



**Creating Opportunities Along the Nation's Trails**

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# Trail User Sample Survey Highlight Report

Main Line Canal &  
Trans-Allegheny Trails Systems  
February 2016





## Executive Summary

In 2015, trail users were surveyed to determine habits and trends of visitors to a series of trails that make up the Main Line Canal and Trans-Allegheny Trails systems. 199 surveys were collected over a span of four months. The respondents represented over 55 unique zip codes. The majority of these zip codes were from Westmoreland County, Indiana County, Cambria County, and Allegheny County in Pennsylvania. There were also zip codes from other states including Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. Of the 199 surveys, the majority of the respondents were male at 64%. With the small amount of surveys collected, this survey, should be conducted again over an increased time span so that additional data can be collected. Highlights from the survey are included below.

## Project Background

### Trail Town Program® Background

The Trail Town Program® is an initiative of The Progress Fund working in small rural towns across western Pennsylvania and western Maryland, focusing on community and economic development around trail tourism and outdoor recreation. The purpose of the Program is to ensure that trail communities and businesses maximize the economic potential of the regions trail. The Program also works to address trail-wide issues and opportunities through regional cooperation and to build the connection between trail and town.

#### Program Goals:

1. Retain, expand, and increase revenues of existing businesses
2. Recruit sustainable new businesses
3. Facilitate collective action by the Trail Towns to create a world class recreational destination
4. Improve the buildings and infrastructure in each town to create a visitor friendly destination

### Survey Background

Limited information has been collected along the Main Line Canal and Trans-Allegheny Trails systems. This sample survey was conducted to provide new and updated information related to trail users visiting these trails. This information includes general demographics, trail usage, interest of services, and spending related to lodging and other amenities.

#### Previous Studies:

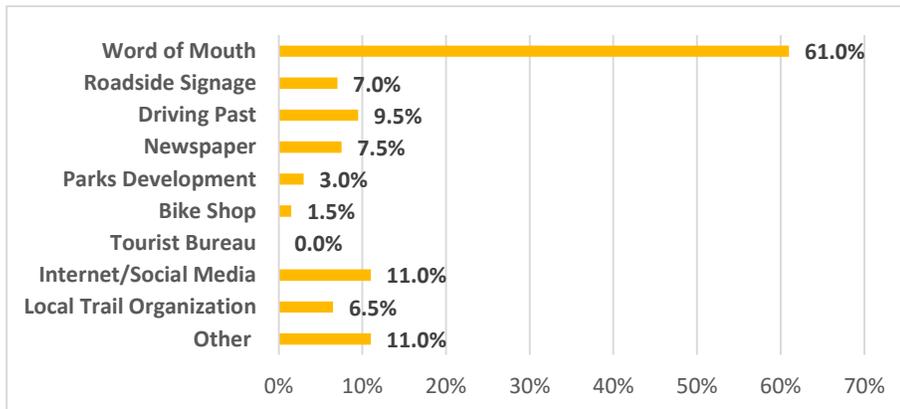
- An in-depth economic impact study was completed by the Rails to Trails Conservancy in 2009 along the Ghost Town Trail.
- In recent years, the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy has surveyed trail users regarding, maintenance, and communications on the West Penn Trail.

## Methods: Trail User Survey

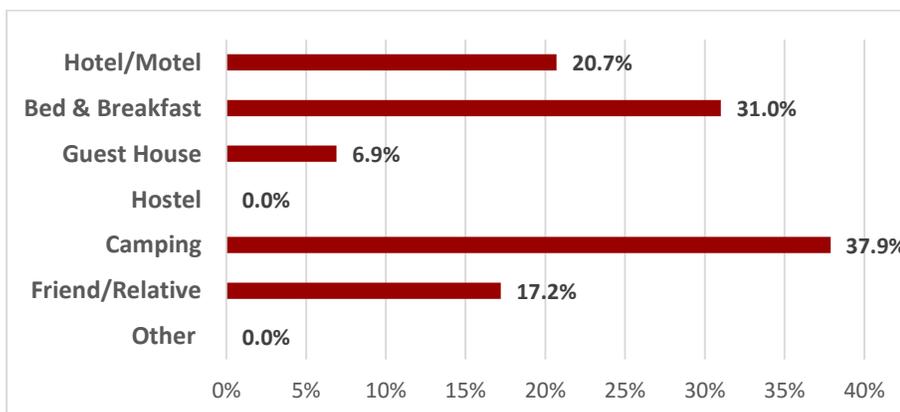
In 2015, Trail Town Program® and community partners identified a series of questions to help determine habits, trends, and interest of visitors to a series of trails that make up the Main Line Canal and Trans-Allegheny Trails systems. These questions were formulated into an intercept survey that was collected in the field alongside the region's trails. Locations were established and surveys distributed among key sites in Delmont, Saltsburg, and Newport Road along the West Penn and Westmoreland Heritage Trails as well as Dilltown and Ebensburg on the Ghost Town Trail. Surveys were collected between June 2016 and October 2016 on selected weekdays and weekends during each month.

