey forms are included in the Appendix of this manual and on the CD as Word© documents to permit editing of the survey questions to fit your specific needs. Each template has been specifically designed for a particular type of trail - metropolitan, suburban, rural non-motorized multi-use, and rural motorized multi-use. You will note that the questions vary slightly to accommodate these differences. The questions have been “field-tested” on other trail surveys and have proven to provide reliable and consistent responses.

The most important consideration when designing a survey is to select those questions that will best help you achieve the goals established for your project. Review your goals and stick to them.

Keep the number of questions in the survey to a minimum. Generally it is better to keep the survey form to a maximum size of one side of one page. For each question, ask yourself “What will I do with the information gathered in response to this question?” AND “Will this information help me to achieve the goals of the survey?” If you can’t give yourself a reasonable answer, leave the question out.

Because you will probably be working with hundreds of completed survey forms, make the questions “closed-ended”. That is, you provide the respondent with a number of pre-determined responses from which to choose. Open-ended questions, where the respondent can provide any answer that comes into their head, are generally too difficult to analyze.

If you wish to add additional questions to those provided in the template, keep the following in mind: (1) Place difficult or sensitive questions near the end of the survey. (2) Group questions together in a logical sequence.

On each of the sample survey forms, certain questions are considered essential in order to compare data collected in your survey with data collected by other trail organizations across Pennsylvania. For comparative capabilities, always include the following questions on your survey: 1,2,3,4,5,13,14,15,16,17,and 18.

Questions 22, 23, 24 are considered optional for a comparative analysis, but the information may be useful to you in managing your trail.

# IV. Recording Your Data

## Input

The methods for data input included here have been designed to make the recording of your survey data as easy as possible. The suggested methodology assumes a working knowledge of Microsoft Excel<sup>®</sup>. If you are not familiar with this software, we recommend you seek a skilled volunteer from a local business or college to assist you with the data input.

You will need a computer that can run Microsoft Excel, which is a basic spreadsheet program. **A blank Excel spreadsheet template for each of the pre-formatted survey forms has been provided on the CD.**

Each completed survey form is represented by a row in the spreadsheet. Each possible response to a question is represented by a column on the spreadsheet. A response to a question is represented by entering a “1” in the column that corresponds to the question response. The only exceptions to entering the numeral “1” are: (1) the ZIP code where the actual five digit number must be entered, (2) the number of nights stayed in accommodations, and (3) the dollar expenditure questions where the actual dollar amount reported must be entered. If the respondent failed to provide a response to a question, leave the column blank. An example is provided below.

**TABLE I.**

Question 6: Please identify your age group. (circle one)  
 15 and under   16 to 25   26-35   36-45   46-55   56-65   66 or older

Question: Age	15 and <	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 55	56 - 65	>66
Survey # 1						1	
2							1
3							1
4							
5					1		
6							
7					1		
8						1	
9						1	
10						1	

Survey #4 had no response to this question therefore the row is left blank.

When entering the data, there are two points that must be kept in mind. First, you must enter exactly what the respondent provided. If the question asked the respondent to “circle one” and they circled three responses you must place a “1” in each column. Second, be aware of the possibility of “outliers”. These are surveys or survey responses that are abnormal when compared to the type of response that would normally be anticipated, e.g., a four digit Zip Code. Such responses are more apt to occur when a “self-service” methodology was used to conduct the survey. In some instances surveys are completed in a malicious manner and contain obvious fabrications. For example,

someone purchased ice cream and recorded a cost of \$1,000. It is best to set surveys with questionable responses aside for review by the project manager.

When all of the completed surveys have been entered into your Excel spreadsheet, the next task is to add up the responses and generate the percentages for each response. Again, the sum function and percentage calculations have been provided on the Excel spreadsheets that correspond with the pre-designed survey forms. The calculations can be found in rows 408, 409 and 411 of the Excel spreadsheets. Below is an example of what the last rows of the spreadsheet look like.

