



The Economics Of Bicycling And Walking In Indiana

Reaching for bicycle handlebars or a favorite pair of sneakers increases this time of year, but many bicyclists, walkers and runners don't realize the economic benefits of — or INDOT's role in — these outdoor activities.

Bicycling is more than a mode of transportation, a means of exercise or a leisure activity – to local communities, the bike/pedestrian paths are amenities that attract residents and businesses. Indiana's economy also benefits from bicycling. For example, recent statistics in Indiana show:

- \$19,542,543 annually, on average, are earmarked for bicycling and walking; these funds include transportation enhancement, Safe Routes to School and recreational trails
- 77 biking and walking projects, on average, are built each year
- 331 bicycle retail stores are in operation
- 1,426 jobs are attributed to bicycle retail stores
- \$132,648,000 is the annual gross revenue from bicycle retail stores

Town of Cumberland Town Council President Mark Reynold said its bike/pedestrian path, the Pennsy Trail, a 3-mile stretch that runs parallel about a quarter of a mile south of East Washington Street, has created a new vibrancy. Connecting trails, sometimes called spurs, come from neighborhoods to link to the Pennsy Trail.

“There is no other single project that the town has developed within the past few years that has had such a significant positive impact in the community than the Pennsy Trail,” said Reynold. “Council members and others in town had heard about the positive energy that trails bring, and now we see that energy through people in motion in Cumberland. Residents, often in family units, are using the trail for biking, walking, rollerblading, walking dogs and jogging. We have had an overwhelming response to the Pennsy Trail, and residents want to see more in town.”

Cumberland residents will get that wish with the new Buck Creek Trail, currently in the design phase, that will connect seven subdivisions directly to the new trail system. Six miles of bicycle trails, with safe roadway crossing, will give residents safety (U.S. 40 runs through this far eastside community located in Marion and Hancock counties) as well as access to local government, services and shops.

Reynold is excited about residual economic benefits of the trail.

“Local realtors are promoting the trail system as an amenity in their sale advertisements,” Reynold said. “The amenities of the trails should stabilize home prices and add value to property.”

INDOT Local Public Agency (LPA)/Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Liaison Randy Walter was involved in the early stages of this \$1.4 million project.



“The Cumberland section of the Pennsy Trail, from German Church Road in Marion County to County Road 600 West (Mount Comfort Road) in Hancock County, was approved for Transportation Enhancement funding,” said Walter. “As an MPO liaison, I was involved in the early phase of the project, which involved arranging many meetings with the MPO, town, and staff in the Greenfield District.”

Greenfield District Consultant Services Manager Scott Bailey provided oversight to the trail project in his previous position as LPA Manager.

“The Cumberland part of the Pennsy Trail, which opened in late 2010, is just one piece of a larger trail project that goes through the Greenfield District and other districts,” said Bailey. “The trail is also part of the National Road Heritage Trail that will eventually connect Richmond to Terre Haute.”

Although the Pennsy Trail was ultimately funded with dollars from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act in 2009, traditional funding comes from Transportation Enhancement (TE) dollars for bike/pedestrian trails.

So far in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, 128 local projects have been let, including 38 bike/pedestrian or related trail projects — 28 more than in FY 2012. The total investment to date for FY 2013 in these facilities is \$18 million — with TE dollars providing most of the funding.

The current 230 miles of trails in Indiana gives all Hoosiers access to a trail within 7.5 miles or 15 minutes from home. That’s great news for many communities, and Hoosiers who love outdoor activities.