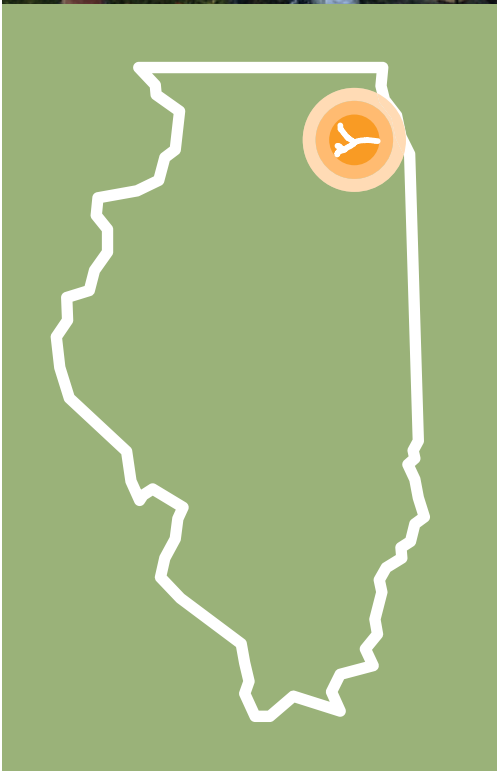


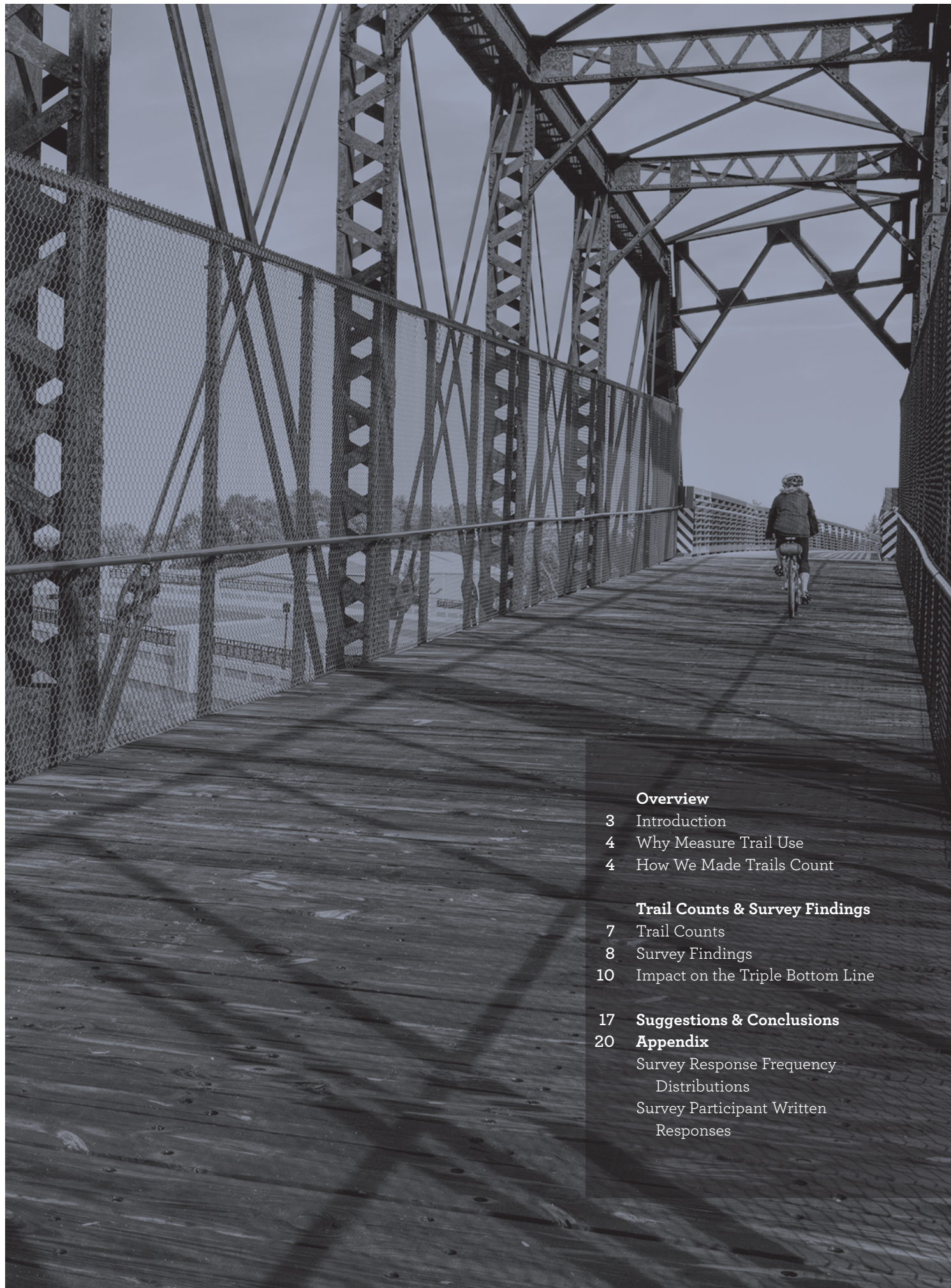


Making Trails Count: **Illinois Prairie Path**

Summer/Fall 2013



A study provided by Trails for Illinois



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The Illinois Prairie Path stretches 61 miles over five branches in west suburban Chicago, connecting 18 communities in three counties with a crushed-gravel, multi-use trail. Established in 1963, it was America's first rails-to-trails conversion.

In the summer of 2013, the Illinois Prairie Path Not-for-Profit Corporation hired Trails for Illinois to measure the impact of its namesake trail on a Triple Bottom Line: economic activity, environmental stewardship, and health and wellness. A trail's impact on the Triple Bottom Line depends on the number of trail visits, who the visitors are, and their activity while on the trail. Generally, to measure the Triple Bottom Line benefits of a trail, Trails for Illinois collects

- 1) Trail count data to measure how much use the trail gets, and
- 2) Survey data, to discover who those users are, and how they are using it.

From late-July to mid-October 2013, seven infrared counters tallied trail traffic around the clock. Meanwhile, 28 volunteers gave nearly 200 hours of their time to survey trail users on the path, collecting nearly 700 surveys overall.

