Bicycling Benefits Business

THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF BICYCLE INDUSTRY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

By Christian Damiana

Adapted from Flusche, Darren. Advocacy Advance/League of American Bicyclists, 2009, pp. 1–27, Bicycling Means Business: The Economic Benefits of Bicycle Infrastructure.

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Bicycling Benefits Business

Across the United States, bicycling is reinvigorating communities and strengthening economies. From bringing tourism to cities and small towns in the rust belt near the Schuylkill River trail, to reviving the once-thriving business atmosphere on Columbia, SC's main street, bicycling is driving millions of dollars in spending toward diverse communities. Bicycling is also leading to massive health care savings, especially in midwestern states like Iowa and Michigan. Innovative programs like bike share are connecting underserved neighborhoods to downtowns in the nation's capital and major urban centers. Each year, diverse examples from across the country demonstrate the clear economic benefits of bicycling.

This report highlights the positive impact of bicycling on small businesses, neighborhoods, and regional and local economies. The evidence demonstrates that when governments and businesses invest in bicycling infrastructure, every level of the economy benefits. Such investments are a cost-effective way to encourage an environmentally-friendly mode of transportation that leads to increased spending at small businesses, generates tourism dollars, and brings communities together. Put simply: bicycling means business.

FEATURES INTERACTIVE CONTENT

Click this symbol to take a deeper dive into the research.

INTRODUCTION

Why is bicycling good for the economy?

Each year, several new studies support the League's argument that safe, accessible, and convenient bicycling leads to significant economic benefits. We've rewritten the original 2009 report to include new data, information, and perspectives on how bicycling strengthens economies.

The research can get technical, but the principles are simple:

When people have access to safe bicycle facilities, they often choose to ride a bicycle.

People who ride bicycles purchase bicycles, supplies, and bike share memberships. This puts people in bicycle shops and bicycle industry related businesses to work.

People who ride bicycles shop at other types of stores too. Bike-accessible businesses experience economic benefits by catering to these customers.

People who ride bicycles on vacation buy food, spend on travel, and pay for lodging. This brings millions of tourist dollars to cities and towns across the country.

All that spending means jobs—and tax revenue—for communities. But people who ride bikes also save money.

Because people who ride bicycles save on transportation and car-ownership costs, they are able to spend more money at local businesses.

People who ride bicycles are often healthier than their inactive peers, saving their employers money on health care costs.

Cities and individuals save money by spending less on expensive car parking and instead investing in space-efficient, low-cost bicycle parking that leads to economic rewards.

National Economic Impact Studies

Across the United States, investments in bicycling have led to significant tangible economic growth. Studies show that the bicycle industry and its related transportation, tourism, and health benefits spur job creation, economic activity, and cost savings.

Today, bicycling dealership and repair is a $5.5 billion national industry[1] that continues to grow. With a projected annual growth of 0.7 percent from 2021-2026, the bicycle industry is expected to exceed $5.7 billion in revenue within five years[2]. Furthermore, the associated economic benefits of riding a bicycle far exceed that number. The 48 million Americans who rode a bicycle in 2019[3] contributed massive sums of money to the United States economy through spending on meals, transportation, lodging, gifts, and entertainment. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, bicyclists spent $83 billion in "bicycle tourism" and generated $97 billion in retail spending in 2017. This spending by recreational bicyclists contributes to the creation of over 848,000 jobs[4]. The Outdoor Industry Association also estimated in 2012 that all bicycling-related activities add $198 billion to the national economy, support nearly 1.5 million jobs, and generate nearly $26 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenue[5].

In just 5 years, the economic benefits of outdoor recreation, including bicycling, increased by nearly 23 percent.

State Economic Impact Studies

THE MIDWEST

The bicycling industry, bicycle tourism, and bicycle-related capital infrastructure projects also measurably benefit local, regional, and state economies. In 2019, the League of American Bicyclists ranked **Minnesota** the third most Bicycle Friendly State in the nation[6]. Overall, according to a 2016 study conducted by the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the bicycling industry—manufacturing, distribution, retail, and other services—contributed $486 million and 3,650 jobs to the Minnesota economy in 2014. Additionally, when direct and indirect economic contributions are combined, the bicycling industry supported a total of $779.9 million of economic activity in the State of Minnesota. The study also found that "bicycle commuting in the [Twin Cities Metropolitan Area] prevents 12 to 61 deaths per year, saving $100 million to $500 million."[7]

Michigan captured similar data in its 2014 study on the economic benefits of bicycling. The Michigan Department of Transportation estimated bicycling provides the state a total economic benefit of approximately $668 million annually. This measure, which includes retail spending, manufacturing, avoided health care costs, reduced absenteeism, and event and tourism spending, was described as a conservative estimate. It is possible that the actual economic benefits of bicycling exceeds that sum. The 2014 Michigan report indicates that bicycling should be a key component of larger economic development strategies, especially when considering the economic benefits of bicycle-related tourism[8]. Michigan placed fifteenth in the League of American Bicyclists' 2019 Bicycle Friendly State ranking[9].