**TABLE II.**

Question: Age		15 and <	16 - 25	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 55	56 - 65	>66
Row 401	Survey # 375				1			
402	376						1	
403	377			1				
404	378					1		
405	379						1	
406	380					1		
407								
<b>408</b>	<b>Question Total</b>	<b>387</b>						
<b>409</b>	<b>Respondent Totals</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>43</b>
410								
<b>411</b>	<b>Respondent Percent</b>	<b>4.65%</b>	<b>4.13%</b>	<b>14.47%</b>	<b>18.86%</b>	<b>27.91%</b>	<b>18.86%</b>	<b>11.11%</b>

**Calculating the Percentages:** (Note: The following calculations will be performed automatically on the included spreadsheet)

The columns are first summed vertically. The results are shown in the row labeled Respondent Totals. Each figure is referred to as the dividend. To arrive at the divisor, all of the respondent totals for each answer are then added together. This provides the total number of responses for a particular question.

In the above example, the divisor is 387. (18+16+56+73+108+73+43=387) To arrive at the percentage, the dividend located in each column is divided by the divisor, or the total for the question, and then multiplied by 100. Continuing with our example to arrive at the percentage of survey respondents that are between the ages of 36 and 45, the calculation looks like this:  $73 \div 387 = .1886$ ,  $.1886 \times 100 = 18.86\%$

Note: In this example, the total number of completed surveys was 380, but there were actually 387 responses to Question 6. In some cases if the survey was completed by a couple or a family, multiple responses were circled. Remember you must record what the respondent placed on the survey form unless you suspect an “outlier.”

When you have completed entering the data from all of the completed survey forms into the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, **MAKE A BACKUP COPY OF YOUR RESPONDENT DATABASE!**

# V. Reporting and Analysis

## Reporting

To complete your project, a report should be written that presents the results of the research. **(Sample reports from both a Trail User Survey and a Trail Event Survey have been included on the attached CD).** At a minimum, your report should include: 1) An executive summary of a page or two in length and 2) Tables or graphs containing the responses to each individual question.

When you have completed your report, please send a copy to the following office at DCNR so that your data can be compared and added to other trail data from around the state:

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
Rachel Carson State Office Building, P. O. Box 8767  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8767

Below is an example of how the data can be presented in a report.

Question 6.

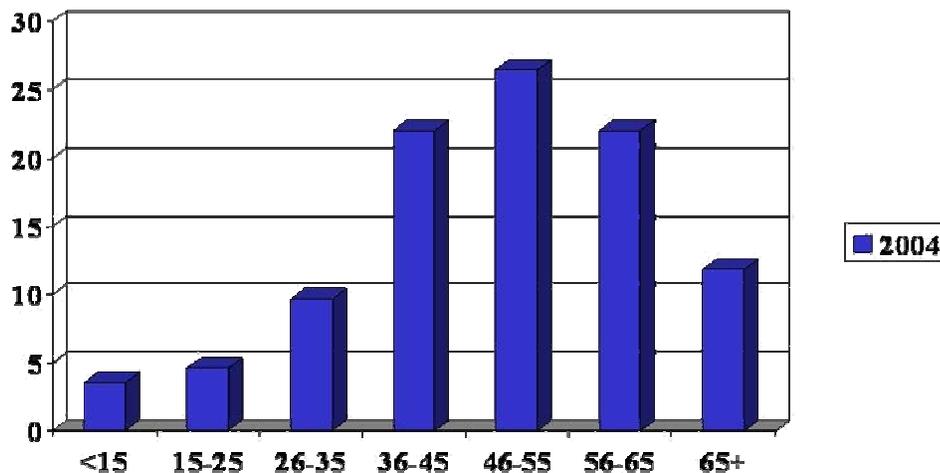
Please identify your age group. (Check one)

3.56%	under 15
4.57%	16 to 25
9.66%	26 - 35
21.98%	36 - 45
26.43%	46-55
21.98%	56-65
11.82%	66 or older

Another excellent way to present the findings is to prepare a series of graphs and charts that provide a visual representation of the results of the study. Below is a graph that represents the age data that was presented above.

TABLE III.