Survey data was sent to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office of Recreation and Park Resources for statistical analysis, while Rails-to-Trails Conservancy analyzed data from the trail counters. A summary of the results begins on page 7.



Why Measure Trail Use

In Illinois, the roles trails play in improving our lives are undervalued in part because trail benefits are not measured.

Fierce competition for scarce public dollars requires that projects build a returns-based case for investment. With only anecdotal information to argue for trail development in Illinois, trail agencies and supporters struggle to articulate the return on investment that trails provide. This hurts arguments for building new trails, but also can limit funding and lower the willingness to maintain, improve, and program existing trails, like the Illinois Prairie Path.

Measuring the Illinois Prairie Path's impact on a Triple Bottom Line helps the Illinois Prairie Path Not-for-Profit Corp. and the County of DuPage prioritize trail improvements, plan new trail connections, promote trail use, and attract grants and development. As part of Trails for Illinois' larger initiative, Making Trails Count in Illinois, collecting data from the Illinois Prairie Path helps build the case for more investment in trails statewide, and for capturing more value from the trails we have.

How We Made the Illinois Prairie Path Count

Counting Trail Use

With assistance from the County of DuPage, we installed Trafx infrared trail counters at seven locations along the Illinois Prairie Path:

- Main branch: A counter each in Maywood and Villa Park
- Wheaton: A counter each on the north branch and the south branch of the trail
- Aurora branch: One counter
- Batavia branch: One counter
- Elgin branch: One counter

With the exception of Aurora and Maywood locations, the counters captured trail use around the clock for 8-10 weeks, collecting hourly and daily use data from late July to mid-October, 2013. Because of equipment losses, we collected six weeks of data in Maywood, and recovered no data from the Aurora location.



The Maywood counter recorded use from 1-4pm on weekdays 2-3 times higher than counts at any other location. Suspecting equipment malfunction, we discovered a more interesting cause: day care. A local day care center used the trail right-of-way each afternoon as a playground in line of sight of our counter, the sensor tallying games of tag, impromptu wrestling, and jump rope as trail use. Since a common feature of trails is providing safe recreational space, we included it in Maywood's count data.

From these samples, our trail count partner, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, produced an estimate of annual use at each location, using a proprietary model that incorporates five million individual counts from 58 trails nationwide. Their estimates range from approximately 33,000 visits annually on the Batavia spur to more than 193,000 on the north branch in Wheaton. A summary of annual estimates by location is on page 7.

Surveying Trail Users

With guidance from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Office of Recreation & Park Resources (ORPR), Trails for Illinois developed an intercept survey instrument with 33 questions. The survey instrument is available as a PDF at <http://trailsforillinois.org/maketrailscount>.



In late-June, trail survey volunteers attended our one-hour survey collection orientation at the Wheaton Park District to familiarize themselves with the survey instrument and a preferred approach to inviting trail users to complete a survey. After orientation, 28 volunteers chose to serve three-hour shifts from late-July to mid-September between 7am and 7pm near the installed trail counters, selecting from a schedule that included at least one weekday and a Saturday or Sunday, chosen randomly, at each location.



To reduce selection bias, we instructed volunteers to ask every third trail user to complete a survey trailside. Volunteers could also offer the survey with a return envelope or a business card with the survey's on-line address for the trail user to complete later. Every trail user selected to complete a survey was offered a Trails for Illinois sticker for their time.

Volunteers collected 607 surveys from late-July to mid-September, serving 198 hours over 35 shifts on 24 days. Trail users completed 45 surveys on-line, and returned 37 surveys by mail. Overall, the ORPR received 689 surveys for coding and analysis. A summary of our findings begins on page 8. A frequency distribution table and written comments are included in the appendix.

A black and white photograph of a forest path. The path is covered in fallen leaves and leads into the distance, flanked by trees with bare branches. The title "Trail Counts & Survey Findings" is overlaid in the upper left quadrant.

Trail Counts & Survey Findings



Illinois Prairie Path

122,016

Average of estimated annual use

Estimated annual use by location

Batavia: 33,767

Maywood: 183,971

Villa Park: 185,012

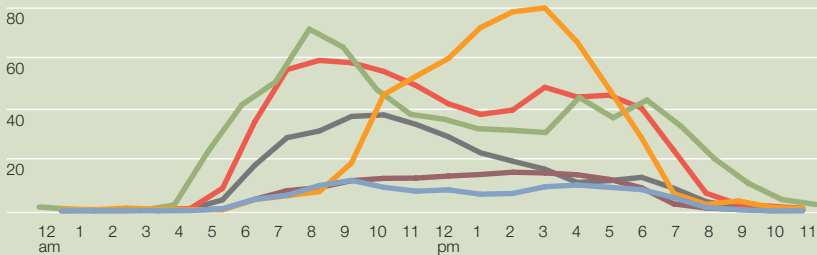
Wayne: 44,288

Wheaton North: 193,514

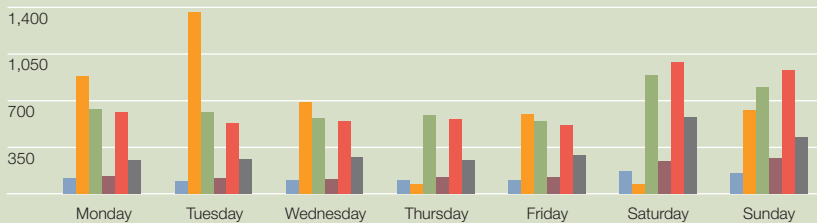
Wheaton South: 91,541



Average Hourly Use



Average Daily Use



- Batavia
- Maywood*
- Villa Park**
- Wayne
- Wheaton North
- Wheaton South

Count Dates

July 30 to October 19, 2013

*August 13 to September 21, 2013

**August 12 to October 19, 2013

Survey Findings

Who Uses the Illinois Prairie Path

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's Office of Recreation and Park Resources used SPSS, a standard statistical analysis tool, to analyze survey data from 689 surveys. Many of the participants answered every question, but not all. We use the word "participant" to indicate those who filled out the survey, and the word "respondent" to refer to those who answered a specific question.

The totals indicated (N) refer to the number of respondents to the question.

