

Fact Sheet
Non-Motorized Use of the Vasa Pathway - A Case Study of Economic Impacts
July 14, 2014

Note: The following information has been taken from a report entitled "The Vasa Effect: Non-Motorized Use of the Vasa Pathway - A Case Study of Economic and Social Impacts." The report was sponsored by Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation Trails and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The analysis and reporting were prepared by Avenue ISR, a Traverse City based research and strategy consultancy.

Non-motorized use of the Vasa Pathway brings substantial economic benefit to the Traverse City area, including during non-peak travel periods and also produces substantial economic activity in the State of Michigan. Local and Michigan decision makers can take greater advantage of these potential gains by improving available trails, supporting events on the Vasa Pathway and giving greater visibility to the Vasa Pathway in communications.

- The study period lasted from July, 2013 to April, 2014.
- Infrared trackers placed at three key points of access around the Vasa Pathway, coupled with survey data collected from both daily users and event participants, show that there are 55,000 visits to the Vasa Pathway annually.
- Visitation is more intense during the Winter months. Visits in December, 2013 and January, 2014 (combined) were generally higher than in the months from August through November.
- Most (81 percent) daily users live within the Traverse City area; almost half (49 percent) of daily users report visiting the Vasa Pathway at least once per week; visitation is intense and concentrated within a core group of users.
- Four events held at the Vasa Pathway– Bell's Iceman Cometh Challenge, Mud, Sweat & Beers Fat Tire Fest, the North American Vasa Race and The Remembrance Run – were examined in detail using surveys of event participants.
 - For non-local daily users the Vasa Pathway is typically not the primary reason for a trip for Traverse City; by contrast, 98 percent of non-local event participants indicate the event they attended on the Vasa Pathway was the primary reason for visiting the Traverse City Area...it is why they came.
 - Events on the Vasa Pathway during the 2013-2014 study brought more than 13,000 participants along with friends, family members and others to the Traverse City area from outside; the majority of these visitors came from Southern Lower Peninsula Michigan.
 - Event participants are more likely to be male and are more affluent and well-educated than regional norms; median household income of \$125,000 is nearly twice that of the typical Michigan traveler.
 - Overall direct spending in the Traverse City area was \$2.6 million, an average of \$718 per group. Much of this spending comes outside of the peak summer travel season; use of public services is fairly limited.

- Because event participants have generally had positive experiences of the region, they are a potential source of future revenue and of word of mouth referral.
 - 98 percent indicate they are likely to recommend the area to friends or family
 - 92 percent plan to return for an overnight visit/vacation or other event within the year
 - 93 percent plan to return for an overnight visit/vacation or other event in future years

- These non-motorized sports enthusiasts spend an average of more than \$3,700 per year on equipment, travel and other goods and services; this produces \$23.5 million of direct spending in the State of Michigan from just the 6,200 unique individuals identified in this analysis.

Ultimately, this study shows that the Vasa Pathway is both a valued local amenity and an important draw for bikers, skiers and other non-motorized users from around the state. These visitors provide millions of dollars of direct spending in the region and in the State of Michigan.