## Age Distribution



## VI. Economic Impact Analysis

An important aspect of trails is the financial impact they have on the communities they pass through. The economic impact of a trail is an important tool in helping to establish and maintain support for your trail . Using the statistics gathered as a result of your survey project can also strengthen applications for grant funding. Several important components to economic impact analyses include: (1) the amount of money users spend, (2) the number of annual trail visitations and (3) the costs associated with the trail.

If possible, costs of a trail, such as costs of initial acquisition, construction, and ongoing maintenance, should be figured into any economic impact analysis..

### Trail User Counts

To be most effective, the economic impact should be presented as spending by all trail users on all trail visits over the course of a year (annual expenditures). In order to determine this, a user count, or estimate of total trail users and total trail user visits, must be developed.

There are a number of methods that can be used to develop trail user estimates. The least expensive, but most time consuming, method is to have volunteers conduct trail user counts at trail access points. Another method is to utilize volunteers to count trail users as they pass by a particular location. To eliminate the use of volunteer counters, some organizations have purchased or borrowed infrared counters that are placed along the trail over extended periods of time.

Whichever method is implemented, it is strongly advised that a trail user count be conducted in conjunction with the user survey. It is entirely possible to perform and make use of a Trail User Survey without performing a user count; however, you will not be able to project any of your findings to determine the overall economic impact. For references on performing Trail User Counts, please see the Appendix.

### Trail User Spending

Three categories of spending accurately reflect spending relevant to both the trail and the user:

- **Hard Goods:** Items such as bicycles, ATV's (if permitted on your trail), snowmobiles (if permitted on your trail), auto accessories, supplies and clothing.
- **Soft Goods:** Consumables such as water, ice cream, sandwiches, snacks and candy.
- **Overnight Accommodations:** A trail activity related to a stay in a hotel, motel, B & B or campground

The types of goods purchased and the amount spent are captured on the survey form.

To calculate the average expenditure, sum all of the expenditures provided by the survey respondents and divide this total by the number of respondents that actually provided a dollar figure response

For **hard good** purchases, the survey question should request information on purchases made over the past twelve months. In the case of **soft good** purchases, the survey

question should request expenditures per person on the most recent trail visit. Whether overnight accommodations were used on the most recent trail visit and the associated expenditures should be requested on the survey form. is also asked

Assuming that the total annual user visits for your trail has been determined, the average **soft good** expenditure can then be multiplied by the number of user visits to determine the economic impact of this category of spending.

Example:

To determine an annual hard good expenditure, your analysis should be based on two determining factors: (1) average life-expectancy and (2) average depreciation. Major **hard good** purchases, such as a bike, may be replaced every 5 to 10 years. Running shoes may be replaced every couple of months. For the purpose of determining the annual economic impact, select a number of years to represent the average life of the hard good purchases. In several recent studies where bicyclists represented the majority of trail users, an average life-expectancy of 6 years was utilized

To arrive at a hard goods expenditure figure that is on an annual user basis, the hard goods spending needs to be broken down to a per trip figure. This involves calculating the average spending on a particular hard good item based upon a “per use” depreciation amount.

Example:

(Note: The impact of hard good purchases must be analyzed in relation to where users reside. For example, if the majority of users are local, then hard good purchases can be interpreted as having a local impact. On the other hand if majority of users are not local, the area of impact should be stated in the final analysis.)

The economic impact can be presented in the form of a chart with a range of annual user visits. In the following example a user count of 200,000 was established via an actual count and progressive numbers were then added to demonstrate growth potential.

Table IV.

### 2004 Economic Impact Analysis

					Annual User Visits 200,000	Projected 250,000	Projected 300,000
Category	% Usage	Avg. \$	Avg. Life	# of trips			
<b>Hard Goods*</b>	85.77%	\$347	6 years	7.97	<b>\$1,245,154</b>	\$1,556,442	\$1,867,731
<b>Soft Goods</b>	74.31%	\$13.97			<b>\$2,076,221</b>	\$2,595,276	\$3,114,332

**Hard Goods** = % Usage X Avg. \$ ÷ Avg. Life X # User Trips ÷ Avg. Number of Trips  
 The % Usage is the % of the survey respondents that indicated they purchased one or more items. In order to determine the % Usage, subtract the percentage in the “Nothing” column on the worksheet from 100% (100% - 14.23% = 85.77%).