- 96% of respondents were from Illinois, and 77% reported living in a 601XX zip code for most of the year. Overall, respondents hailed from 100 different zip codes, including a handful from Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri, Colorado, Washington, Texas, and a student from South Korea. (N=679)
- 54% of respondents identified as male, 46% as female. (N=657)
- More than half (56%) of respondents were over the age of 45. 19% were younger than 35. (N=652)
- 91% of respondents identified themselves as Caucasian, 2.4% Latino, 2% Asian, and 1% African American. (N=662)
- More than 95% of respondents rated their general health as excellent or good. (N=661)
- More than 70% of respondents had earned at least a Bachelor's degree; more than half of them reported having at least a graduate degree. (N=667)
- 17% of respondents reported household incomes of more than \$200,000. Sixteen percent (16%) reported household incomes under \$50,000. Sixty-six percent (66%) of respondents indicated household incomes between \$51,000 and \$200,000. (N=591)

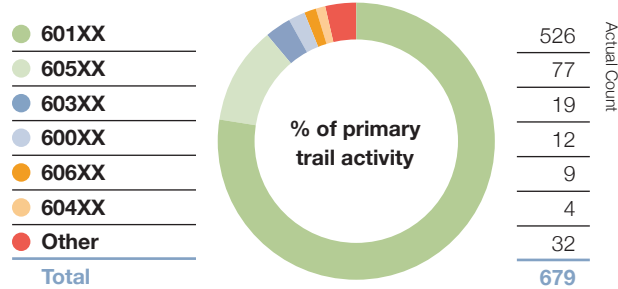
Reported Health

Trail Users' Health Rating By Age

Age	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total
18-25	35	21	3	0	59
26-35	25	34	7	0	66
36-45	36	48	4	0	88
46-55	102	88	7	1	198
56-65	82	76	6	1	165
66 or older	37	37	2	0	76
Total	317	304	29	2	652

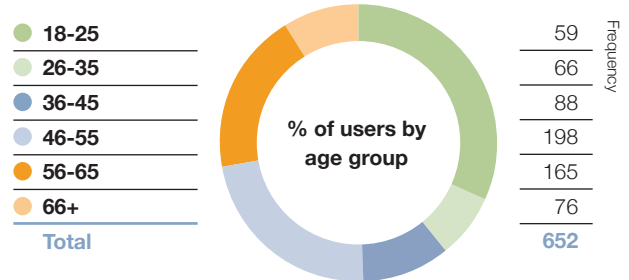
Zip Code

Trail Users' Home Zip Code



Age

Trail Users' Age at Time of Survey



Household Earnings

Household Income	Frequency
Under \$50k	97
\$51k-\$100k	190
\$101k-\$150k	127
\$151k-\$200k	75
\$201k-\$250k	45
\$251k-\$300k	23
\$301k-\$350k	12
\$351k+	22
Total	591

Survey Findings

Impact on the Triple Bottom Line—Health

- 94% of respondents selected physical activity/exercise as a reason for trail use that day. (N=671)
- The three most common reasons given for using the trail were physical activity/exercise (632), re-fresh/clear your mind (382), and stress-relief (361).
- 66% of respondents aged 36–45 cited stress relief as a reason for visiting the trail.
- The top five trail activities reported by respondents during their visit were bicycling (519), walking (309), nature enjoyment (268), running (214) and socializing (120). (N=687)
- For nearly 60% of respondents across all demographics, cycling was their primary activity on the trail. (N=678)
- Overall, running (17%) and walking (13%) were the next two most reported primary activities. But respondents older than 56 reported walking as a primary activity more often than running.
- Walking a pet was the primary activity for 3.5% of respondents.
- 76% of respondents indicated they would use the trail between 1–3 hours that day (N=669). Nearly 75% estimated their average time on the trail per visit as 1–3 hours.
- Nearly 26% of respondents older than 55 reported an average time per visit of two hours.
- Of the 293 respondents who were visiting the trail with others, 60% reported being with a family member. Forty-five said they were with children. (N=652)

To reduce adult health risks, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week