A similar analysis on the economic impact of bicycles was conducted by **Wisconsin** in 2019. The Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation determined that bicycling supports an estimated 13,505 jobs and contributes $1.42 billion in consumer spending, $614 million in output/sales, and $83 million in state/local taxes to the Wisconsin economy annually. The report also estimates that bicycling leads to $300 million in health care cost savings[10].

In 2011, the **Iowa** Bicycle Coalition commissioned the University of Northern Iowa to produce an economic impact study for the Hawkeye state. The report, titled "Economic and Health Benefits of Bicycling in Iowa," found that both recreational and utilitarian bicycling produces $400 million in economic activity for the state and results in an estimated health care savings of $87 million a year[11].

PACIFIC COAST AND THE WEST

While it is evident that bicycling supports state economies in the midwest, similar benefits have been seen across the nation, notably in the West and on the Pacific coast. A 2016 report on the economic impact of **Colorado** bicyclists determined that excluding health benefits, bicycling has a $1.1 billion annual impact on the Colorado economy. This measure includes consumer spending, retail and manufacturing, and bicycle-related tourism. The report estimated an additional $511 million in annual health benefits from bicycling. Combined, the total economic and health benefits of bicycling in Colorado is approximately $1.6 billion[12]. Colorado was seventh in the League of American Bicyclists' 2019 Bicycle Friendly State ranking[13].

A 2017 study on the benefits of active transportation in **Utah** had similar findings. The report, compiled for the Utah Transit Authority, estimated that the $132 million spent on bicycle-related goods and services supports 805 jobs and contributes $26.8 million in annual income. When multipliers are included, the total economic impact inflates to $300 million in output, supporting almost 2,000 jobs and contributing $77 million in income. Bicycle-related tourism shows similar economic benefits. People spend $612 million on bicycle-related tourism, which can be linked to over 1,000 jobs and nearly $29 million in income. When direct bicycle-related tourism sales are combined with multipliers, the economic benefit includes output of $122 million, support for 1,500 jobs, and $46.7 million in income[14]. Utah was eighth in the League of American Bicyclists' 2019 Bicycle Friendly State ranking[15].

Washington has been named the most Bicycle Friendly State in the League of American Bicyclists' last ten annual rankings[16]. In 2020, the Washington Recreation and Conservation Office conducted an analysis of the economic benefits of outdoor recreation. It determined that in 2019, individuals participating in outdoor recreation (including bicycling) contributed $26.5 billion to the state economy. This spending supported an estimated 260,000 jobs with an average income of $44,000 a year, nearly $12 billion in wages for Washingtonians. The total spending—including direct, indirect, and induced—was $40 billion. Bicyclists alone contributed $2,916,891,339 in spending to the Washington economy[17]. While Washington is already a state popular for bicycling and outdoor recreation, the economic benefits of these activities are still expanding. The 2015 version of this report estimated that residents and visitors to the state contributed $21.6 billion a year to the state economy[18]. In other words, in just five years, the economic benefits of outdoor recreation, including bicycling, increased by nearly 23 percent.

NORTHEAST / NEW ENGLAND

A **New Hampshire** study conducted in 2020 focused on how annual investment in capital infrastructure projects leads to bicycle and pedestrian related economic benefits. The report concluded that the total impacts associated with bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure investment represent $21 million in business sales, $8.5 million in labor income, and support over 130 jobs in New Hampshire. Moreover, pedestrian and bicycle related businesses also have an outsized economic impact. These businesses annually support 240 direct jobs and approximately $35.4 million in sales. If multiplier effects are included in this estimate, these businesses account for around $48.7 million in sales. Additionally, bicycle-related tourism contributes sizable amounts to the state economy. New Hampshire bicycle-related tourism contributes $43 million in sales, nearly $24 million in value added, almost $14 million in labor income, and supports close to 400 jobs[19].

Vermont's economy has seen similar bicycling and walking related benefits. A 2012 study titled "Economic Impact of Bicycling and Walking in Vermont" showed that in 2009, bicycling and pedestrian related activities contributed $53.9 million to the state economy, led to $27.8 million in labor income, and supported 1,095 jobs[20].

The **New Jersey** Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center conducted a study of active transportation (bicycling and walking) in the state. It concluded that in total, all active transportation-related infrastructure, business, and events contributed $497 million to the New Jersey economy in 2011. This sum is equal to the projected economic benefits of the 2014 Super Bowl. The 2011 economic impact supported more than 4,000 jobs and generated $49 million in tax revenue[21].

