



# Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation Trails, Inc.

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## VASA Economic Impact Study

**Objective:** Collect and analyze data to understand usage and economic impact of use of and events at the VASA Pathway on the local economy. A prototype tool was developed for the DNR to use to collect data for events on all Pathways.

**Action Taken:** Daily use counts and onsite surveys were launched in August 2013. Surveys were sent to event participants in Mud, Sweat & Beers Fat Tire Fest, the Remembrance Run, Bell’s Iceman Cometh Challenge, and the North American Vasa Festival of Races.

**Funding:** The study was commissioned by Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation Trails (TART) in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The project was completed with the assistance of the Traverse Bay Economic Development Corporation (TBEDC) with generous support from Traverse City Tourism, Bell’s Iceman Cometh Challenge, the North American Vasa, and the Traverse City Track Club.



**Results:** Non-motorized use of the Vasa Pathway brings significant economic benefit to the Traverse City area, in particular, during non-peak travel periods. Non-motorized users also produce substantial economic activity in the State of Michigan. Local and state 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 marketing and communication efforts.

- The Vasa Pathway is visited more than 55,000 times a year by daily users and event participants for biking, skiing, walking, bird-watching and other non-motorized activities.

- Visitors to the Vasa Pathway 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Overall direct spending in the Traverse City area generated by events was \$2.6 million, an average of \$718 per group; much of this spending comes outside of the peak summer travel season.
- 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
- Because event participants have generally had positive experiences of the region, they are a potential sources 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