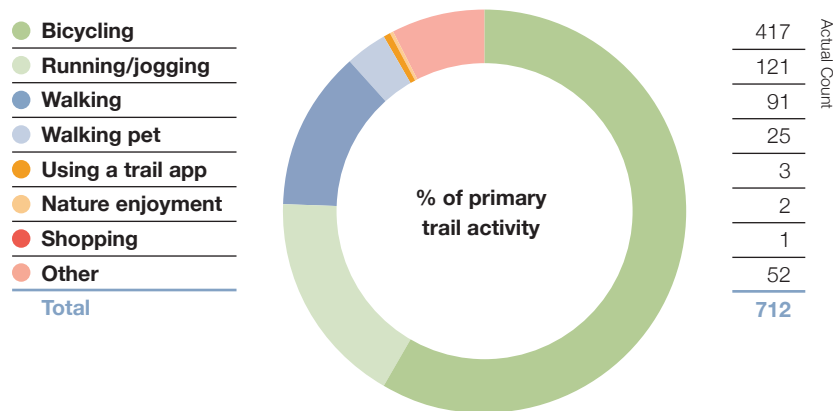
Stress Relief

By Age

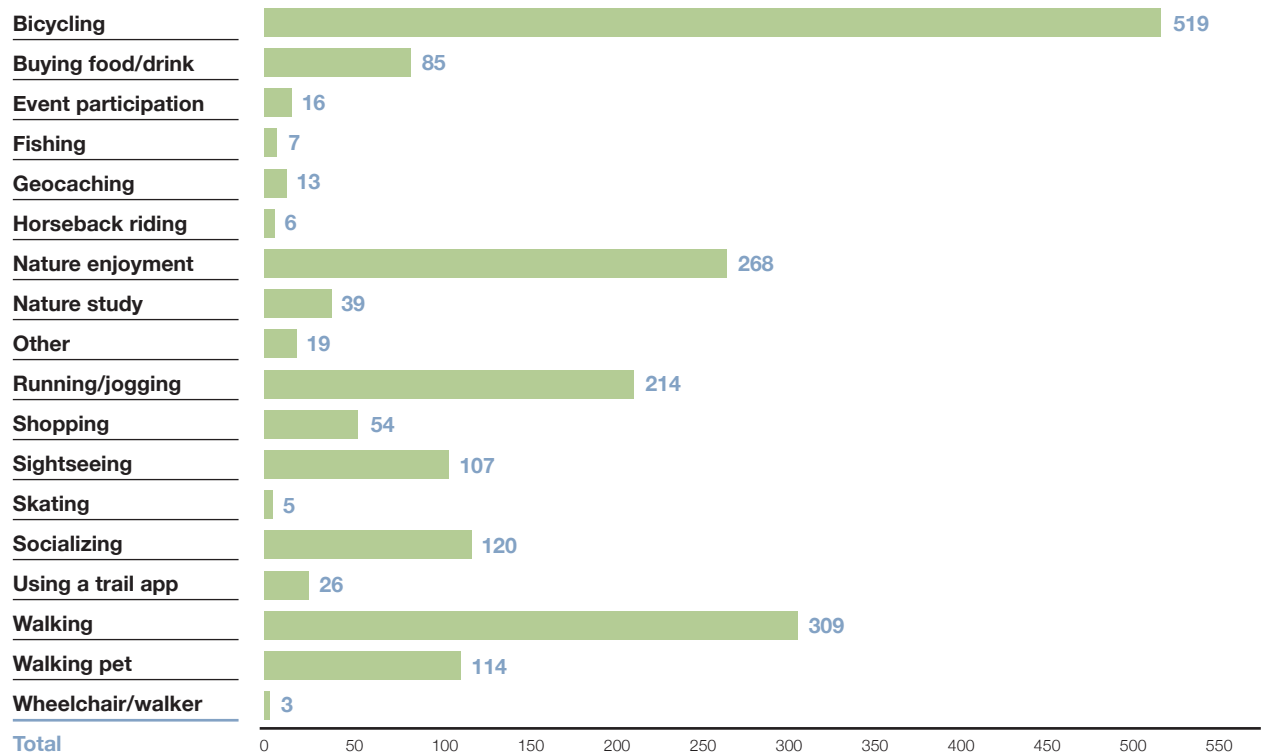
Age	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66 +	Total
Yes-Stress Relief	32	33	47	101	66	21	300
Total # of respondents	50	58	71	165	140	64	548
% yes	64	57	66	61	47	33	55

Activities

Trail Users' Primary Activity on the Trail



Trail Users' Activities on the Trail



Survey Findings

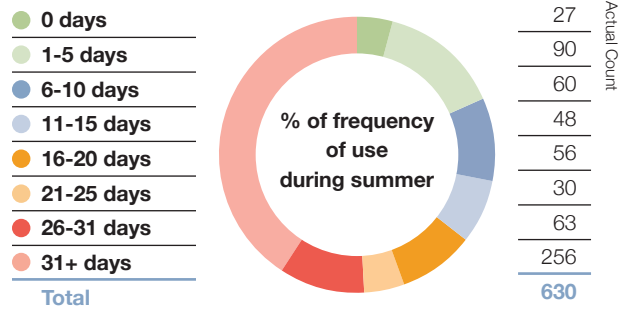
Impact on the Triple Bottom Line—Environment

- More than half of respondents indicated using the trail more than 25 days during the summer (N=630). During winter, nearly 16% reported using the trail 26 days or more. (N=615)
- Nearly 66% of respondents traveled five miles or less one-way to use the trail (N=649). Only 23% of all respondents traveled to the trail in a motor vehicle. (N=677)
- Trails can provide a non-motorized facility for transportation. 6% of respondents said commuting was their primary reason for using the trail. (N=659)
- Nature enjoyment was the fifth most cited reason for visiting the trail. (N=671)
- For respondents listing “other” reasons for trail use, commuting and bird watching were the most common written responses.

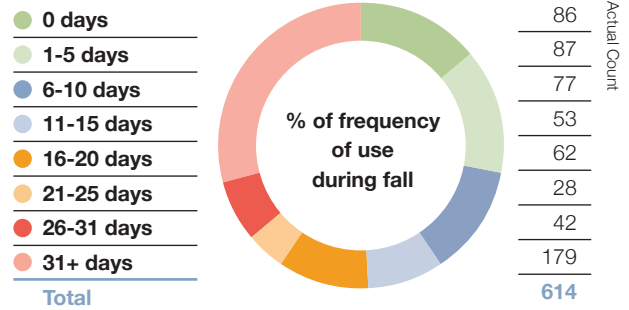
Research shows that time spent in nature increases nature appreciation and strengthens interest in environmental stewardship

Seasonal Use

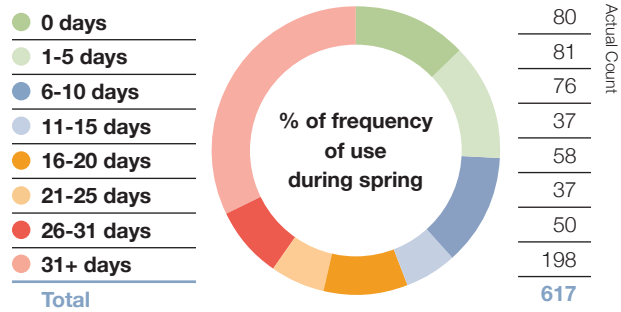
Summer



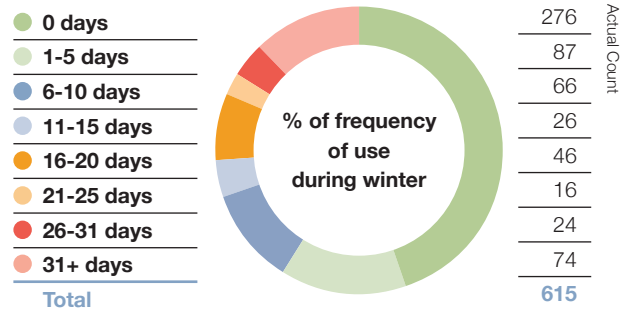
Fall



Spring



Winter



Nature Enjoyment

Reason for Visiting the Trail By Age

Age	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66 +	Total
Nature enjoyment	26	22	31	65	58	22	224
Total # of respondents	50	58	71	166	140	66	551
Nature Enjoyment by %	52	38	44	39	41	33	41

Survey Findings

Impact on the Triple Bottom Line—Economy

- A number of written comments mention the trail playing a key role in the decision to purchase a home: one respondent wrote “Purchased home because within walking distance [of the trail].”
- Trail users are frequently customers: 35% of respondents reported spending money during their trail visit on the day they were surveyed. (N=610)
- The average amount spent by those reporting a purchase was \$41.50. When averaged across ALL respondents, the average expenditure was \$14.29.
- Restaurants and bars (21%), grocery and convenience stores (10%) and vehicle expenses (8%) were the most common expenditures.
- The average expenditure at a restaurant or bar was just over \$18. (N=130)
- 22 respondents reported purchasing trail-related gear while visiting the trail. Their average expenditure was \$175.52.
- 30% of respondents who live outside 601XX and 605XX postal areas spent money while visiting the trail.
- Four respondents indicated paying for lodging during their trail visit.
- 86% of respondents said they had spent money in the last year specifically related to their trail use. (N=634)
- Those making trail-related purchases in the last year spent on average \$435. Across all respondents, the average expenditure in the last year was nearly \$373.
- Cycling-related gear (391), walking/running shoes (374), and clothing (291) were the most frequently reported purchases. (N=634)
- 20% of respondents reported purchasing a personal fitness monitoring device, spending on average \$87.
- 20 respondents reported purchasing camping gear, spending on average \$330, the highest of all categories.