In the above example, the calculation would look like this:  
 $.8577 \times \$347.11 \div 6 \times (300,000 \div 7.97) = \$1,867,731$

**A spreadsheet for calculating the average number of trips per year is contained on the CD.** Simply enter the percentages from Question 2, and the spreadsheet will automatically calculate the average trips per year.

**Soft Goods** = % Usage X Users Average \$ X Annual Users  
 The % Usage is the % of the survey respondents that indicated they purchased one or more items. In order to determine the % Usage, subtract the percentage in the "None of these" column on your spreadsheet from 100% (in the above example, 100% - 25.69% = 74.31%)

In the above example, the calculation would look like this:

$$.7431 \times \$13.97 \times 300,000 = \$3,114,332$$

Expenditure on overnight accommodations can be calculated by the following product: Average spending X the percentage of the respondents that indicated they stayed overnight X the average expenditure X the average number of nights. This result would then be multiplied by the number of unique trail users to arrive at total annual expenditure for overnight accommodations related to trail use.

**Table V.**

## 2004 Expenditures for Overnight Accommodations

				Unique Trail Users 25,094	Projected 31,367	Projected 37,641
Category	% Usage	Avg. \$	# Nights			
<b>Overnight Accommodations</b>	10.00%	\$55.00	1.2	<b>\$165,620</b>	\$207,022	\$248,252

Overnight  
 Accommodations = % Usage X Average \$ X # of Nights X # of Unique Trail Visitors

In the above example the calculation would look like this:

$$(.1000 \times \$55.00 \times 1.2 \times 25,094 = \$165,620)$$

## VII. Survey Templates

## User Survey Template – Metropolitan Trail

In order to provide you with a high quality recreational experience, we are conducting a survey of trail users. Your cooperation in completing this survey will be greatly appreciated. One user per survey for please!

1: What is your zip code? \_\_\_\_\_

2: How often, on average, do you use the trail? (circle one response)

Daily    Between 3 and 5 times a week    1 or 2 times a week    Once a week    A couple of times a month  
Once a month    A few times a year    First time

3: Please identify your age group. (circle one response)

15 and under    16 to 25    26-35    36-45    46-55    56-65    66 or older

4: Were any children under the age of 15 with you on your trail experience today?    Yes    No

5: What is your gender? (circle your response)    Male    Female

6: What is your primary activity on the trail? (circle all that apply)

Walking/Hiking    Biking    Jogging/Running    Rollerblading    Walking pet    XC skiing/Snowshoeing    Other \_\_\_\_\_

7: Generally, when do you use the trail? (circle one response)    Weekdays    Weekends    Both

8: How much time do you generally spend on the trail each visit? (circle one response)

Less than 30 minutes    30 minutes to 1 hour    1 to 2 hours    More than 2 hours

9: Would you consider your use of the trail to be for... (circle one response)

Recreation    Health and Exercise    Commuting    Fitness Training (marathon, triathlon)    Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

10: If you use the trail to commute, what is the total round trip mileage? \_\_\_\_\_

11: How did you find out about the trail? (circle all that apply)

Word of mouth    Roadside signage    Driving past    Newspaper    Parks Department    Bike shop  
Convention and Visitors Bureau    Information from Rails-to-Trails Conservancy    Internet web site    Other \_\_\_\_\_

12: Has your use of the trail influenced your purchase of: (circle all that apply)

Bike    Bike supplies    Auto accessories    Rollerblades    Footwear    Clothing    Nothing

13: Approximately how much did you spend on the items above in the past year? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

14: In conjunction with your most recent trip to the trail, did you purchase any of the following? (circle all that apply)

Beverages    Candy/Snack foods    Sandwiches    Ice cream    Meals at a restaurant along the trail    Other \_\_\_\_\_    None of these

15: Approximately how much did you spend, per person, on the items above on your most recent visit? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

16: Did your visit to the trail involve an overnight stay in one of the following types of accommodations? (circle one response)

