

The Economic Benefits of Trails

TRAIL
MONITOR

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Background

Go for Green, the Active Living and Environment Program, is proud to present the first in a series of Fact Sheets about trail development in Canada.

Three priorities for Go for Green's Rails to Greenways initiative are:

- Researching and promoting the social, heritage, economic, health and environmental benefits of preserving Canada's discontinued rail corridors for trails;
- Distributing useful and up-to-date resource material to local groups involved in trail development in Canada;
- Promoting Canadian trails to Canadians and international visitors.

Railway lines were originally developed for trade, transportation and communication purposes. Today, many have been discontinued as a rail service but provide a wonderful opportunity as a recreation and/or active transportation corridor. Trails can be excellent economic development initiatives in both rural and urban areas.

"Since Confederation, more than 64,000 Km of railway have been constructed. A series of brilliantly-engineered road beds, viaducts and other feats of 19th c. building vividly reflect, as no mere museum can, the geographical and historical forces in Canada."



"As the majority of the population moves from activities like tennis and spectator sports to ones like walking and birding, the movement to make the countryside more accessible will intensify... Another (spectacular) example of the demographics driven movement to make use of the great Canadian outdoors is the Canadian Rails to Greenways Network."

David Foot
Boom, Bust and Echo

This fact sheet will provide you with researched facts about trail use, the amount of money spent by trail users, statistics on job creation related to trail development, adjacent land values and the economic impact of new money to a community when trails are developed.

There is ample evidence that trails not only enable Canadians to live actively in a healthier environment, but also that trails most often economically benefit both adjacent landowners and the local business community. Everyone wins!

Being informed about the economic benefits of trails will increase the likelihood that abandoned railway lines will be converted into recreation and active transportation trails, enabling people to live more actively and enjoy Canada's great outdoors.

Trail Development and Use

- Current Canadian research indicates that people are taking shorter but more frequent vacations, closer to home, with a more family-oriented focus. Trails can meet this demand (Schutt 1997).
- Among the ten most popular physical activities of Canadians are: walking (84%), bicycling (44%) and jogging (24%). Walking, a common trail activity, has consistently been the top ranked activity in research conducted in 1981, 1988 and 1995 for both sexes and across all age groups (CFLRI 1996).
- In the summer of 1998, the Capital Regional District of Victoria, British Columbia, recorded a high of 1700 users in a 24 hour period on a popular section of the *Galloping Goose Trail*. In addition to the traditional walkers, joggers and cyclists, counters have observed more in-line skaters and electrical scooters driven by older adults and disabled people (CRD, Victoria).
- *The Bruce Trail* in Ontario had more than 410,000 user visits over the twelve month study period July 1994 until June 1995. 70.3% of these users felt the trail was a primary reason for visiting the area. 26.8% of users stayed away from home at least one night. The average number of nights away was 3.8. Therefore, there were about 417,605 (410,060 x 26.85% x 3.8) nights spent by trail users in some kind of accommodation (Schutt 1997).

