UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO TRAIL USE

MAY 27, 2021

MET BRANCH TRAIL | PHOTO BY INDIA KEA
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Today’s Presenters

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Motivation
Perception
Value
Empathy
Research Objectives

Gain insight across race, age and gender into:

- How trails, walking and biking are perceived?
- The top motivators and barriers to trail use?
Research Objectives

- **What do we want to do with this information?**
  Help create informed strategies to increase trail use across all groups.

- **Next steps:** How do we convert interest in trails into use and support for trails across all groups especially in the Hispanic/Latin and Black/ African-American communities?
Methodology

• RTC’s National Barriers to trail use survey conducted between Spring 2020 (1214 responses)

• RTC Regional Survey focusing on four metro areas: Bay Area, Cleveland, Miami and Washington DC metro area conducted Summer 2020 (n>= 600)

• Qualitative focus group with 21 DC residents
Who we surveyed

• 33% Black/African-American, 30% Hispanic/Latin, 36% White/Caucasian
• 15% 18-24 years, 49% 25-44 year, 35% 45-64 years, 1% 65 and above
• 51% female, 49% male, less than 1% non-binary
We all choose to use trails for exercise, enjoyment, relaxation and connection.

By Race

- Connecting with nature or spending time in nature
- Recreation or fun
- Getting physical exercise
- Enjoying the ride or walk
- Relaxing
We all choose to use trails for exercise, enjoyment, relaxation and connection.
We all choose to use trails for exercise, enjoyment, relaxation and connection.
Frequency of Trail Use Varies by Race, Gender and Age

How Frequently do you use trails?

- Regularly
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
Frequency of Trail Use Varies by Race, Gender and Age

Ideally how frequently would you like to use a trail?

- A lot more
- A little more
- About the same amount
- A little less
- None at all

Frequency of Trail Use Varies by Race, Gender and Age

A lot more
A little more
About the same amount
A little less
None at all

Black or African American
Hispanic
White / Caucasian
Frequency of Trail Use Varies by Race, Gender and Age

By Age

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<th>Age</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
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Frequency of Trail Use Varies by Race, Gender and Age

By Gender

- Regularly
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

- Male
- Female
- Nonbinary
What prevents us from using trails?

1. Time
2. Access to trails
3. Destination vs. thorough fare
4. Gear and appearance
5. Perceptions of welcome and safety
What would make it more likely for us to walk and bike in our neighborhood?

- Protected bike lanes (bikeways that are at street level and use a variety of methods for physical separation and protection from passing traffic)
- Trails and greenways protected and separated from traffic
- Better lighting
- More destinations within a 20 minute walking and/or biking distance
- My friends or family are interested in walking or biking more
How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the frequency of your outdoor activity?

By Race

- I go outdoors a lot more than before
- I go outdoors more than before
- I go outdoors about the same as before
- I go outdoors less than before
- I avoid going outdoors

[Bar chart showing data by race]
How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how we think about trails and open spaces?

By Race

I now consider trails and open spaces as very important
I now consider trails and open spaces as somewhat important
I always consider trails and open spaces as important
I now consider trails and open spaces as somewhat unimportant
I now consider trails and open spaces as not important at all
I never considered trails and open spaces as important
How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how we think about trails and open spaces?

By Gender

- **Male**
  - I now consider trails and open spaces as very important: 30.00%
  - I now consider trails and open spaces as somewhat important: 15.00%
  - I now consider trails and open spaces as not important at all: 5.00%
  - I never considered trails and open spaces as important: 5.00%

- **Female**
  - I now consider trails and open spaces as very important: 30.00%
  - I now consider trails and open spaces as somewhat important: 15.00%
  - I now consider trails and open spaces as somewhat unimportant: 10.00%
  - I never considered trails and open spaces as important: 5.00%
How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how we think about trails and open spaces?

By Age

- **18 to 24**
- **25 to 34**
- **35 to 44**
- **45 to 54**
- **55 to 64**
- **65 to 74**

- I now consider trails and open spaces as very important
- I now consider trails and open spaces as somewhat important
- I always consider trails and open spaces as important
- I now consider trails and open spaces as somewhat unimportant
- I now consider trails and open spaces as not important at all
- I never considered trails and open spaces as important
Key Findings from national survey

1. Trails are universally used and valued for recreation, mental and physical health purposes and social interactions across gender, race and age groups.

2. Female respondents report less frequent trail usage than males.

3. Male respondents are more likely to say saving time and money is a major motivator whereas female respondents are more likely to say having social interactions with family and friends is a major motivator.

4. Black respondents are less likely to be trail users AND less likely to report interest in increasing their trail usage.

5. Black respondents are more likely to say trails are not welcoming and that they do not like running or walking outdoors.
Key Findings from national survey

6. Younger respondents are more likely to mention lack of proper maintenance, being unsure what to do on trails, being sweaty and not having proper gear as major barriers.

7. Older respondents are more likely to say not having enough places to stop and rest are barriers to trail use (trails as the destination).

8. Hispanic and Black respondents are much less likely to go out during COVID-19 compared to white respondents (2020).

9. Male, older and Hispanic respondents are more likely to say that they ‘NOW’ consider trails to be important, implying that the pandemic has had a positive impact on perception of trails.

10. Separated bike lanes, trails and greenways; improved lighting and maintenance; destinations accessible by walking and biking, social support from friend and family might go a long way in encouraging walking, biking and trail use.
Panel Discussion

- What do we want to do with this information?

- Help create informed strategies to increase trail use across all groups.

- How do we convert interest in trails into use and support for trails across all groups especially in Black/African-America, Hispanic/Latin and other communities of color?