



Trails & Active Transportation

Wise Federal Investments in Tight Times

TRAILS: ECONOMIC POWERHOUSES

Trail destinations are vital to the West Virginian economy. Trails significantly contribute to the West Virginia's burgeoning tourism industry, boosting local economies through job creation and business district revitalization. Federal investment is absolutely critical for trail construction, and pays dividends accordingly.

West Virginia has capitalized on federal programs like Transportation Enhancements (TE) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP) to develop, construct and maintain some of the country's premier trail destinations. Trails like the Hatfield and McCoy Trail System (which used RTP funds) and the Greenbrier River Trail (a TE-funded project) have leveraged those dollars to spur impressive local economic development.

The Hatfield McCoy Trail System is an outstanding example of a federal investment that has only begun to demonstrate its long-term economic impacts to the region. The trail system has resulted in more than \$7.7 million increase in statewide output, more than \$2.7 million increase in income, and 146 jobs. With double-digit growth in both total retail sales and sales per establishment, the relatively young trail system is predicted to catalyze further economic development, with tourism bringing increased visibility to the region.

Another strong return on federal investment in trails is its impact on health costs. The WV Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan reports that for every \$1 spent on building recreational trails, there is a \$3–4 reduction in direct medical costs.

BEYOND WEST VIRGINIA

The "Trail Towns" initiative along the Great Allegheny Passage promotes businesses aiming to capitalize off the 700,000 annual trips taken along the rural trail corridor between Cumberland, Md., and Pittsburgh, Pa. Direct annual spending by trail users exceeds \$40 million. This economic infusion has enabled a resurgence of many towns that had declined with the loss of mining jobs and the original railroad. Trail-related businesses pay out \$7.5 million in wages every year, and since 2007, 54 new or expanded businesses serving trail users have created 83 new jobs in eight small towns. (The Great Allegheny Passage Economic Impact Study, 2007–2008)





Active Transportation

Cost-Effective Mobility Improvements—for Everyone

In tough economic times, governments have to make the most of every tax dollar spent. That's why active transportation (walking and bicycling) projects stand out: With fewer federal dollars available, these projects can be completed at a low cost, are highly popular and significantly improve mobility. Further, such projects benefit such areas of national interest as dependence on foreign oil, climate change, public health, air quality and safety. Bicycle and pedestrian investments are extremely cost-effective options, especially in managing trips that are three miles or less (nearly half of all trips) and those one mile or less (more than one quarter of all trips).

Trails are essential elements of any active transportation system. Where trails have been prioritized, surrounding communities have benefited greatly from the economic, quality of life, health and transportation improvements. Further, trails continually rank among the very top neighborhood amenities, boosting local real estate values while reducing out-of-pocket expenditures due to reduced driving. Increased investment in trails, bicycling and walking means:

- **More jobs** per dollar for small, local businesses: Design, engineering and construction of walking and bicycling facilities such as trails creates more good jobs per dollar than do other transportation projects, while keeping the profits closer to home.
- **Vital local economies:** Trail and bicycling networks are a boon to local economies, resulting in increased tourism, property values and business activity.
- **Positive returns for the federal budget:** Active transportation investments save the federal government money by reducing the need to build more expensive transportation infrastructure, cutting federal health care costs and creating jobs.
- **Greater travel choices for the American public:** A recent national poll found that nearly three-quarters of Americans feel they “have no choice but to drive as much as” they do, and two-thirds “would like more transportation options.”
- **Reduced oil dependence:** Automobiles are responsible for 40 percent of U.S. oil use. Cutting miles driven—and reduced congestion with less cars on the road—is among the best ways to manage our oil-related economic, environmental and security vulnerabilities. Shifting short trips to bicycling and walking could save four to 10 billion gallons of fuel each year.