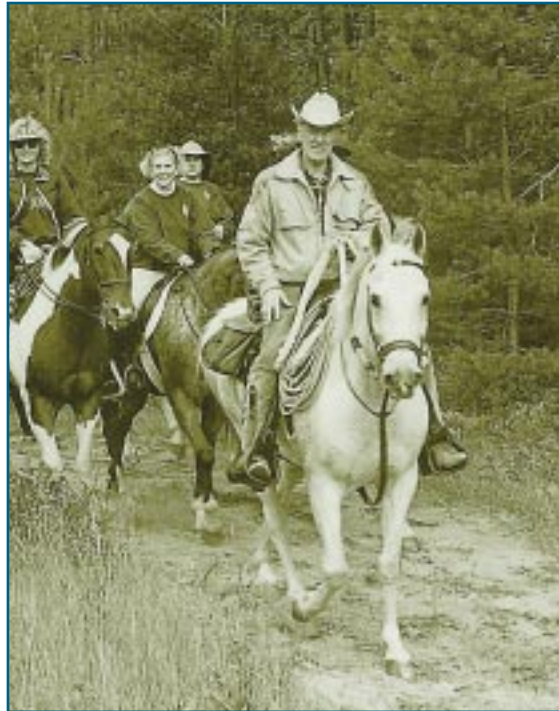
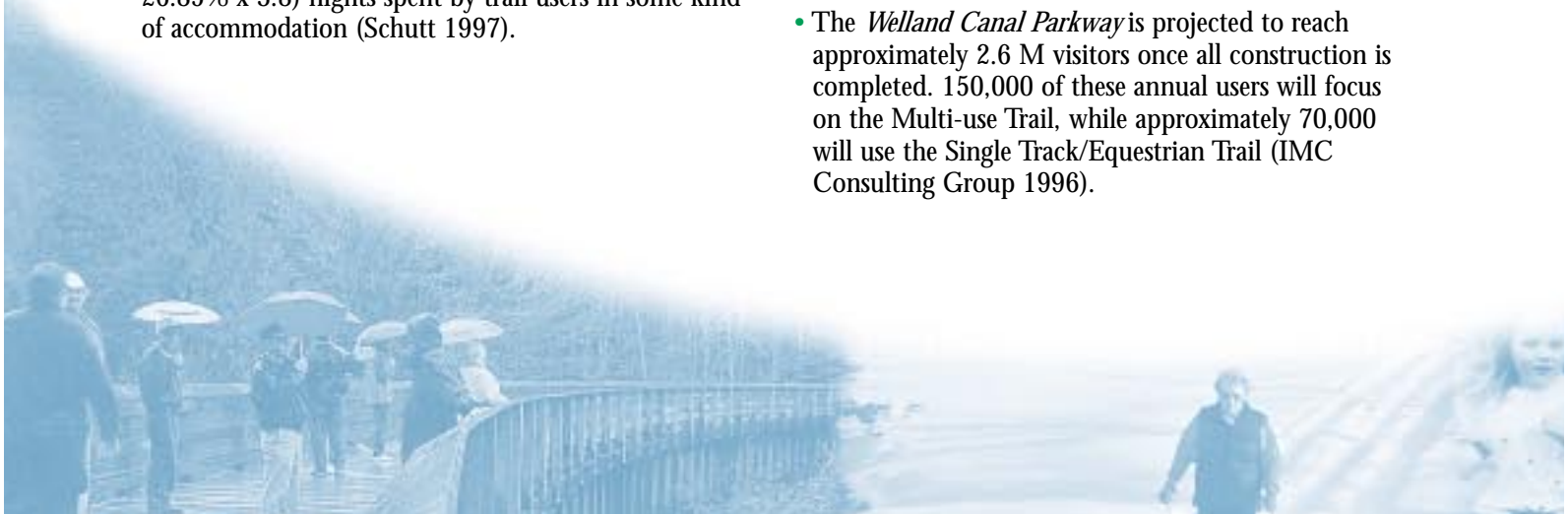


Photo: Courtesy of Marg Webb of Ontario Trail Riders

- Over half of all adjacent landowners and three-quarters of actual landowners over which the *Bruce Trail* traverses, use the trail. The big difference between landowners and adjacent landowner use is that actual landowners tend to view the trail with a sense of stewardship, as it crosses their land (Schutt 1997).
- In 1996, the increase in domestic tourism in Quebec, due to *la Route verte* was estimated to be 26,400 visits within the province (Vélo Québec 1998).
- In Canada, bicycle tour companies logged around 28,000 traveler-days in 1993. Most trips lasted more than one day and 73% were sold as pre-arranged packages. Average trip length was 5.6 days, with daily spending of \$116 (Vélo Québec 1998).
- In Toronto, pathway counts in the summer of 1995 hit a high of 12,671 users, recorded over eight hours at Centre Island on Toronto Island Park (Municipality of Metro Toronto 1995).
- In 1995, there were an estimated 1,100,000 visits to the 14 *OVT (Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail)* sites examined. The *OVT* goes through the states of Virginia, Tennessee, North and South Carolina (Moore & Barthlow 1998).
- The total length of trails operated by the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs in 1997-98 was 49,000km (Ecologists Limited 1998).
- The *Welland Canal Parkway* is projected to reach approximately 2.6 M visitors once all construction is completed. 150,000 of these annual users will focus on the Multi-use Trail, while approximately 70,000 will use the Single Track/Equestrian Trail (IMC Consulting Group 1996).



