



Trails: building blocks for healthier, wealthier communities

Regional trails provide many benefits to local communities, from economic development to increased tourism, improved health to better transportation options. Consider a few reasons why your community should invest in a new trail or expand one you have now.

Better health

Studies consistently show the health benefits of trails. In communities closer to a trail, residents are more likely to be active. People who live near trails walk on average 15 to 30 minutes more per day than those who live in neighborhoods with fewer trails or other ways to get around without a car.

Lower transportation costs

Transportation costs are shown to decrease with the number of trails in a community. The greater Portland region is a prime example. In 2005, it was estimated that trails save us \$1.1 billion per year on gas and other auto-related expenses. These savings allows residents to spend more where they want or need to.

Increased property values

In Indianapolis, a study found that homes within a half mile of the Monon Trail were worth \$13,059 more than the average home in the area. For homes within one mile of Ohio's Little Miami Scenic Trail, every foot closer to the trail increased a home's sale price \$7.05.



Cyclists on Troutdale Main Street.

Workers and talent

A study by the National Association of Home Builders showed that trails help attract educated employees and talent to an area. According to Portland-area economist Joe Cortright, young, educated workers are looking for walkable and bikeable communities with nearby natural areas. Trails provide them with both active transportation and access to parks.

“Trails consistently remain the number one community amenity sought by prospective homeowners.”

National Association of Home Builders

Business booms

Greenville County, S.C., recently completed the Swamp Rabbit Trail, a major tourist amenity connecting downtown Greenville and Travelers Rest. The two communities' businesses saw a major rise in new customers and increased spending from current customers. One bike shop saw a 20 percent annual growth rate thanks to the trail. The county as a whole estimates that the new trail's economic impact is worth \$7 million per year

Tourists and the jobs they create

Recreational trail use helps boost the local economy. In Virginia, an estimated 1.7 million recreational visitors have used the Washington and Old Dominion Trail, bringing in \$12 million annually in recreation dollars. Meanwhile, the West Orange, Little Econ and Cady Way trails in Orange County, Fla., support 516 recreation and tourism jobs. Across the country, there are examples of trails bolstering communities' recreation and tourism industries.

Safety and security

Overall, creating trails has not caused safety or security problems for communities. A study based in Omaha, Neb., found that trails within communities were very safe. In a survey, negative or crime-related experience with trails were infrequent, and even those reported were relatively minor.

Questions about trails?

Robert Spurlock
Metro trails planner
503-813-7560
robert.spurlock@oregonmetro.gov

Metro
600 NE Grand Ave., Portland