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Regional/City Economic Impact Studies

PORTLAND, OREGON

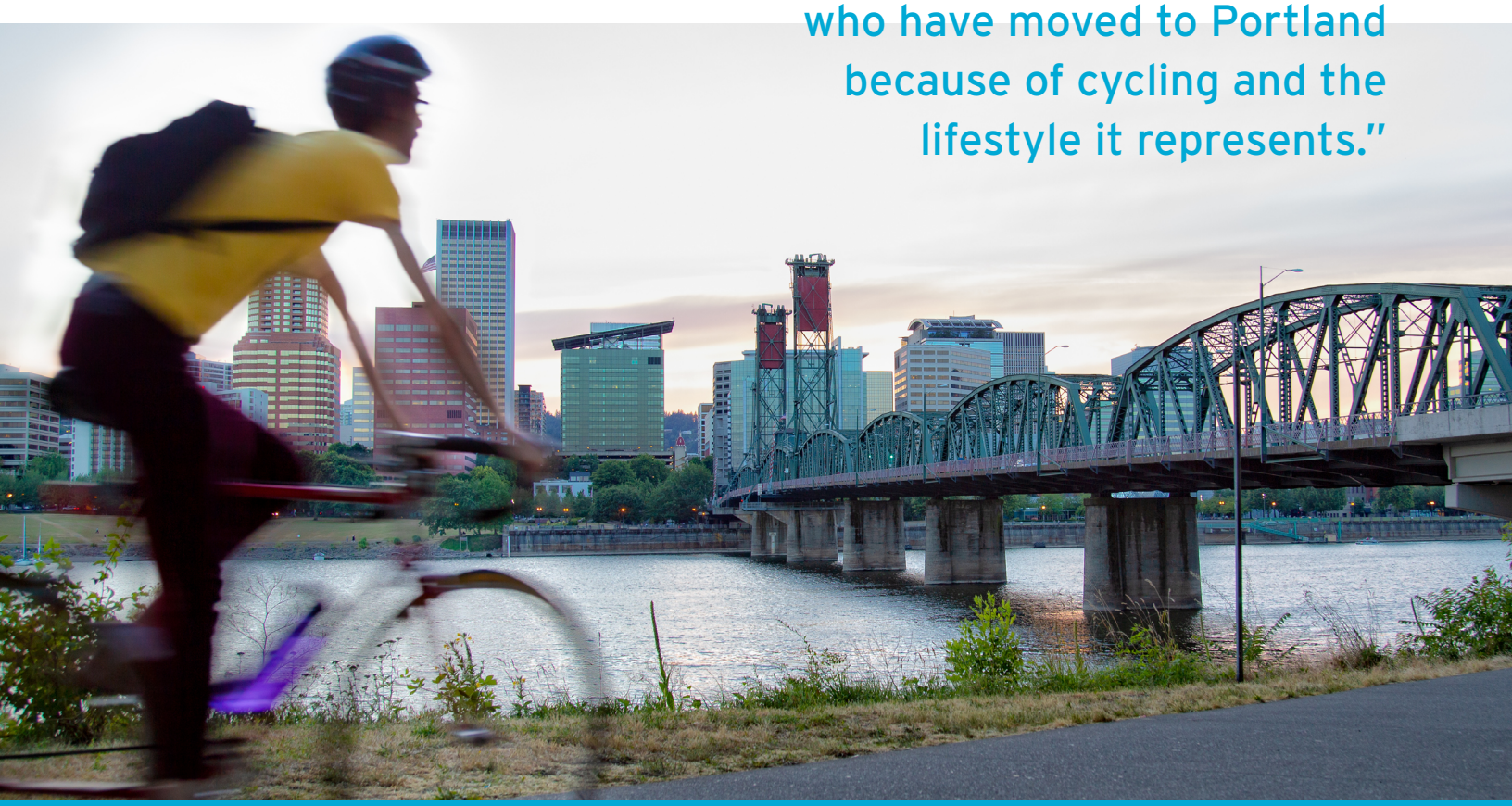
In 2008, The League of American Bicyclists named Portland, Oregon a Platinum-level Bicycle Friendly Community, the first city to achieve that designation[22]. Since then, Portland has consistently been named one of the most welcoming large cities for bicyclists in the United States and has quickly built a reputation centered around its bicycling culture. Portland's bicycle ridership tops 23,000 commutes per day, averaging 7 percent of all commute trips. When coupled with the city's 300+ mile bicycle infrastructure network, it's clear why it is such an attractive place to ride[23].

A June 2006 survey conducted by Alta Planning and Design determined that 80 percent of businesses that responded vastly believe that Portland's reputation as welcoming to bicyclists is good for business[24]. This positive impact is also mentioned in conversations with business owners: one bike shop owner, who reported six-fold revenue growth over a decade, stated, "we see many, many people who have moved to Portland because of cycling and the lifestyle it represents."[25]

Portland's bicycle industry comprises around 217 businesses that include retailers, manufacturers, and service businesses. When accounting for direct, indirect, and induced impacts, bicycle-related economic activity supports a total of 2,300 jobs with $82.7 million in labor income. The bicycle industry represents a total value added of $133.7 million annually and a total output of $315.5 million. In addition to these economic benefits, the industry also generates $10 million in state and local taxes each year[26].