Money Spent by Trail Users

Walkers/Hikers:

- 70% of all trail users spent money on non-durable goods during their visit to the *Bruce Trail*. Of those 70%, the average expenditure per group was \$60.99. Seventy-five percent of this \$60.99 was spent within a 10-km corridor on either side of the trail, resulting in a high local economic benefit. Each group had an average of 3.12 persons (Schutt 1997).

- Visits to the *OVT* (*Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail*) sites were found to generate a significant economic impact in 1995. On average, users spent \$49.05 per person per day on their trips. The average daily expenditures on the *OVT* were: Restaurants \$11.29, Food & Beverages \$2.69, Lodging \$12.29, Retail Purchases \$7.35, all other expenses \$8.49. (Moore & Barthlow 1998).

- In 1995, the use of the *OVT* (*Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail*) sites generated over \$22.4M in total industrial output, \$12.4M in total income and \$14.1M in total value added for the 15 Trail counties (Moore & Barthlow 1998).

- Analyzing the spending of 556 trail users from nine trails in Nova Scotia found that the average spending per party for Non-Nova

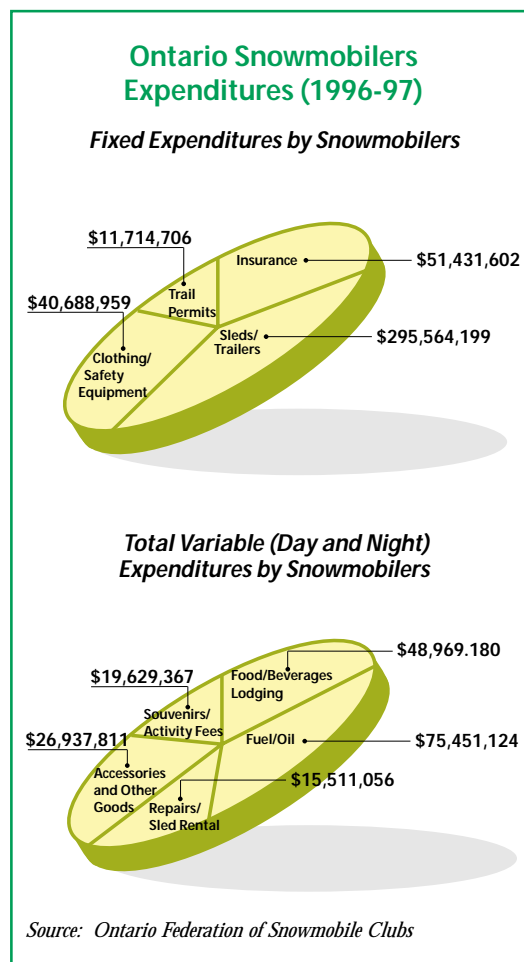
Scotians is about \$1,210. This breaks down to about \$1,120 per party beyond a 30 minute drive of the trail and about \$90 within a 30 minute drive of the trail (*Nova Scotia Hiking Trail Study*).

- Nova Scotian tourists (people travelling more than 80 km or who stay overnight as part of their trail visit) spend about \$210 per party, of which about \$130 occurs beyond the 30-minute range of the trail (*Nova Scotia Hiking Trail Study*).

Snowmobilers:

- In 1996-97, Ontario snowmobilers spent over \$580 M on both fixed expenses such as equipment, clothing, permits and insurance; and variable expenditures incurred while snowmobiling such as fuel, food, maps etc.

- The total direct impact of tourist related recreational snowmobiling in Quebec is estimated at \$413M (1995-96 season). Snowmobilers in Quebec inject \$327M in the Quebec economy, North American snowmobilers (from outside Quebec) who take trips in Quebec, using their own snowmobiles, inject almost \$18M into the Quebec economy, spending an average of \$871/trip in the province (Zins Beauchesne et associés 1997).