A National Association of Home Realtors survey found that trails are the second-most important community asset to home buyers, ahead of security, ball parks and golf courses

Day Purchases

Number of Users Reporting Purchases During Their Visit

Amount Spent	0	1-25	26-50	51-75	76-100	101-125	126-150	151-200	201-225	226-250	251-300	301+	Total
Restaurant/Bar	398	95	18	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	515
Grocery/ Conven. Store	462	49	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	515
Gear (Biking, Running, etc.)	497	8	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	515
Bike Rental	510	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	514
Travel	506	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	515
Lodging	513	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	515
Vehicle (Gas, Parking, etc.)	471	40	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	515
Recreation	502	11	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	515
Other	504	8	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	514

Annual Trail Related Purchases

Number of Users Reporting Trail-related Purchases in the Last 12 Months

Amount Spent	0	1-25	26-50	51-75	76-100	101-125	126-150	151-200	201-225	226-250	251-300	301+	Total
Shoes	217	4	43	26	96	28	14	60	2	4	9	30	533
Biking	218	31	55	22	65	5	13	36	1	7	13	68	534
Bike Rental	530	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	534
Heart Rate Monitor	416	19	35	10	29	4	8	8	0	0	1	3	533
Camping	518	1	4	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	5	534
Clothing	289	44	56	19	59	4	11	27	7	0	0	18	534
Skating	530	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	534
Skiing	518	1	4	1	6	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	533
Fishing	519	2	5	1	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	534
Equestrian	532	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	534
Mobile App	505	17	6	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	534
Guidebook	498	25	8	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	534
Safety	504	24	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	534
Travel	503	10	4	1	9	0	1	1	0	1	0	4	534
Other	514	4	7	2	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	533



“I never know where I am unless I got my phone.”

- Bathrooms—The lowest rated aspect of the trail, bathrooms were rated as fair or poor by nearly 60% of respondents, and 6% rated bathrooms as very poor. Several respondents also wrote in “NA” or “?” rather than choosing a rating. (N=605)
- Drinking fountains—More than 20% rated drinking fountains as poor or very poor. Many written comments indicate that trail users desire more drinking fountains along the the trail, and more operating fountains throughout the year.
- Nature enjoyment and destinations/connections were the two highest rated aspects of the trail.

Trail User Opinions & Attitudes

- Most respondents learned of the trail as a resident, or by word of mouth. 8% learned of the trail from a map. Just 2% learned of the trail from a public agency, a trails organization, or a visitors bureau. (N=685)
- Safety and security—85% of respondents rated safety and security as good or excellent (N=666). Women were less likely to rate safety and security as excellent (28%) than men (40%).

“Runners need restrooms!”

- Maintenance—94% of respondents ranked trail maintenance as good or excellent. (N=666)
- Wayfinding—50% of respondents ranked trail route markings as good, and 35% as excellent (N=668). But wayfinding signs for nearby amenities and destinations fared much more poorly, with 43% ranking them fair or lower. (N=664)



“Signage to local establishments is poor at best.”

Making the Illinois Prairie Path Count More

Our data also suggests that more can be done to attract users to the Illinois Prairie Path, and to create more value from its use.

Trail Promotion Opportunities

The Illinois Prairie Path is well known nationally as the first rails-to-trails conversion in America. The handful of out-of-state visitors in our sample seems low given its notable history, overall length and interesting connections.

- Only .15% reported learning about the trail from a visitors bureau. 2% learned about the trail from a trail agency or trail organization; less than 3% learned about the trail from a bike shop.
- 4% learned of the trail from a roadside sign; 3% learned of the trail from TrailLink.com or another website.

Successful destination trails—regional or statewide trails catering to tourism, such as Wisconsin’s Elroy-Sparta Trail—have focused marketing programs that highlight features and amenities of connecting communities as part of the trail experience. Our findings suggest focused promotion of the Illinois Prairie Path, regionally and nationally, may boost out-of-area visits including overnight stays.

Trail Improvement Opportunities

- Inadequate restrooms and drinking fountains dominated respondents’ written comments. Some comments reference the particular need for restrooms and drinking fountains by families with children, runners, and the elderly, suggesting that adding more facilities may increase trail visits and extend trail use.
- Installing and improving wayfinding signs, particularly to provide information about nearby communities, amenities, and attractions, would markedly improve the experience for trail users. Better wayfinding could also boost trail-related traffic at nearby merchants, and raise the trail’s utility for non-motorized transportation.
- Most Illinois Prairie Path users do not drive to the trail, but more respondents rated parking as fair (23%) than excellent (22%). (N=595) More designated parking and

more communication about where to park was cited frequently as a needed improvement in written comments. Improving the availability and visibility of parking may boost out-of-area visits to the trail.

Trail Programming Opportunities

- According to the US Census Bureau, 18% of residents in Villa Park identify as Latino. Near Wayne, 14% of residents identify as Asian descent. African Americans make up 74% of Maywood, 2% in Batavia, and 4% in Wheaton and Villa Park. Yet only 1-2% of survey respondents identified as belonging to these ethnic groups.

We should not assume that populations of color are not using the trail simply based on these findings. Previous studies conducted in the Chicago area have found reluctance among populations of color to participate in studies like this one. In our study, volunteer reluctance to survey trail users in Maywood led to fewer shifts collecting surveys, and likely contributed to people of color being underrepresented. But considering that public trails provide measurable benefits to one’s quality of life as well as access to jobs and services, our findings suggest a need for additional studies of trail use, perceptions and attitudes among people of color along the Illinois Prairie Path.