## 2015 Trail User Sample Survey Highlight Results

- **Age:**
  - 73% of respondents were 44 years and older.
- **Is this your first time on the trail?**
  - 17% were first time visitors to the trails.
- **How did you find out about the trail?**
  - 61% have found out about the trail via Word of Mouth.



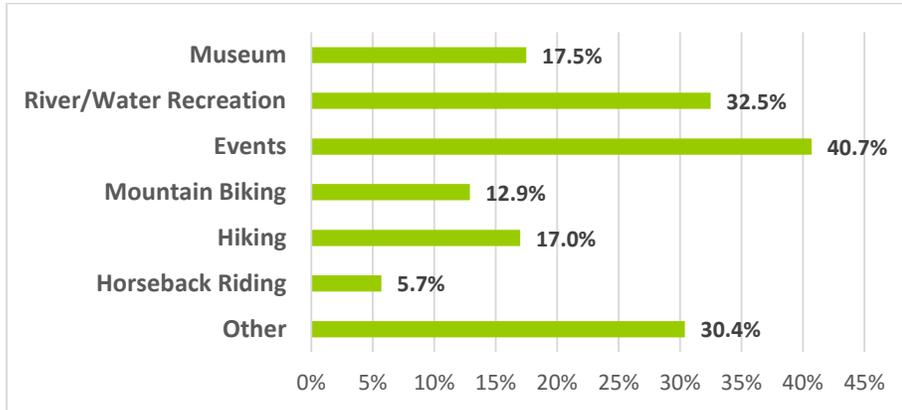
- **Approximate miles traveled today:**
  - The average distance traveled among respondents was 17.6 miles.
- **In conjunction with this ride, are you visiting any other trails in the area?**
  - 28% of respondents were visiting other trails in the area as part of their trip.
- **In conjunction with your trip, have or will you plan an overnight stay?**
  - 14.5% of all respondents planned an overnight stay with their trip. Of those planning an overnight stay, they were staying an average of 1 night.
- **What type of accommodation do you plan on staying in?**
  - For those that planned an overnight stay, 37.9% chose camping, followed by 31% at bed and breakfasts, and 20% at a hotel/motel as their accommodation plans.



- **How much does your group plan to spend on overnight accommodations (per night average)?**
  - For those that planned an overnight stay, the per night average was \$70.71.
- **If this trail and nearby trails were connected, would you consider a longer or multiple day trip?**
  - 80% of those surveyed said if this and nearby trails were connected, they would consider a longer or multiple day trip.

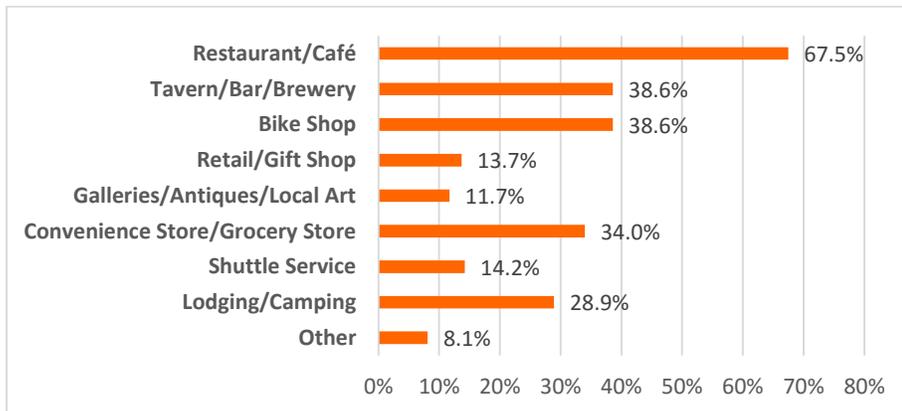
- **What would encourage you to make longer trip?**

- 40.7% said that events would encourage them to stay longer, followed by 32.5% for river/water recreation.



- **Why types of services and amenities are you looking for?**

- The majority of respondents identified Restaurant/Café as their most interested service at 67.5% followed by Tavern/Bar/Brewery and Bike Shop both at 38.6%



- **On average, how much did you spend per day (not including lodging)?**

- On average, each person spent \$10.22 per day.