Cyclists:

- The number of trips taken on *la Route verte* by non-local day-trippers in 1996 was over 135,000. Each cyclist spent \$22.50-\$25 per trip resulting in total spending of \$3M to 3.4M (Vélo Québec 1998).

- The number of trips on *la Route verte* taken by locals was over 2.5 M, spending from \$7-\$8 per trip, resulting in total spending of \$17M to \$20M (Vélo Québec, 1998).



The Economic Benefits of Trails

Job creation and more

- The trails in New Brunswick have over 80 volunteer Local Trail Sponsor groups, and employ around 1,500 people (average 6 months/year) (*New Brunswick Trails Council*).

- Direct expenditures of *Bruce Trail* users annually now support over 1,100 full-time equivalent jobs in the province of Ontario, with at least 191 of these supporting local jobs in the communities along the *Bruce Trail* (Schutt 1997).

- Direct spending on non-durable goods (restaurants, accommodation, car expenses, ...) was around \$4.4M within the *Bruce Trail* region, a gross (direct and indirect) impact of around \$10M. (Schutt 1997).

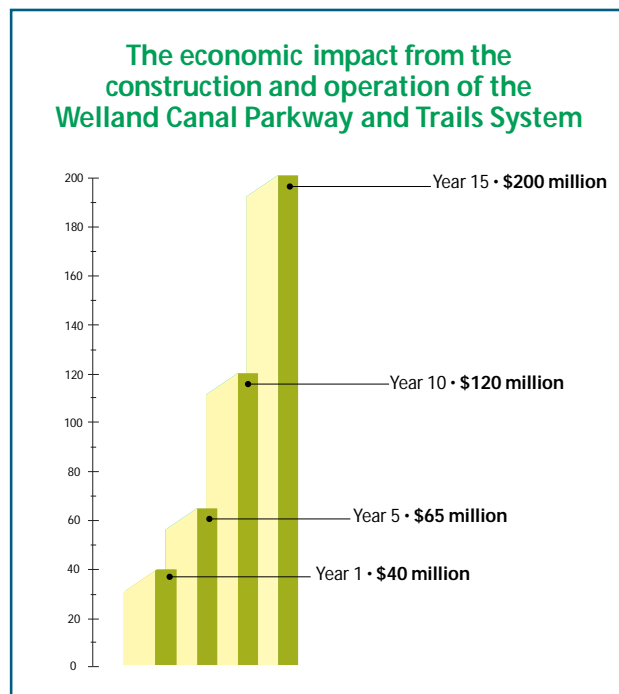
- 33% of *Bruce Trail* users interviewed indicated that they had made purchases (during the past year) of durable goods relating to their use of the Bruce Trail. These purchases made over a 12 month period had a direct impact of over \$20M and a gross (direct and indirect) impact of almost \$47M, which supported almost 900 jobs (Schutt 1997).

- Total economic activity generated in Ontario by snowmobiling in the 1996/97 season was over \$900 M while total net contribution to provincial GDP (Gross Domestic Product) was estimated at \$300M (Ecologistics Limited 1998).

- The value of goods purchased because of the *Northern Central Rail Trail* in Maryland for 1993, is estimated to total in excess of \$3.3M (PKF Consulting 1994).

- A survey of trail users in Minnesota found that users who traveled less than 25 miles spent an average of just \$0.61 to \$2.68 per day, while those traveling 25 miles or more spent up to \$53.20 per day on average (PKF Consulting 1994).

- The annual *Welland Canal Parkway* construction budget of \$2.5M will lead to the creation of approximately 40 direct jobs, and 50 indirect jobs (IMC Consulting Group 1996).