Motel/Hotel    Bed and Breakfast    Friend or Relatives Home    Campground    Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

17: How many nights did you stay in conjunction with your visit to this trail? \_\_\_\_\_

18: Approximately how much did you spend on over night accommodations per night? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

19: In your opinion, the maintenance of the trail is (circle one)    Excellent    Good    Fair    Poor

20: In your opinion, the safety and security along the trail is (circle one)    Excellent    Good    Fair    Poor

21: In your opinion, the cleanliness of the trail is (circle one)    Excellent    Good    Fair    Poor

22: Would you be willing to pay an annual usage fee to help maintain the trail? (circle one response)    Yes    No

23: What portion of the trail do you use most often? (circle all that apply)

Divide your trail into segments, generally from one trail access point to the next.

24: Which trail access point do you generally use when you visit the trail? (circle all that apply)

List all trail access points.

Additional comments \_\_\_\_\_

## User Survey Template – Suburban Trail

In order to provide you with a high quality recreational experience, we are conducting a survey of trail users. Your cooperation in completing this survey will be greatly appreciated. One user per survey form please!

1: What is your zip code? \_\_\_\_\_

2: How often, on average, do you use the trail? (circle one response)

Daily    Between 3 and 5 times a week    1 or 2 times a week    Once a week    A couple of times a month  
Once a month    A few times a year    First time

3: Please identify your age group. (circle one response)

15 and under    16 to 25    26-35    36-45    46-55    56-65    66 or older

4: Were any children under the age of 15 with you on your trail experience today?    Yes    No

5: What is your gender? (circle your response)    Male    Female

6: What is your primary activity on the trail? (circle all that apply)

Walking/Hiking    Biking    Jogging/Running    Horseback riding    Rollerblading    Walking pet    XC skiing/Snowshoeing  
Other activity (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7: Generally, when do you use the trail? (circle one response)    Weekdays    Weekends    Both

8: How much time do you generally spend on the trail each visit? (circle one response)

Less than 30 minutes    30 minutes to 1 hour    1 to 2 hours    More than 2 hours

9: Would you consider your use of the trail to be for... (circle one response)

Recreation    Health and Exercise    Commuting    Fitness Training (marathon, triathlon)    Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

10: If you use the trail to commute, what is the total round trip mileage? \_\_\_\_\_

11: How did you find out about the trail? (circle all that apply)

Word of mouth    Roadside signage    Driving past    Newspaper    Parks Department    Bike shop  
Convention and Visitors Bureau    Information from Rails-to-Trails Conservancy    Internet web site    Other \_\_\_\_\_

12: Has your use of the trail influenced your purchase of: (circle all that apply)

Bike    Bike supplies    Auto accessories    Rollerblades    Footwear    Clothing    Nothing

13: Approximately how much did you spend on the items above in the past year? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

14: In conjunction with your most recent trip to the trail, did you purchase any of the following? (circle all that apply)

Beverages    Candy/Snack foods    Sandwiches    Ice cream    Meals at a restaurant along the trail    Other \_\_\_\_\_    None of these

15: Approximately how much did you spend, per person, on the items above on your most recent visit? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

16: Did your visit to the trail involve an overnight stay in one of the following types of accommodations? (circle one response)

Motel/Hotel    Bed and Breakfast    Friend or Relatives Home    Campground    Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

17: How many nights did you stay in conjunction with your visit to this trail? \_\_\_\_\_

18: Approximately how much did you spend on over night accommodations per night? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

19: In your opinion, the maintenance of the trail is (circle one)    Excellent    Good    Fair    Poor

20: In your opinion, the safety and security along the trail is (circle one)    Excellent    Good    Fair    Poor

21: In your opinion, the cleanliness of the trail is (circle one)    Excellent    Good    Fair    Poor

22: Would you be willing to pay an annual usage fee to help maintain the trail? (circle one response)    Yes    No

23: What portion of the trail do you use most often? (circle all that apply)

Divide your trail into segments, generally from one trail access point to the next.

24: Which trail access point do you generally use when you visit the trail? (circle all that apply)

List all trail access points.