- Just 16 trail users surveyed said event participation was a reason for their trail visit. (N=687) Given the many drinking and dining opportunities along the trail, and trail users’ willingness to spend money on food and drink, events such as progressive dinners by bike, themed runs, “Amazing Race” events, and pub crawls could attract new visitors, grow trail use, and benefit local merchants.
- Given the popularity of using the Illinois Prairie Path to maintain and improve one’s health, the trail may be an opportunity for area health and wellness providers to develop low cost health promotion, intervention and rehabilitation programs that leverage the trail, such as trail use prescriptions.
- Written comments regarding the trail’s role in choosing a home suggests an opportunity for creative partnerships with area realtors to showcase available homes or organize home and garden tours along the trail on foot or by bike.

Conclusions

The Illinois Prairie Path is a popular and frequently used trail; count data from Villa Park and Wheaton, in particular, are the highest we have recorded of seven trails we have studied in Making Trails Count. And people find a wide variety of ways to use and enjoy it: as a day care play site, a training facility, as transportation infrastructure, as a venue for both bird watching and socializing.

Overall, our research shows that the Illinois Prairie Path:

Attracts hundreds of thousands of trail visits a year

Provides a non-motorized transportation option

Generates local economic activity

Attracts visitors from outside the area

Brings trail users in contact with nature

Provides a safe, accessible opportunity for frequent outdoor physical activity

The data we collected from making the Illinois Prairie Path count will help the Illinois Prairie Path Not-for-Profit Corporation articulate the historic trail's continuing relevance to quality of life in west Cook and Dupage County. It will also help them identify new opportunities to make the trail more relevant, attracting more users and playing a larger role in community development.

For Trails for Illinois, the data from this research strengthens the argument for maintaining, improving, and connecting trails statewide. The return on investment in trails is real, it is significant, and it is measurable.



The more trails are counted, the more they will count.

Appendix Survey Response Frequency Distributions

	Frequency		Frequency
1. Where do you live most of the year? N=679		2. How many miles (one-way) have you traveled to use this trail? N=649	
<i>State</i>			
IL	651	0–1 mile	256
Other	22	1.1–5 miles	171
IA	2	5.1–10 miles	99
MN	2	10.1–20 miles	71
WI	1	More than 20 miles	52
MO	1	20.1–30 miles	23
Total	679	30.1–40 miles	12
		80.1 or more miles	10
<i>Zip Code</i>		40.1–50 miles	3
601	526	60.1–70 miles	3
605	77	50.1–60 miles	1
603	19	Total	701
600	12		
606	9	5. How much TOTAL time will you spend on the trail today? N=669	
604	4	1 hour	189
35803	2	2 hours	148
48108	2	1.5 hours	94
55901	2	3 hours	55
80209	2	30 minutes or less	54
10003	1	2.5 hours	44
27517	1	4 hours	30
30062	1	5.5 or more hours	21
30126	1	3.5 hours	16
34481	1	5 hours	11
37122	1	4.5 hours	7
43402	1	Total	669
49120	1		
49777	1	6. If you're a regular user of this trail, what is the AVERAGE time you spend on the trail? N=621	
52240	1	1 hour	222
52807	1	2 hours	148
53128	1	1.5 hours	87
61081	1	3 hours	42
61201	1	30 minutes or less	37
61704	1	2.5 hours	35
61801	1	4 hours	24
64078	1	5.5 or more hours	13
70037	1	5 hours	7
75206	1	3.5 hours	5
78741	1	4.5 hours	1
84105	1	Total	621
85737	1		
99114	1		
99207	1		
Total	679		

Appendix Survey Response Frequency Distributions

	Frequency		Frequency
8. Which reasons describe your use of the trail today? N=671		11b. How close is your lodging to the trail? N=10	
Physical Activity	632	1.1–5 miles	6
Refresh Mind	382	0–1 mile	3
Stress-Relief	361	10.1–20 miles	1
Recreation	343	Total	10
Nature Enjoyment	315	11c. How many nights spent in lodging? N=9	
Training	251	1 night	2
Sightseeing	169	2 nights	2
Socializing	153	Week or more	2
Commuting	46	0 nights	1
Nature Learning	21	3 nights	1
Other	20	4 nights	1
Commuting Other	13	Total	9
Total	2706	11d. How much money spent on lodging? N=9	
9. Primary Reason for Trail Use N=659		\$0.00	5
Physical Activity & Exercise	410	\$5.00	2
Other	78	\$60.00	1
Recreation	40	\$120.00	1
Athletic Performance	39	Total	9
Commuting	27	11e. What kind of lodging did/will you use? N=10	
Stress-Relief	24	Friend/Relative Home	7
Commuting Other	13	Hotel	1
Socializing	12	Campsite	1
Clear Mind	11	Other	1
Nature Enjoyment	3	Hostel	0
Sights	2	Bed and Breakfast	0
Total	659	Total	10
10. Did you travel in a motorized vehicle to the trail today? N=677		14. How did you FIRST learn about this trail? N=685	
No	521	Resident	442
Yes	156	Word of Mouth	139
Total	677	Other	63
11. Are you staying in overnight lodging in this area (such as a hotel room, campsite, etc.)? N=656		Passed by it	59
No	645	Trail Map	57
Yes	11	Roadside Sign	30
Total	656	Bike Store	18
11a. Are you visiting the area PRIMARILY to use the trail? N=610		Book	12
No	6	TrailLink.com	9
Yes	4	Other Website	9
Total	10	Trails Org	7
		Agency	6
		Event	5
		Newspaper	3
		Magazine	3
		TV News	3
		Visitors Bureau	1
		Total	866