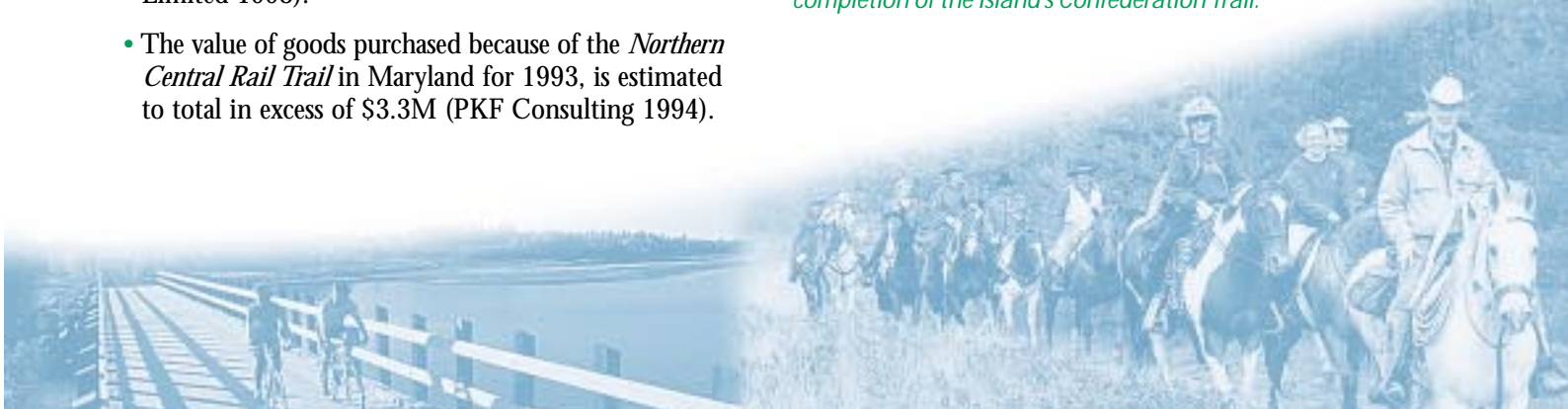


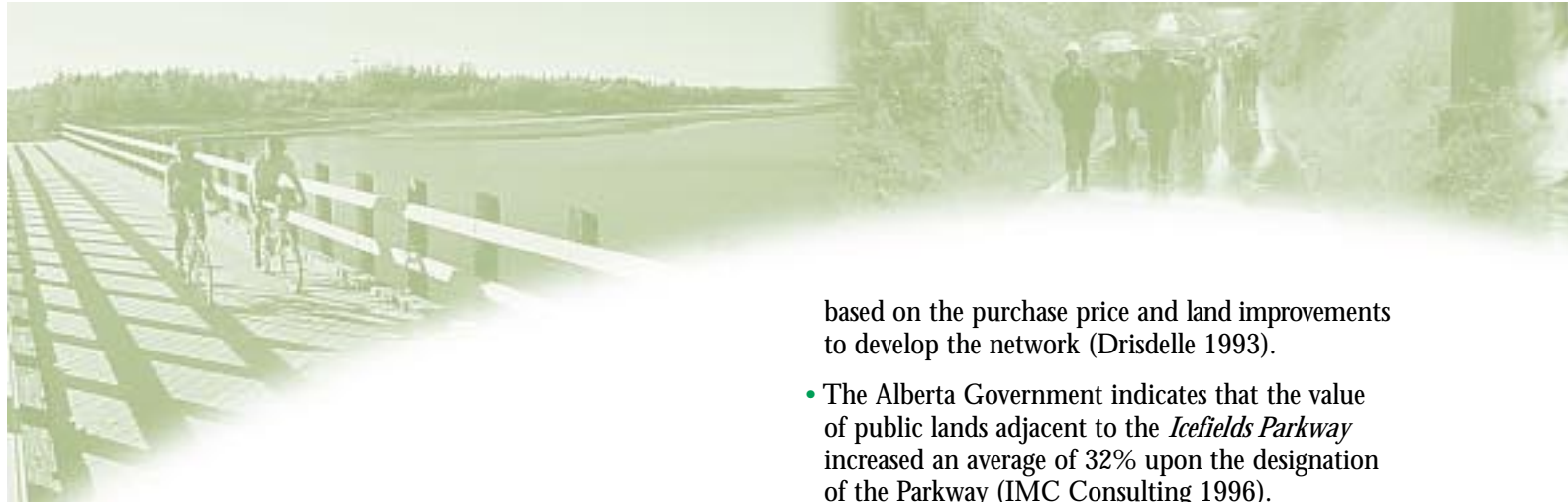
- Approximately \$218M in annual tourist expenditures are projected for the *Welland Canal Parkway* supporting more than 7,600 jobs and creating almost \$14M in provincial sales tax and about \$13.7M in federal GST (IMC Consulting Group 1996).