While the Portland bicycle industry only represents a small portion of the city's local economy, reputation is everything. Bicycling is a deeply ingrained part of the city's culture, leading to increased bicycle tourism and numerous events centered around it—including bicycle-themed cafés and even the famous World Naked Bike Ride, a summer protest against global oil dependency. States and municipalities across the nation view Portland as a model and the reason that bicycles have had such a positive impact is no secret. Government officials, bicycle-related businesses, and everyday citizens see a direct causal relationship between safe, convenient bicycle infrastructure and the success of the local economy.

"...we see many, many people who have moved to Portland because of cycling and the lifestyle it represents."



Business Districts and Business Impacts

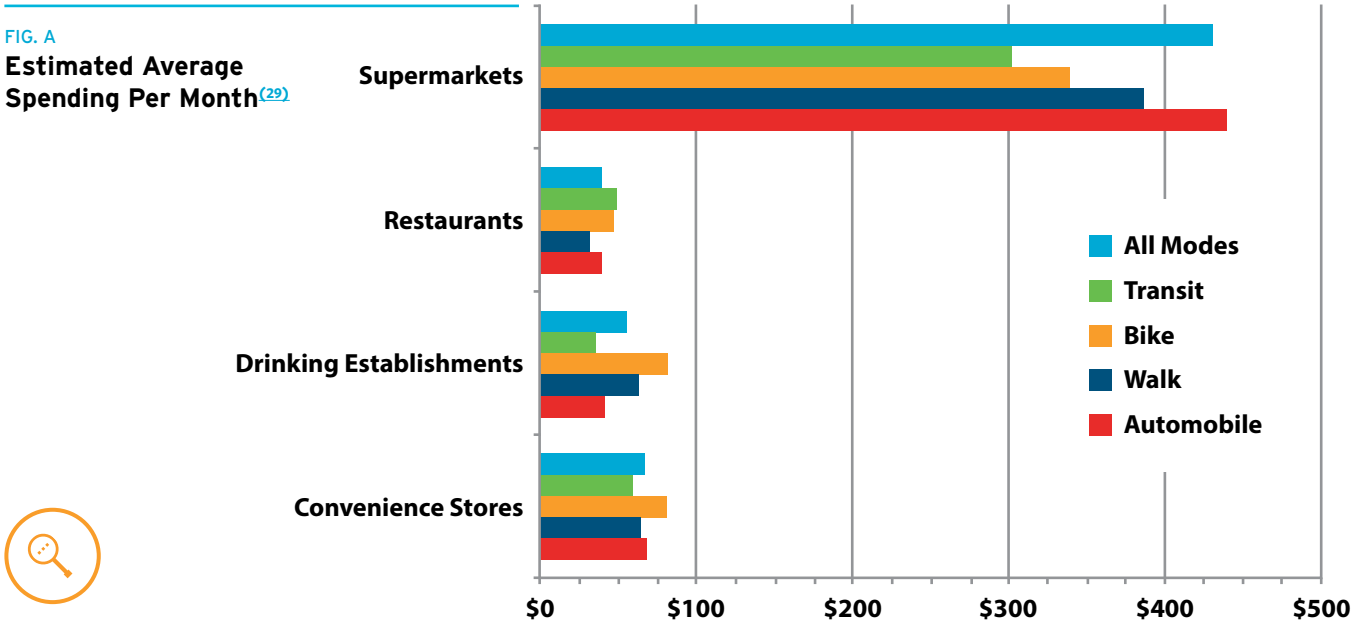
While transportation plans can set overarching standards for bicycle infrastructure, decisions about whether to construct a bike lane or install a bike share station are often made at local or even hyperlocal levels. Civic and neighborhood groups, business owners, and local politicos can sway the conversation in support of improved bicycle facilities or organize opposition to them. For these reasons, it is key for bicycle advocates to build relationships with these community stakeholders and present hard data that confirms businesses and neighborhoods benefit from investments in bicycle infrastructure.

While bicyclists and automobile drivers spend similar amounts per trip, bicyclists spend more overall at more locations (FIG.A). A 2012 study in Portland, Oregon, determined bicyclists are competitive consumers that spend similar amounts to automobile drivers. When trip frequency is accounted for, average monthly expenditures show bicyclists tend to spend more than those who drive[27].

A 2014 study published by University of California, Davis scholars came to the same conclusion as the Portland study. The researchers examined almost 1,900 shopping trips made in downtown Davis, California, after a new Target store opened. The data revealed bicyclists spent more per trip and took more frequent trips than automobile drivers. On average, bicyclists spent $70 more per month than drivers[28]. This research is significant because it shows bicyclists spending more per month at Target, a store comparable to a supermarket, the one location the Portland study did not.

