

Executive Summary, Research Readiness Level Assessment, and Technology Transfer

Investing in Bicycle Infrastructure to Spur Statewide Economic Growth Through Bicycle Tourism

Research Objectives

The objective of the research was to conduct a robust economic impact analysis based on current recreational bicyclist events in the state of Nebraska to better understand the benefits of bicycle tourism on the state. These analyses would estimate the direct, indirect and induced economic impacts of bicycle tourism and recreational bicycling in Nebraska. It would also discuss specific ways in which the State's bicycle infrastructure could promote or inhibit the development of bicycle tourism and recreational activity.

The final report included economic impacts at multiple applicable geographies. The results are essential for NDOT's as it considers the benefits of bicycle tourism against potential costs.

Research Benefits

This work provided an evidence base for the economic impacts of planning and capital investments in bicycle facilities. Benefits also included identifying the direct, indirect and induced economic impacts to local governments, as well as NDOT. Ultimately, the NDOT should be able to more accurately describe the benefits of bicycle tourism as it considers the cost of associated infrastructure improvements

Principal Investigators

Daniel Piatkowski (P.I.)

Fadi Alsaleem (Co P.I.)

University of Nebraska

NDOT Lead TAC Member

**Ryan Huff, Chief Strategy
Officer**

Background

Bicycle tourism is proving highly beneficial to local economies, particularly in small towns and rural areas. Bicycle tourism has a proven economic boost to states.

In Nebraska, designated routes in rural areas and on-street bicycle infrastructure outside of cities are limited. There are individual efforts to connect communities via rail-to-trail projects; but no organized effort to facilitate the creation of bike routes and build bike related features into highway projects. This stemmed from the perception of liability risk and the additional costs. Signed routes:

- (i) direct bicycle traffic to suitable routes and away from more less suitable ones (such as busy freight corridors),
- (ii) capitalize on existing bicycle facilities in communities and regional ongoing rails-to-trails projects,
- (iii) aid in long-term planning for prioritizing bicycle treatments where they are most likely to be used and foster economic development in communities across Nebraska.

NDOT is considering the development of a state bicycle route, and concurrently this research assessed the economic impact of such signed routes so as to better inform NDOT bicycle-related planning activities and return-on-investment of taxpayer dollars. The research team reviewed the economic impacts of bicycle tourism events in Nebraska to further explain the benefits of such events.

Conclusion

Bicycle tourism is a growing industry that has been shown by prior studies to contribute significantly to the economy of numerous states. The economic benefits of recreational bicycling are not limited to the direct effects of the transactions of bicyclists in related industries, but also spillover effects such as the reduction of automobile activity and its associated costs to society, or the decrease of the costs of obesity and inactivity to the healthcare system. This study focused on the former and provided a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the economic impacts derived from recreational bicycling expenditure, as well as an assessment of the implications of bicycling events and activity for Nebraskan communities along with local and state governments. It found that bicycle tourism events generate many millions of dollars for governments; however, event organizers see potential being limited by DOT planning and cooperation.

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Interested in finding out more?
Final report is available:
[HERE](#)

NDOT Recommendations Based Off of Research Project

This research conducted the very first study on an economic impact based on current recreational bicyclist volumes in the state of Nebraska. This preliminary study provided insights for future research, such as but not limited to:

- A study to focus on the expenses incurred by local road authorities to host bicycle tourism events and covering direct costs such as traffic control, etc. Such a study, in combination with this report, would serve as the basis for a cost-benefit analysis of bicycle tourism in the State of Nebraska.
- A comparative study of the recreational bicycling industry and other industries that employ public roads to host recreational races.
- Explore/research the cost components associated with
 - Safety/capacity improvements for bikes and bike events
 - What is needed and how much it costs
 - Tort liability issues (as a cost)
 - Explore what "improvements" are being requested by bike event organizers

- As provided by Ryan Huff, Lead TAC Member

Research Readiness Level (RRL) Assessment

Level 2: Applied Research/Proof Concept

More supported Research is needed

RRL 2

Technology Transfer

Webinars/Presentations

- Webinar for the Non-Profit organization Bike Walk Nebraska on the Economic Impacts of Bicycling:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMrPJutnjIA&t=520s>

This brief summarizes Project SPR-P1 (20) M098
“Investing in Bicycle Infrastructure to Spur Statewide Economic Growth Through Bicycle Tourism”
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