Appendix Survey Response Frequency Distributions

	Frequency		Frequency
Your opinion about the trail N=666		21. Drinking fountains N=637	
<i>15. Trail maintenance</i>		Good	232
Excellent	317	Fair	211
Good	314	Poor	109
Fair	27	Excellent	60
Poor	7	Very Poor	25
Very Poor	1	Total	637
Total	666		
<i>16. Safety and security</i> N=666		<i>22. Sightseeing opportunities</i> N=655	
Good	328	Good	323
Excellent	236	Excellent	210
Fair	89	Fair	110
Poor	10	Poor	11
Very Poor	3	Very Poor	1
Total	666	Total	655
<i>17. Trail route markings</i> N=668		<i>23. Nature enjoyment opportunities</i> N=657	
Good	339	Excellent	323
Excellent	235	Good	270
Fair	80	Fair	59
Poor	11	Poor	5
Very Poor	3	Total	657
Total	668		
<i>18. Trail signs directing you to nearby amenities and destinations</i> N=664		<i>24. Destinations & connections</i> N=645	
Good	269	Good	332
Fair	192	Excellent	259
Excellent	115	Fair	48
Poor	67	Poor	3
Very Poor	17	Very Poor	3
Total	664	Total	645
<i>19. Automobile parking</i> N=595		<i>26. Are you on the trail with others today?</i> N=652	
Good	306	No	400
Fair	135	Yes	252
Excellent	131	Total	652
Poor	19		
Very Poor	4	<i>26a. How many individuals are with you today?</i> N=644	
Total	595	0	393
<i>20. Bathrooms</i> N=605		1	164
Fair	211	2	40
Good	167	3	25
Poor	150	4	12
Excellent	39	5	4
Very Poor	38	7.00	2
Total	605	14.00	2
		18.00	1
		20.00	1
		Total	644

Appendix Survey Response Frequency Distributions

	Frequency		Frequency
<i>26b. What best describes those who are with you?</i> <i>N=293</i>		<i>28. What is your sex?</i> <i>N=657</i>	
Family	175	Male	356
Friend	74	Female	301
Missing	35	Total	657
Club	6		
Other	3	<i>29. In general, how would you rate your health?</i> <i>N=661</i>	
Total	293	Excellent	321
		Good	309
<i>26c. Are there children with you on the trail today?</i> <i>N=649</i>		Fair	29
No	604	Poor	2
Yes	45	Total	661
Total	649		
		<i>30. What is your ethnic group?</i> <i>N=662</i>	
<i># of respondents with children under 5</i> <i>N=15</i>		Caucasian	603
1 child	10	Other	17
2 children	3	Latino	16
4 children	2	Asian	13
Total	15	African American	7
		Native American	6
<i># of respondents with children 6-9</i> <i>N=15</i>		Total	662
1 child	12		
2 children	3	<i>31. What is your highest level of formal education?</i> <i>N=667</i>	
Total	15	Graduate	240
		Bachelor's	236
<i># of respondents with children 10-15</i> <i>N=26</i>		Some college	76
1 child	19	High School	43
2 children	3	Associate's	41
3 children	4	Grades 7-12	14
Total	26	Tech or vocational	13
		Other	4
<i>27. What is your age group?</i> <i>N=652</i>		Total	667
46-55	198		
56-65	165		
36-45	88		
66 or older	76		
26-35	66		
18-25	59		
Total	652		

Appendix Survey Participant Written Responses to Questions

Question/Answer (Frequency)

3. How many of the following activities will you do while using the trail today?

Commuting (3)
 Bird watching (2)
 Commute to work (2)
 Commuting to work (2)
 Cross country skiing (2)
 cross country skiing
 Exercise
 Exercise during lunch
 Fill out Survey
 Gambling
 I live on the path—
 access from my backyard—Woo Hoo!
 Live on trail
 Looking for charming lasses and funny
 gangsta kids and protecting the latter
 from the former
 Mostly ride my bike
 Park
 Parks and playgrounds
 Parks/playgrounds
 People watching
 Photography
 Photography Nature
 Picking wild grape leaves
 Playground and parks
 Riding and enjoying
 Roller ski
 Route to destination
 Running
 Simply enjoy
 Snowshoeing in winter
 Sorry—these are all the activities I do
 Take grandkids on trail to park
 Taking grandchildren for walks
 The Lincoln Marsh is awesome
 Town fest
 Track
 Transportation route
 Use as a short cut to work
 Using playgrounds along
 Prairie Path (3 kids)
 Visit historical museum/use scooter
 Walking granddaughter
 Walking to the Metra station
 Went to historical museum
 XC ski; snowshoe; letterboxing
 XC Skiing

4. Which ONE activity from the list above describes your PRIMARY activity on the trail today?

Walking (5)
 Biking to work (3)
 Jogging (3)

Exercising (2)
 Transportation (2)
 Bicycling on car-free trails paved and
 maintained
 Bike commuting
 Bike ride for exercise
 Bike Travel
 Biking
 Biking w/my sweetheart
 Biking with club
 Commute/Biking
 Commuting
 Exercise
 Exercise and fresh air
 Fitness and pleasure
 Get from home to museum
 Getting around
 Getting to work
 I like to race
 I run from Wiesbrook Rd to
 Roosevelt Rd
 I usually walk on the trail
 Iron man training
 Long run-marathon training
 Long way home from the post office
 Mostly bike
 Power walking
 Riding
 Running
 Running 14 miles!!!!
 Running an errand
 Running/Biking
 Running/jogging with pet
 Safe commute to stores
 Sightseeing
 Walk/exercise
 Walking Fast
 Walking to nearby store
 Walking with dog
 Walking with stroller
 Working now

8. Which reasons describe your use of the trail today?

All of the Above
 Being with granddaughter
 Biking child to school
 Birding
 Child care
 Eat more, sleep better
 Errand in Wheaton
 Errands, family time
 I commute from Elmhurst to Naperville
 Learning area
 Lose weight
 Marsh Class
 Pet walking

Photography
 Running errands
 Shopping in Aurora
 Transportation
 Travel for doctor's appts.
 Travelling/Cycle Touring

9. Which ONE of the reasons listed above is your PRIMARY reason for using the trail today?

Biking (17)
 Running (11)
 Bike (3)
 Walking (3)
 Walking dog (3)
 Cycling (2)
 Exercise (2)
 Socializing (2)
 All checked
 All of the above
 Bicycling
 Biking child to school
 Biking to lunch
 Biking to stores
 Biking w/my sweetheart
 Burn calories
 Cardio
 Commuting
 Commuting uptown
 Cycle use see amazon runners
 Cycling—exercise
 Dog walking in the morning & Biking
 in the afternoon
 Easy-low traffic, shaded
 Enjoyment, Bike to Mena, Running
 Exercise/Family-time
 Exercise/train for 35 mile ride
 Exploring the area
 Family time
 Fast walking
 Fitness
 Fitness, Stress Relief, Look at Girls
 Fun
 Fun—exercise/refresh mind
 Get to Villa Pk Museum
 Getting heavy cardio
 Going to historical museum
 Going to store
 Going to work
 Granddaughter
 Health—well being
 It's across from my house
 It's my health club (bicycling)
 Just having fun
 Lose weight
 Mainly for love of railroad history &
 family connecting