- The combined economic impact from the construction and operation of the *Welland Canal Parkway and Trails System* will grow from about \$40M in Year 1, to about \$65M by Year 5, approximately \$120M by Year 10 and reach over \$200M by Year 15 (IMC Consulting 1996).

- Based on an investment of approximately \$2.5M per year over 15 years, the *Welland Canal Parkway* would generate a total annual impact of about \$5M, resulting from over \$4.8M in total income, around \$250,000 in provincial taxes and close to \$300,000 in federal taxes (IMC Consulting 1996).

"In 1994 the total expenditure by tourists who visited Prince Edward Island for pleasure was \$130.2M. Part of the province's Strategic Plan for P.E.I.'s Tourism Industry included completion of the Island's Confederation Trail."





Property Values and Trails

- 70% of adjacent landowners felt that overall the *Bruce Trail* was a good neighbor when taking all aspects into account. Positive impacts included: getting in touch with nature (64%), recreational opportunity (53%) and health benefits (24%) (Schutt 1997).
- Nearly 70% of the real estate agents contacted used the *Bruce Trail* as a selling feature when advertising property near the trail (Schutt 1997).
- The results of surveying real estate agents that sell properties in the *Bruce Trail* area revealed that 80.5% felt that the *Bruce Trail* would either make a home easier to sell or that the presence of the trail would have no effect at all (Schutt 1997).
- In Minnesota, 87% of home-owners believed that the trails either increased the value of their properties or had not affected them at all (Moore & Barthlow 1998).
- The increase in adjacent property value upon completion of a Provincial Trail System for New Brunswick equates to an increase in property taxes collected by the Provincial Government of approximately \$100, 000 per year,

based on the purchase price and land improvements to develop the network (Drisdelle 1993).

- The Alberta Government indicates that the value of public lands adjacent to the *Icefields Parkway* increased an average of 32% upon the designation of the Parkway (IMC Consulting 1996).
- A survey of homeowners with properties adjacent to the *Burke-Gilman Trail* in Seattle found that 75% of owners who had bought property adjacent to the trail after it opened felt that their home would be easier to sell, and 48% expected a value premium (PKF Consulting 1994).
- For the *Burke-Gilman Trail*, property near, but not adjacent to the trail, sold for an average of 6% more than comparable property elsewhere (and property immediately adjacent to the Trail sold for up to 0.5-1% more) (Moore & Barthlow 1998).
- The real estate agents surveyed along the Boulder Greenbelt, in Colorado, estimate a \$4.20-\$10.20 decrease in property values per foot *away* from the greenway. The largest value increases were for houses with views of or immediate access to the greenbelt (PKF Consulting 1994).
- Increases in property value range from 5 to 32%, according to a report by the U.S.National Parks Service that cites examples from across the country. Increases are particularly noted near greenways that highlight open space rather than highly developed facilities. (Royal Commission on the Future of the Toronto Waterfront 1992).

Name of Trail	Location	Length
Bruce Trail	Niagara Escarpment to Tobermory, Canada	725km
Burke-Gilman	Seattle, WA, USA	19.5km
Confederation Trail	Prince Edward Island, Canada	270km
Galloping Goose Trail	Victoria, British Columbia, Canada	100km
Heritage Trail	Dubuque, Iowa, USA	41.8km
Icefields Parkway	Alberta, Canada	n/a
Northern Central Rail-Trail	Maryland, USA	21mi
Overmountain Victory	Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina and	
National Historic Trail	South Carolina	482.7km
Route Verte	Quebec, Canada	3.400km
St. Mark's Trail	Northern Florida, USA	256.7km
Welland Canal Parkway	Ontario, Canada	56km
Waterfront Trail	Ontario, Canada	325km

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(for a complete bibliography, visit our website at www.goforgreen.ca)

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