FIG. A

Estimated Average Spending Per Month[29]

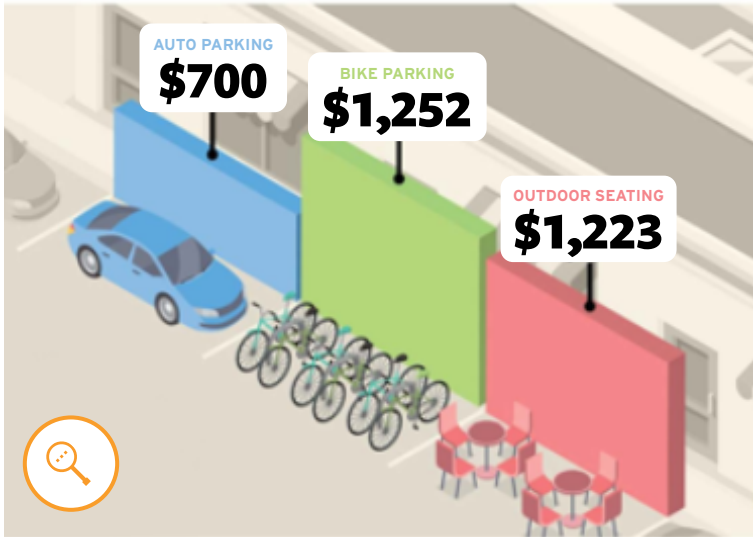


A Bloomberg CityLab article titled "No, Bike Lanes Don't Hurt Retail Business" argues that retailers often overestimate the importance of car parking and fail to see its many downsides, including congestion and low shopper turnover. The article analyzes a 2013 study by Kyle Rowe, a University of Washington researcher, on the impact of a bike lane on 65th street in Seattle, Washington, that necessitated the removal of 12 car parking spaces[30]. The study determined that after the bike lane was constructed (and the car parking spaces were removed), the corridor's sales index skyrocketed, growing by over 400 percent. While it is impossible to confirm the bike lane caused this increase, it clearly did not harm business either[31]. Rowe's study also analyzes a bike lane installed in the Greenwood district of Seattle. He determined that after the city removed an entire lane of traffic and some car parking spaces, the sales index in the corridor hardly changed. In the Greenwood example, the bike lane had, at worst, a neutral economic impact on retailers[32]. Rowe's study correctly asserts that bike lanes have no negative effect on nearby business and in some situations can have a positive economic benefit.

Opponents of safe, convenient bicycle infrastructure often cite the potential removal of on-street car parking as a reason for their hostility to such improvements, but the evidence proves such losses do not harm local businesses. In fact, the removal of on-street car parking can often lead to an economic benefit for businesses. A 2021 study conducted by Urbis in various Australian cities compared the economic activity generated by one on-street car parking space versus six bicycle parking spaces or a dining parklet within the same geographic footprint. The study determined an on-street car parking space generates an estimated $700 USD in 14 hours, while the bike parking and dining parklet generate roughly $1,252 and $1,223 USD respectively, in only 8 hours. In other words, converting an on-street car parking space to bicycle parking can lead to a substantial increase in revenue, potentially by as much as 78 percent (FIG. B).

FIG. B

Revenue Generated Per Day - by Different Curbside Uses[33]



Source: Urbis, 2021

Bicycle Parking and Storage

While the evidence proves bicyclists produce significant economic benefits for businesses, this is only possible when the appropriate bicycle infrastructure is present. Bicycle parking is a pro-business amenity that is essential to maximize economic spending by bicyclists. Bicycle parking typically comes in two forms: on-street bike corrals and traditional bike racks. Establishing sufficient bicycle parking is a priority for cities and businesses alike as it reduces the amount of bikes locked to nearby trees, benches, and railings.

Cities of all sizes across the country have installed in-street bicycle parking in what are known as bike and scooter corrals. A corral is usually a row of racks used to securely lock private and shared bicycles and scooters. A typical corral can accommodate 12 bicycles within an area the size of a car parking space. They are usually installed in public spaces or in front of businesses that request them.

There is widespread support for bike corrals among the business community. Across the country, businesses are increasingly willing to support replacing on-street car parking with on-street bike parking due to their clear economic benefits. The City of Portland, Oregon is a notable example of this. A 2015 survey of businesses within close proximity of a bike corral found strong support for biking parking. Over eight in ten respondents (84 percent) agreed that bike corrals enhance the street and neighborhood. Additionally, 67 percent stated that bike corrals increase foot and bike traffic in the area[34].

FIG. C1 **Acceptable Use**[35]

"Inverted-U" racks are an example of an acceptable rack design. These racks provide two points of contact, can secure a bicycle with a U-lock, and are securely anchored. They are also properly spaced from one another; and are located near the building entrance.

FIG. C2 **Unacceptable Use**[36]

Examples of bicycle racks that are not approved. The designs do not properly support bicycles and lead to improper and inefficient parking.

A majority of businesses responding to a survey said bike corrals enhance the street and neighborhood identity, help promote sustainability, increase transportation options for employees and patrons, increase foot and bike traffic, increase the visibility of the businesses from the street, and improve the sidewalk environment for patrons[37] (FIG. D).