Additional comments \_\_\_\_\_

## User Survey Template – Rural Trail – Non-Motorized Multi-Use

In order to provide you with a high quality recreational experience, we are conducting a survey of trail users. Your cooperation in completing this survey will be greatly appreciated. One user per survey form please!

1: What is your zip code? \_\_\_\_\_

2: How often, on average, do you use the trail? (circle one response)

Daily Between 3 and 5 times a week 1 or 2 times a week Once a week A couple of times a month  
Once a month A few times a year First time

3: Please identify your age group. (circle one response)

15 and under 16 to 25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65 66 or older

4: Were any children under the age of 15 with you on your trail experience today? Yes No

5: What is your gender? (circle your response) Male Female

6: What is your primary activity on the trail? (circle all that apply)

Walking/Hiking Biking Jogging/Running Horseback Riding XC skiing/Snowshoeing Other activity (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7: Generally, when do you use the trail? (circle one response) Weekdays Weekends Both

8: How much time do you generally spend on the trail each visit? (circle one response)

Less than 30 minutes 30 minutes to 1 hour 1 to 2 hours More than 2 hours

9: Would you consider your use of the trail to be for... (circle one response)

Recreation Health and Exercise Commuting Fitness Training (marathon, triathlon) Other (specify) \_

10: During your trail visit did you (circle all that apply) Fish Canoe Kayak Tube Watch birds Watch wildlife Study flowers

11: How did you find out about the trail? (circle all that apply)

Word of mouth Roadside signage Driving past Newspaper Parks Department Bike shop  
Convention and Visitors Bureau Information from Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Internet web site Other \_\_\_\_\_

12: Has your use of the trail influenced your purchase of: (circle all that apply)

Bike Bike supplies Auto accessories Footwear Clothing Nothing

13: Approximately how much did you spend on the items above in the past year? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

14: In conjunction with your most recent trip to the trail, did you purchase any of the following? (circle all that apply)

Beverages Candy/Snack foods Sandwiches Ice cream Meals at a restaurant along the trail  
Horse rental Other \_\_\_\_\_ None of these

15: Approximately how much did you spend, per person, on the items above on your most recent visit? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

16: Did your visit to the trail involve an overnight stay in one of the following types of accommodations? (circle one response)

Motel/Hotel Bed and Breakfast Friend or Relatives Home Campground Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

17: How many nights did you stay in conjunction with your visit to this trail? \_\_\_\_\_

18: Approximately how much did you spend on over night accommodations per night? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

19: In your opinion, the maintenance of the trail is (circle one) Excellent Good Fair Poor

20: In your opinion, the safety and security along the trail is (circle one) Excellent Good Fair Poor

21: In your opinion, the cleanliness of the trail is (circle one) Excellent Good Fair Poor

22: Would you be willing to pay an annual usage fee to help maintain the trail? (circle one response) Yes No

23: What portion of the trail do you use most often? (circle all that apply)

Divide your trail into segments, generally from one trail access point to the next.

24: Which trail access point do you generally use when you visit the trail? (circle all that apply) List all trail access points.

Additional comments \_\_\_\_\_

## User Survey Template – Rural Trail – Motorized Multi-Use

In order to provide you with a high quality recreational experience, we are conducting a survey of trail users. Your cooperation in completing this survey will be greatly appreciated. One user per survey form please!

