

# Economic impacts

Motorized use trails are important to tourism in rural communities. Communities throughout Wisconsin host non-local trail riders, and in return, these trail riders spend money in our communities. So, how much do motorized recreationists spend? Where is this money spent? And how does this spending translate in economic stimulus for residents?

Answering these and other questions about local economic impact served as the primary impetus behind the Cheese Country Trail study.

**T**he Cheese Country Trail is a multiuse trail system that meanders through 48 miles of rural Wisconsin, from Monroe to Belmont and Mineral Point. It is open to motorized and non-motorized uses, including all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), utility terrain vehicles (UTVs), snowmobiles, off-road dirt bikes, mopeds, motorcycles, horses and horse-drawn conveyances, bicycles, and hikers.

Local stakeholder groups and Cooperative Extension collaborated to study the number, characteristics, and perceptions of Cheese Country Trail users, with the goal of improving users' trail experiences and helping local businesses and governments create tourism-related economic development strategies. During the 12-month study (Nov. 2010–Oct. 2011), 74 local volunteers spent more than 1,400 hours collecting data. They conducted a total of 683 two-hour trail observations and 730 face-to-face interviews.

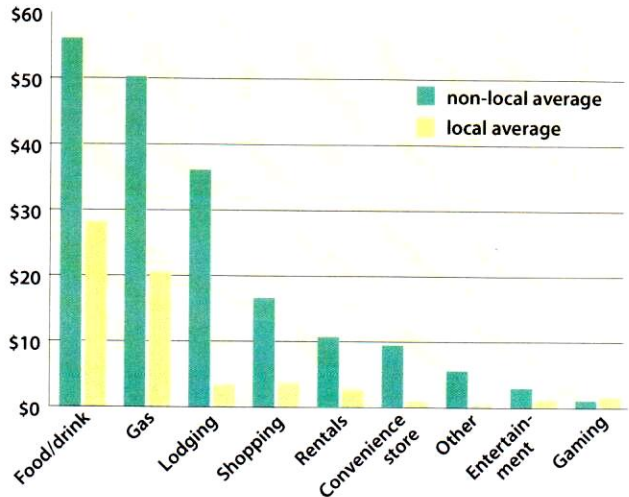
This is one of three "Results at a Glance" fact sheets that highlight key information from the full report.

## Trail-related user spending

- Individual trip expenditure patterns differed between local trail users and non-local trail users (figure 1).
- On average, individual non-local trail users spent between \$175 and \$220 per trip, depending on the time of year.
- Trail users' total spending exceeded \$15 million during the 12-month study (see table on back).
- Non-local trail users infused the local economy with more than \$13 million during the 12-month study.
- Non-local trail user spending supported almost 190 local jobs and contributed almost \$3 million in employee compensation for residents of Green, Lafayette, and Iowa Counties.
- Jobs created compensated each employee with an average of over \$28,000 per year.



Figure 1. Trail user expenditures by category





## Trip characteristics

- The majority of users entered the trail at either Monroe or Darlington.
- Twenty-six percent of trail users spent at least one overnight. Camping and hotel/motel were the most common types of lodging, and most overnight visitors stayed in Darlington, Gratiot, or Monroe (figure 2).
- During the study, campgrounds were available along the trail only in Darlington and Gratiot. As the study was completed, Monroe opened a route from the trailhead to the Green County Fairgrounds, where camping is also available. Those who camp or rent cabins tend to spend at least two nights away from home.
- On average, hotel and motel guests stay 1.7 nights per trip.
- Many trail users also dine, shop, and visit area attractions (figure 3).

## For more information

To learn more about the Cheese Country Trail, visit the Tri-County Trails website: [www.tricountytrails.com](http://www.tricountytrails.com).

For more "Results at a Glance," see *Characteristics of Trail Users* and *Future Directions*.

The full report is available on the Green County UW-Extension website: <http://green.uwex.edu>.

Expanded 1-year total spending of trail users

Category	Non-local user spending	Local user spending	Combined spending
Food & drink	\$3,813,501	\$980,850	\$4,794,350
Gas	\$3,820,084	\$603,798	\$4,423,882
Lodging	\$2,428,122	\$124,149	\$2,552,271
Shopping	\$1,152,515	\$79,177	\$1,231,692
Rentals	\$871,667	\$71,540	\$943,207
Convenience	\$566,639	\$115,346	\$681,985
Other	\$604,251	\$123,060	\$727,311
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,256,779</b>	<b>\$2,097,920</b>	<b>\$15,354,699</b>

Figure 2. Location of trail users' lodging by type

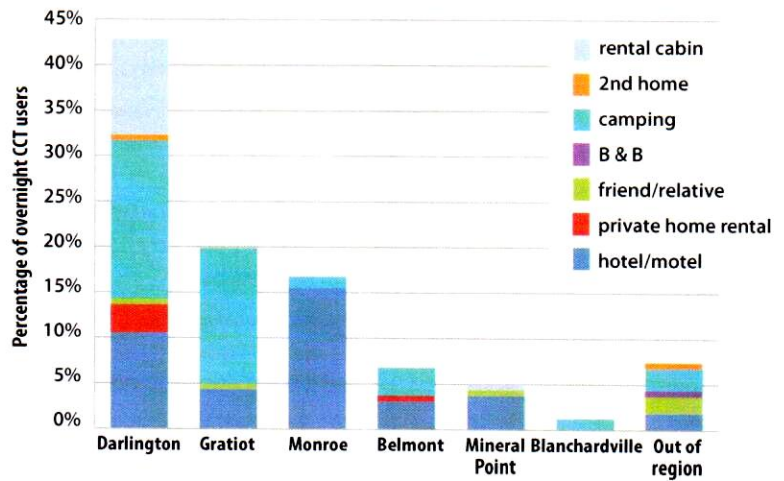


Figure 3. Percentage of users participating in other trip-related activities