Not all bicycle parking is the same. Easy-to-use, functional bicycle parking encourages people to rely on bicycles for transportation (FIG. C1). In fact, research has demonstrated that people are more likely to use a bicycle if their destination offers convenient and secure bicycle parking[38]. If bicycle parking is poorly located or appears insecure, bicyclists will not use it, potentially causing them to use other modes of transportation or not patronize a business they otherwise would (FIG. C2).

The District of Columbia had around 100 bike corrals installed or planned as of January 2020[39]. D.C. installs 400 bike racks annually and also has zoning regulations that require new construction to include both long- and short- term bicycle parking[40].

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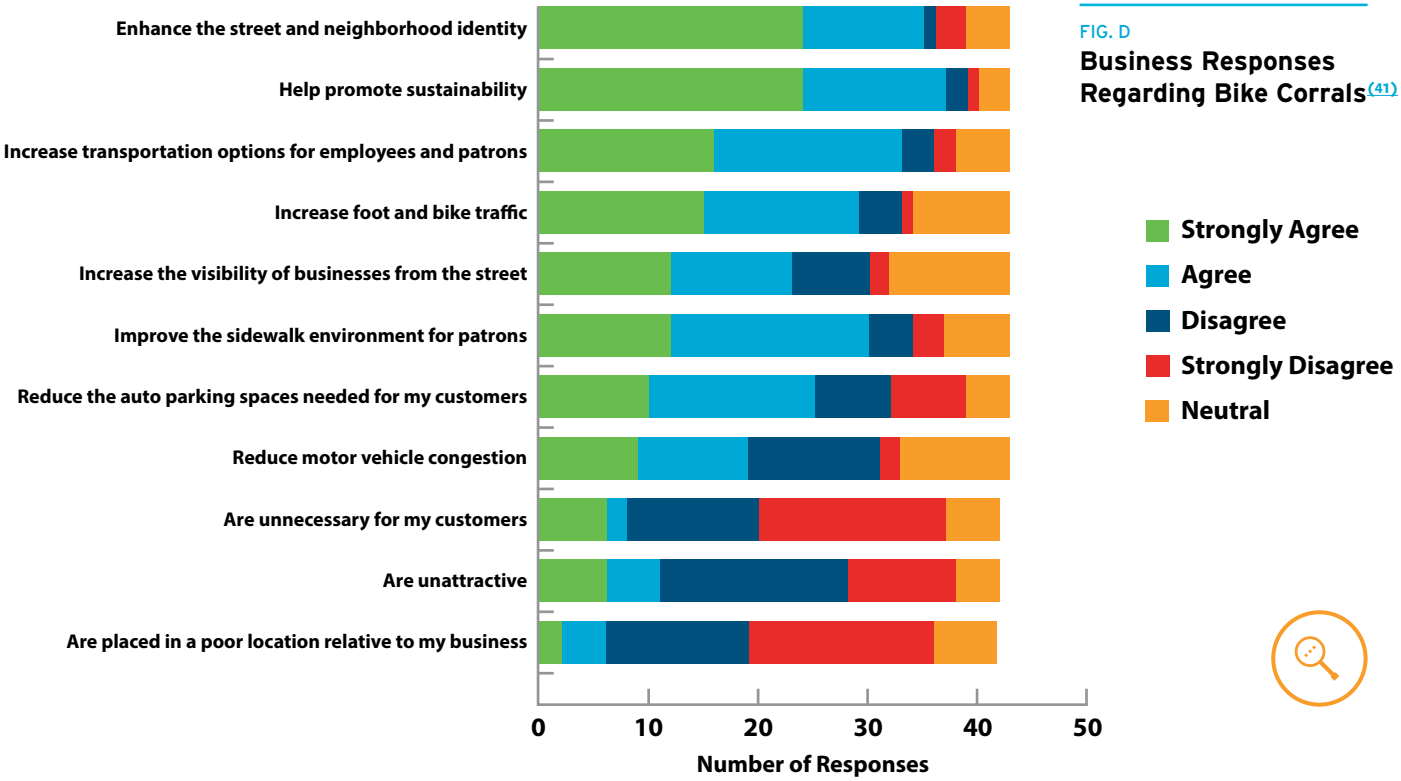

FIG. D

Business Responses Regarding Bike Corrals[41]

Docked and Dockless Shared Micromobility

Bicycle and scooter sharing has exploded since this report was first published in 2009. As of 2017, there are 119 cities with bike share programs. The largest networks are in New York, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., but many other urban areas have sizable networks[42]. This does not include dockless bike share companies like Spin, Limebike, Bird, which have large quantities of dockless bicycles (primarily e-bikes) available throughout major American cities.