- 1: What is your zip code? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2: How often, on average, do you use the trail? (circle one response) Daily Between 3 and 5 times a week 1 or 2 times a week  
Once a week A couple of times a month Once a month A few times a year First time
- 3: Please identify your age group. (circle one response)  
15 and under 16 to 25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65 66 or older
- 4: Were any children under the age of 15 with you on your trail experience today? Yes No
- 5: What is your gender? (circle your response) Male Female
- 6: What is your primary activity on the trail? (circle all that apply) Walking/ Hiking Biking Jogging/Running  
Horseback Riding ATV XC skiing/Snowshoeing Snowmobile Other activity (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7: Generally, when do you use the trail? (circle one response) Weekdays Weekends Both
- 8: How much time do you generally spend on the trail each visit? (circle one response)  
Less than 30 minutes 30 minutes to 1 hour 1 to 2 hours More than 2 hours
- 9: Would you consider your use of the trail to be for... (circle one response)  
Recreation Health and Exercise Commuting Fitness Training (marathon, triathlon) Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 10: During your trail visit did you (circle all that apply) Fish Canoe Kayak Tube Watch birds Watch wildlife Study flowers
- 11: How did you find out about the trail? (circle all that apply)  
Word of mouth Roadside signage Driving past Newspaper Parks Department Bike shop  
Convention and Visitors Bureau Information from Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Internet web site Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 12: Has your use of the trail influenced your purchase of: (circle all that apply)  
Bike Bike supplies Auto accessories Footwear ATV Snowmobile Clothing Nothing
- 13: Approximately how much did you spend on the items above in the past year? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- 14: In conjunction with your most recent trip to the trail, did you purchase any of the following? (circle all that apply)  
Beverages Candy/Snack foods Sandwiches Ice cream Meals at a restaurant along the trail  
ATV rental Snowmobile rental Horse rental Other \_\_\_\_\_ None of these
- 15: Approximately how much did you spend, per person, on the items above on your most recent visit? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- 16: Did your visit to the trail involve an overnight stay in one of the following types of accommodations? (circle one response)  
Motel/Hotel Bed and Breakfast Friend or Relatives Home Campground Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 17: How many nights did you stay in conjunction with your visit to this trail? \_\_\_\_\_
- 18: Approximately how much did you spend on over night accommodations per night? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- 19: In your opinion, the maintenance of the trail is (circle one) Excellent Good Fair Poor
- 20: In your opinion, the safety and security along the trail is (circle one) Excellent Good Fair Poor
- 21: In your opinion, the cleanliness of the Trail is (circle one) Excellent Good Fair Poor
- 22: Would you be willing to pay an annual usage fee to help maintain the trail? (circle one response) Yes No
- 23: What portion of the trail do you use most often? (circle all that apply)  
Divide your trail into segments, generally from one trail access point to the next.
- 24: Which trail access point do you generally use when you visit the trail? (circle all that apply) List all trail access points.  
Additional comments \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix

# Trail User Counts - References

Title

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National Bicycle and Pedestrian Document Project  
<http://www.altaplanning.com/>

Indiana Trail Study - Appendix B, Methodology  
<http://www.in.gov/dot/projects/trails/m-AppendixB.pdf>

Allegheny Trail Alliance - Introduction, Methodology  
<http://www.ucsur.pitt.edu/EDS/Chapter%201.pdf>

Using Pedestrian Count Models to Estimate Urban Trail Use  
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/jrap/Lindsey1.pdf>

Handbook for Bicyclists And Pedestrian Counts  
[http://www.bayareatrafficsignals.org/downloads/ped&bike/Handbook\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.bayareatrafficsignals.org/downloads/ped&bike/Handbook_Summary.pdf)

Guidebook on Methods to Estimate Non-Motorized Travel: Overview of Methods  
Publication No. FHWA-RD-98-165  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tfhrc/safety/pubs/vol1/title.htm>

October Use Patterns on Lansing's Riverfront Trail  
<http://www.msu.edu/course/prr/475/djslect/Trrpt96.doc>

## Case Study #1 York County Heritage Rail Trail

The York County Heritage Rail Trail, a 21-mile, non-motorized, multi-use trail, was developed in phases between 1990 and 1999 by the York County Rail Trail Authority. When completed and officially opened in August 1999, the York County Department of Parks and Recreation assumed responsibility for the trail's management and operations. Just prior to the opening of the final phase of the trail, the Authority and the Department of Parks developed a Trail User Study. The study was designed to collect information about trail users and their trail-related spending. From this survey came the "Heritage Rail Trail County Park 1999 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis".\* Follow-up studies have been conducted in 2001 and 2004.

These surveys provided information on user characteristics; which sections of the trail and trailheads were used most often; spending on trail-associated equipment; spending on beverages and snacks during trail use; perceptions of trail maintenance, cleanliness and security.

