

Ozarks Transportation Organization

THE VALUE OF A TRAIL

AUGUST 2019



Ozarks Transportation Organization

The Ozarks Transportation Organization (OTO) MPO is the federally designated regional transportation planning organization that serves as a forum for cooperative transportation decision-making by state and local governments, and regional transportation and planning agencies.


The MPO Board of Directors includes local elected and appointed officials from Christian and Greene Counties, and the cities of Battlefield, Nixa, Ozark, Republic, Springfield, Strafford and Willard. It also includes technical staff from the Missouri Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and the Federal Aviation Administration.

Staff from local governments and area transportation agencies serve on OTO's Technical Planning Committee (TPC) which provides technical review, comments, and recommendations on draft MPO plans, programs, studies, and issues.

MPOs are charged with maintaining and conducting a "continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive" regional transportation planning and project programming process for the MPO's study area. The study area is defined as the area projected to become urbanized within the next 20 years.



OZARKS TRANSPORTATION ORGANIZATION



Many studies have been conducted over the years to establish the economic benefits of trails. While the majority focus on the effects on property values, a number of studies also address health, economic benefits, and talent retention and recruitment. These studies have been conducted by a variety of researchers and are geographically dispersed around the country.

WHY TRAILS


The Outdoor Industry Association has reported that outdoor recreation generates \$88.7 billion annually, creates 7.6 million American jobs, \$65.3 billion in federal tax revenue, and \$59.2 billion in state and local revenue, all the while making communities healthier and safer(1). In Missouri, outdoor recreation is responsible for 133,000 direct jobs and \$14.9 billion in consumer spending (2).

Trails are not just for recreation, either. When we connect our communities and destinations, trails become choices for transportation. About 50 percent of trips in the United States can be replaced by riding a bicycle for 20 minutes and a quarter can be accomplished by walking 20 minutes or less (3).

TRAILS IN THE OTO REGION

The OTO recently completed a trail investment study, evaluating 88 miles of new trail that could cost as much as \$116 million to construct, about \$1.3 million per mile. These high-level priority trails would be in addition to the nearly 65 miles of trail already on the ground and the numerous other non-regional trails planned within each community. 🧭

Introduction



Though the data is limited, trails are often cited as an amenity used for talent recruitment and retention.


SPRINGFIELD AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

10/30/2018

"There are many reasons why Springfield is a great place for people starting or growing their career, and The Network for Young Professionals works hard to share those opportunities with the community. Two recent events highlighted a couple of the biggest advantages in our area: access to outdoor amenities, and the ability to interact directly with business and community leaders (4)."

GREAT RIVERS GREENWAY

6/2016

"Companies, particularly those involved in the information economy, or knowledge economy, are increasingly moving to places with access to nature and outdoor spaces. A study by Headwaters Economics described that in 'today's economy, the bulk of economic value of public lands lies in its ability to attract people—and their businesses—who want to live near protected lands for quality of life reasons (5).'" 

"Other communities that have developed these trail networks and systems, it is helping with talent recruitment, attraction, and retention. As millenials are looking for jobs, there's certain things that they want their community to have. With our aging population...they want walkable communities, too (6)."

Mary Kromrey, Ozark Greenways (per Springfield Business Journal)


The average annual economic impact from trail development can be calculated to about about \$100,000 per mile, and often more. Greenways, Inc. (not Ozark Greenways, Inc.), cites the economic benefits of multiple trails ranging from \$73,500 per mile to \$137,500 per mile (7):

- The 34-mile Virginia Creeper Trail in southwestern Virginia results in \$2.5 million spent annually by locals and non-locals.
- The 16-mile St. Marks Trail in Tallahassee Florida nets \$2.2 million annually in economic benefit.
- The direct economic impact of the 150-mile Allegheny Passage in Pennsylvania exceeds \$14 million per year.
- A 20-mile trail in Dallas, Texas generates local revenues of \$2 million.

Alta Planning studied the Tahoma to Tacoma Trail network. It is estimated that the 45-mile Main Alignment will produce \$8.25 million in economic benefits per year, or \$183,333 per mile. The 15-mile Pipeline Trail Connector could generate over \$2 million in economic benefits, or about \$135,533 per mile. 🧱

"If a greenway would go by a brewery, it would be wonderful. We support anything that promotes connectivity and community. I know how good these trails are for the community. Adding bike racks is easier for business than adding parking (6)."
Jeff Shrag, Mother's Brewing Company (per Springfield Business Journal)





The effect of trails on property values has been studied extensively, going as far back as the 1990s, and in a more limited aspect, the 1970s. The National Association of Realtors will often point out the impact to time on the market, as well.

Increases in property values have been promoted in a variety of ways over a variety of years in a variety of housing markets and geographies. A study of three neighborhoods adjacent to the Barton Creek Greenbelt and Wilderness Park in Austin, Texas, showed that proximity to the greenbelt and its 7.5 miles of multi-use trails had a positive impact on property values, as does proximity to its entrance (8).

DISTANCE

Property values appear to increase as distance to the trail decreases. One 2011 study of the Little Miami Scenic Trail in Hamilton, Ohio found the average housing value decreased by \$3.98 with each foot of distance from the trail (9). Elsewhere along the trail, this was as much as \$7 (10). The 2005 study in Austin found prices to fall about \$3.97 for each foot away from the greenbelt entrance (8).

SALE PRICE

Homes within a quarter-mile of the Razorback Greenway in Northwest Arkansas sold for an average of \$15,000 more than those two miles from the trail (11). Along the Little Miami Trail, homebuyers were willing to pay \$9,000 more to be within 1,000 feet of the trail (12). Homes that bordered the 12-mile Burke-Gilman trail in Seattle, Washington, sold for 6 percent more than houses of comparable size and in Apex, North Carolina, the Shepard's Vineyard housing

development added \$5,000 to the homes adjacent to the greenway. (7). Houses near the Barton Creek Greenbelt in Austin saw property value increases of 12 percent, while also nearby houses without a view saw a sales price increase of 5.7 percent (8). Houses adjacent to the Pinellas Trail in Florida did not initially see an impact from the trail, but values of trailside homes have been increasing at a faster rate than other homes in the area (13).

CEOs for Cities found homebuyers are willing to pay \$20,000 to \$34,000 more for homes in communities that are pedestrian-friendly. A ten-point increase in Walk Score can also increase commercial property values by five to eight percent (15).

TIME ON MARKET

Homes near two Massachusetts rail trails sold, on average, in 29.3 days compared to 50.4 days for other homes (13). Lots in Brown County, Wisconsin adjacent to the Mountain Bay Trail sold faster and for 9 percent more, on average, than similar property not adjacent to the trail (7). Surveyed home owners and real estate agents in Colorado felt that a trail would make homes easier to sell (16). 🏡

"The new bike lanes are absolutely an attractive selling point, putting Atlanta in the limelight as a progressive city...listings that would have been sitting for 60 to 90 days a few years ago, [will be] going under contract within 24 hours - easy (14)."

Maura Neill, REMAX Realtor (National Association of Realtors)



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Endnotes