Lyft operates shared micromobility systems in 15 markets, including nine bike share systems. The company works with city partners to operate the five largest bike share systems in the United States (New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, and Boston)[43]. A 2021 Multimodal Report by the company determined that its shared microbility systems, especially bike share, help improve public transit connectivity and support underserved and minority populations. Over 53 percent of riders self-identify as members of racial or ethnic minority groups. Additionally, 31 percent of Lyft-operated bike share stations across the country are located in low-income areas as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. This demonstrates that racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse populations rely on shared microbility systems. The Lyft report also states that its shared micromobility systems improve public transit connectivity, with 79 percent of riders using its services to connect to public transportation. 70 percent of members of Lyft operated bike share systems don't own or lease a personal vehicle, showing a reliance on more sustainable modes of transportation[44].

Capital Bikeshare, Washington, D.C.

Capital Bikeshare, Washington, D.C.

In 2020, Capital Bikeshare, which operates in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area celebrated its 10-year anniversary with 27 million all-time rides[45]. Back in 2008, D.C. was the first jurisdiction in North America to launch a bike share system and it has since seen massive success. As of May 2019, the system contains 553 stations, 9,498 docks, and over 4,500 bikes. As of February 2020, Capital Bikeshare has 29,843 total members (annual and 30-day)[46].

Capital Bikeshare has produced numerous economic benefits for the metropolitan area and its businesses. A January 2015 report titled "Business and Bikeshare User Perceptions of the Economic Benefits of Capital Bikeshare" analyzed the impact of Capital Bikeshare through a survey of businesses located near Capital Bikeshare stations. Of the businesses that responded, 20 percent reported a positive impact on sales and 70 percent noted a positive impact on the area. A majority of the responding businesses (59 percent) supported Capital Bikeshare expansion and 61 percent had either positive or neutral responses to replacing on-street car parking spaces with Capital Bikeshare stations[47].

A 2014 Member Survey Report compiled by Capital Bikeshare showed similar support for the system among its users. 16 percent of respondents used Capital Bikeshare to make an induced trip they would not have otherwise made and 23 percent reported spending more because of it[48]. A similar report by Capital Bikeshare in 2016 indicated that eight in ten survey respondents were at least somewhat more likely to patronize an establishment that is Capital Bikeshare accessible[49].

In addition to the economic benefits, Capital Bikeshare also leads to changes in transit mode. 71 percent of respondents to the 2016 survey reported they use Capital Bikeshare at least occasionally to access bus stops, MetroRail, or commuter rail. 18 percent of those respondents do so at least six times per month. More than eight in ten members said they bicycle more since joining. Capital Bikeshare also causes a reduction in car usage. 55 percent of respondents drove a car less often and 20 percent reduced their driving miles. Additionally, 60 percent use ride hailing services like Uber and Lyft less frequently. The average Capital Bikeshare member saved $631 annually in personal travel costs, making the total annual cost saving for all members $19,982,000[50]. In 2021, Washington, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser included a goal of ensuring all residents live within a quarter mile of a Capital Bikeshare station in the District's budget[51].

Platinum Level Bicycle Friendly Business, Dero, celebrating bike to work day

Bicycle Friendly Businesses

Thousands of businesses in the United States are becoming more welcoming to bicyclists in order to expand their customer base, improve employee health, and enjoy new economic benefits. The League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly Business program recognizes companies that promote bicycling.

As of August 2021, 1,458 companies in all 50 states and Washington, D.C. have been designated as Bicycle Friendly Businesses for their efforts to encourage bicycling. These businesses employ 609,046 employees and serve millions of customers.

Bicycle Friendly Businesses do things like provide bike parking, choose bike-accessible locations, and provide incentives for their employees to ride to work. The list of Bicycle Friendly Businesses includes over 35 Fortune 500 companies, including Walmart Headquarters in Bentonville, AR, and Facebook Headquarters in Menlo Park, CA[52]. Those are also the largest Bicycle Friendly Businesses in the program, with 23,000 and 19,000 employees respectively. The Bicycle Friendly Business list also includes over 30 companies that have only one employee or are all-volunteer, including St. Petersburg Bicycle Co-op in St. Petersburg, FL, and BikeDFW in the Dallas-Fort Worth, TX region. Out of the 1,458 current Bicycle Friendly Businesses as of August 2021, 919 have 50 or fewer employees and 117 have 1,000 or more employees. 218 Bicycle Friendly Businesses are bike shops.

That so many companies apply to the League's Bicycle Friendly Business program and make investments in bicycle infrastructure and benefits highlights the significant economic returns of supporting bicycling.

Bicycle Shops and Bicycle Industry Related Businesses

There are direct economic benefits for bicycle shops and bicycle industry related businesses such as manufacturers when states and communities invest in making biking a safer and easier option for more people. This is largely because when more people ride bicycles, there are more customers to make purchases at bicycle shops. There are nearly 11,500 bicycle retail shops in the United States, employing almost 75,000 people[53].