One key finding from the studies is the fact that over one-third of the Heritage Rail Trail users come from outside York County, making it a significant tourists attraction. Over the course of the three studies, the percentage of users that primarily bike has been declining from 79.6% in 1999 to 71.4% in 2004. More than 50% of trail users are on the trail from 2 hours or more on each visit. In 2004 the majority of the survey participants (55.8%) stated that their primary use of the trail was for health, exercise and fitness. Trail user spending on beverages and snacks has increased from an average of \$6.47 in 1999 to \$13.97 in 2004. User perceptions of the safety and security on the trail were higher in 2004 than in 1999.

Over the three studies, a total of 1,245 survey forms have been completed and analyzed. As one of the few trail user studies that is tracking usage characteristics and perceptions over time, these studies have proven to be a valuable management tool for the York County Department of Parks and Recreation.

According to Tom Brandt, Executive Director of York County Parks, the information from the survey reports has been used in "budgeting, board presentations, addressing media inquiries, internal publications, newsletters, annual reports, grant applications and park master plan..

Gwen Loose, Project Coordinator for the York County Rail Trail Authority, states that the Authority also uses the information contained in the user study reports to "win support for the development of additional trails in York County; provide assistance to trail organizations in other Pennsylvania counties; support grant applications to both local, state and federal funders; develop presentations to community organizations; and win national recognition for the York County Heritage Rail Trail".

\*A copy of the "Heritage Rail Trail County Park 1999 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis" is included on the attached disc.

## Case Study #2 Pennsylvania Greenway Sojourn - Participant Survey

2004 marked the third year that the Northeast Regional Office of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy hosted a Pennsylvania Greenway Sojourn, a 6-day bicycle tour in Pennsylvania riding 70% on trails. The purpose of this annual event is to promote the use and development of regional rail-trail systems. The route of the 2004 Sojourn covered 200 miles in the northwestern corner of the state. Sojourners camp in or near town centers. The majority of meals are provided with several meals being "on your own".

In conjunction with the 2004 Sojourn, 57.7% of the participants completed a brief survey at the end of their trip. Both demographic and economic questions were asked. The findings show that the participants are a highly educated and affluent group. Two thirds of the survey respondents purchased items such as bicycles, bicycle supplies, auto accessories, clothing and camping supplies prior to the trip with an estimated total expenditure of over \$69,000. Data related to purchases made during the event showed an estimated \$38,000 was spent by participants during the event on additional meals, snacks and other consumables (1<sup>st</sup> choice was not surprisingly ice cream!). Another \$10,000 was spent on overnight accommodations either before or after the Sojourn. The survey findings demonstrated that every community the Sojourn passed through realized an economic benefit from spending on goods and services. In total the 2004 Greenway Sojourn contributed over \$159,000 to the economy of northwestern Pennsylvania..

A one-page "Executive Summary" of the 2004 Sojourn Participant Survey provides an overview of the event, summary of the characteristics of the participants, and the major findings as stated above. The full-bound report includes a detailed summary of the responses to each question along with graphic charts illustrating the data.\*

Pat Tomes, Program Coordinator for the Greenway Sojourn stated, "I find the report is invaluable when the Greenway Sojourn is entering new territory. One look at the Participant Survey and most community leaders will do everything they can to support the event".

Tim Poole, Sojourn Route Coordinator added, "In one specific case, the owner of a campground adjacent to the Armstrong Trail was a borderline opponent. After discussions, including the economic information, the proverbial light bulb went on, and the owner realized there was money to be made from the trail. Most towns were supportive of the Sojourn last year. But the red carpet was truly rolled out this year, as communities took an active role in planning our route, accommodations, meals, and other amenities. And these efforts were made by Chambers of Commerce, not primarily by trail organizations. This was clearly a result of the survey, supported by their own first-hand experiences from last year. By answering the "what's in it for me" question, the survey has also made it much easier to get the assistance required when extending the Sojourn to new communities and trails. Money talks, and the survey data makes the case that the Sojourn and the trail networks it promotes mean money for trailside communities and businesses".

\*A copy of the 2004 Greenway Sojourn Participant Survey is included on the attached CD.