Organized Rides and Bicycle Tourism

Organized rides and bicycle tourism contribute significantly to economic growth across diverse states and localities as well as the national economy. From the Southwest to the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Great Lakes, bicycle tourism (largely fueled by organized event rides) breathes new life into local economies.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis estimated the economic output of all outdoor recreation to be $734 billion in 2018, a larger share of the nation's GDP than agriculture and petroleum and coal. The Bureau of Economic Analysis also determined that bicycling contributes roughly $96 billion in annual retail sales[54]. A 2017 report by the Outdoor Industry Association produced similar results to the Bureau, stating that bicyclists spent $83 billion in bicycle tourism and generated $97 billion in retail spending that year. This bicycle recreation spending supported the creation of over 848,000 jobs[55]. Additionally, the 2012 edition of the report found that all bicycling-related recreation activities add $198 billion to the national economy annually[56].

A 2015 Michigan Department of Transportation report titled "Community and Economic Benefits of Bicycling in Michigan" examined the impact of bicycle tourism on the state. It found that out-of-state participants in organized bicycle events spent $15.6 million in 2014 and were responsible for $21.9 million in economic impact for the state. Self-supported long distance touring bicyclists have an average individual economic impact of $760 when considering direct and indirect effects[57]. Each year, Michigan hosts organized rides in every corner of the state. From the Apple Cider Century in the southwest corner of the lower peninsula to the Ore to Shore Mountain Bike Epic in the upper panhandle, similar positive economic impacts are present even in geographically and culturally diverse areas. One Michigan organized ride with an especially large economic impact is the Bell's Beer Iceman Cometh Challenge, a point-to-point mountain bike ride across 29 miles of pavement, dirt, railroad tracks, and ski trails. The annual event often boasts 5,500 participants who cumulatively spend $2.35 million. Of that sum, $1.2 million was spent by participants who live further than 50 miles from the event[58]. This demonstrates the draw of Michigan's bicycle tourism industry and the massive amount of spending that these tourists contribute to the state's economy.

Bicycle tourism has had a similar positive economic impact in western North Carolina. The 23 counties in the Appalachian region of the state have seen increased bicycle tourism in recent years as organized rides become more popular in the southern Blue Ridge Mountains. A 2015 study titled "Bikes in Beds: How to Maximize Bicycle Tourism in Haywood County and Western North Carolina" was produced by Kostelec Planning for bicycle organizations serving western North Carolina. The research determined that bicycle tourism has an estimated $14 million annual economic impact in the region. Clearly bicycle tourists spend a lot of money, but they often spend more than their non-bicyclist counterparts. The study found that bicycle tourists tend to stay in lodging for an average of 3.7 nights, more than the average standard tourist who stays 2.5 nights. Bicycle tourists spend more on the lodging and on dining, transportation, and other purchases during their lengthier stay[59]. Chipley Consulting developed a similar economic impact study of the region in 2017. It determined that the average bicycle tourist spends $189.66 per day. This spending supports 1,702 jobs, funds $43.3 million in labor income, and generates $15.3 million in taxes per year[60]. Bicyclists have been a boon for western North Carolina's tourism industry, revitalizing the area and bringing millions of new dollars to its communities.

Conclusion

Bicycling has long been popular among diverse groups of Americans in both rural and urban areas. This popularity has only increased in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, when bicycle sales and ridership skyrocketed in response to a national bike boom. It is evident that when bicycling is safe, convenient, and accessible, more individuals will choose it as a mode of transportation or recreation. Communities that have bicycle infrastructure that supports bicycling as a means of transportation and recreation have outsized economic benefits by attracting residents and tourists alike to business districts.

Everyone benefits from improved bicycle infrastructure. It gives individuals more transportation choices and allows them to travel in a way that improves their health and physical fitness. It also helps businesses by making it easier for customers to reach their storefronts, spend more, and build loyalty. Put simply, bicycle infrastructure brings neighborhoods together and strengthens their hyperlocal economies, leading to massive national economic benefits.

This report was intended to be an updated version of the League's 2012 publication on the economic benefits of bicycle infrastructure. New research is conducted each year, time and time again proving the significant link between people who bike and strong, resilient economies. While we can't fit every economic benefit in one report, the League will continue our work of analyzing the positive impacts of bicycles on our website, BikeLeague.org and data.bikeleague.org. Stay tuned for more information on how bicycles lead to job creation, public health savings, lower congestion, and more in future updates.

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ABOUT THE LEAGUE

For generations past and to come, THE LEAGUE represents bicyclists in the movement to create safer roads, stronger communities, and a Bicycle Friendly America. Through education, advocacy and promotion, we work to celebrate and preserve the freedom cycling brings to our members everywhere.

WE BELIEVE

— Bicycling brings people together.

— When more people ride bikes:

— Life is better for everyone;

— Communities are safer, stronger and better connected;

— Our nation is healthier, economically stronger, environmentally cleaner and more energy independent.

OUR VISION

is a nation where everyone recognizes and enjoys the many benefits and opportunities of bicycling.

OUR MISSION

is to lead the movement to create a Bicycle Friendly America for everyone. As leaders, our commitment is to listen and learn, define standards and share best practices to engage diverse communities and build a powerful, unified voice for change.

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