Appendix Survey Participant Written Responses to Questions

Question 9—continued

Marathon running/training
Marathon training
Marsh Class
No traffic
Park
Pet walking
Physical activity & clear my mind
Play
Pray
Proximity
Put a lot of miles to maintain good health so I do not become a burden on society
Recreation
Revisiting the trail after 12 years away
Ride to work
Run
Running to lose weight
Running with friends
Shopping
Shopping in Aurora
Store
Stress Relief
Stress relief/exercise
Stress-relief
Stress-relief/Relaxation
Therapeutic
To see friend
Training
Training for 1/2 marathon
Training for a ride
Training for specific race
Travel to job/family
Travelling/cycle touring
Travelling/cyle & touring
Vacation w/family
Walk
Walk dog
Walking and Socializing
Walking dog for exercise
Walking to Metra Stop and to get home
Walking with pets
Weight loss
Well worth it

11. Are you staying in overnight lodging in this area? (Such as a hotel room, campsite, etc.)

Our home
Visiting friends in Wheaton

12. How much TOTAL did/will you spend in each of the following categories while using the trail today?

Class
Coffee
Coffee, bagel

Cycling equipment
Drinks
Farmer's Market
Home (illegible)
I buy bikes and equipment for use on the trail. Not per day thing
Metra
Metra Stop
Pay bills
Pears from Farmer's Market

14. How did you FIRST learn about this trail?

60 hikes in 60 miles of Chicago
CARA
Co-workers
College Cross Country Coach
Bought home in area
Purchased home because within walking distance
Purchased home on the trail
Railstotrails.org
Real estate agent
Real estate agent when we moved to IL.
Selected house because it was close to trail
Realtor
We moved to this area because of the Prairie Path
Bike Club
Bike group
Bike rental in Wheaton
IDOT bike map
Have used for years
35 year user
As a child 50 years ago
Born & raised in Glen Ellyn; always knew about it
Boy Scouts hiked from Wheaton to Pratt Wayne Wood in the 1970s. Lived in Wheaton 1965-1999
Dad took me when I was little
Former resident
Grew up in Wheaton
Have used it all my life
I live near it and have used it since it was created in the 70s.
I use to ride this all the time with my friends as a teen. But, now I disdain it since the limestone is bad for moving cycle parts.
I was one of the volunteers who helped spread the very first limestone screenings (Roosevelt Rd. to Orchard Rd.) to make the Path
I've lived here 35 years
It is by my school

It was in my neighborhood great, great trail! Used it for over 30 years
Known for 50 years
Life long DuPage resident
Friend
Friend using trail
Glen Ellyn Runners Club
Local neighbor
Mother's recommendation
My parents
My wife told me
Relative
Running club
Ski-club rides
Discovered it when I moved to Wheaton
Discovered while on ride in nearby cemetery
Live along path
Live by it
Live by it
Live near path
Live near trail
Live really close
Live right next to it
Lived by it whole life
Lived in Lombard when trail started
Next to where I live
Path is behind my parents house
Used to live by trail
We live right by it
Work across the street
Google Earth
Google maps
mapmyride app

25. If you rated any of these as poor or very poor, please explain why and/or suggest improvements.

Better signs for food, parks, bike repairs, etc. Should have restrooms at mile 0
Come on, you guys, you spend millions of \$\$ on auto road improvement, and can't up-date your trail signs for a pittance??
Did not note any signage for other sightseeing
For cyclists (and maybe others) it's a pain to have all the stops at the numbered streets in Maywood.
I'm not sure much can be done about that. Sometimes glass on trail written next to trail maintenance.
I would like to have a sign stating what the road is when the trail crosses a road. I like to know where I am

Appendix Survey Participant Written Responses to Questions

Question 25—continued

<p>If I go someplace new, I don't know where things are</p> <p>Just need more of each. Almost no amenity signs in Elmhurst Villa Park</p> <p>Maps—Information on the trails</p> <p>Marking could be better. Geneva Rd is hard to follow at turn</p> <p>Markings are not very visible. Port-a-potties are typically avoided</p> <p>Mile markers not always available esp once you go from PP to another trail</p> <p>More signs at intersections</p> <p>More signs needed</p> <p>Never noticed [written next to trail signs]</p> <p>NA written next to parking and drinking fountains. [question mark written next to bathrooms]</p> <p>Never saw one [written next to bathrooms and fountains]</p> <p>Do not use [written next to parking]</p> <p>Next to rail route markings—some areas could use signage</p> <p>No signs for destinations</p> <p>No trail signs for amenities 7/11...convenience stores. No bathrooms. Need port-o-potties</p> <p>Route marking on Fox River Trail are bad</p> <p>Signage on Stearns Rd should be improved</p> <p>Signage to local establishments is poor at best</p> <p>Signs good on trail, but need to find off trail destinations on your own</p> <p>Some of the markers are missing—no water for miles, rarely see any (illegible) on trail</p> <p>Stop signs at intersections [illegible]</p> <p>The more directions the better</p> <p>There have been very few hiking trail signs and they have not been color coordinated with the map</p> <p>Trail route markings are unclear. No bathrooms or other amenities</p> <p>Trail routes are marked excellent on IPD but fair on Fox River Trail</p> <p>What road did we cross under? What town are we in?</p> <p>Bathrooms</p> <p>Bathrooms—need more and more frequent cleaning</p> <p>Bathrooms—are there any at all?</p> <p>Bathrooms are not available</p> <p>Bathrooms permanent</p> <p>Bathrooms scarce</p> <p>Bathrooms! There are not many for girls.</p> <p>Boys have no problems</p> <p>Could use additional port a pottie</p>	<p>Could use more bathrooms or directions to other available bathrooms</p> <p>Could use more [written next to bathrooms]</p> <p>Didn't see one bathroom on my run</p> <p>Don't know by bathrooms and destinations and connections</p> <p>Few bathrooms in many areas—Not many signs except at trail intersections</p> <p>Few or non-existent (signs, parking, bathrooms, drinking fountains) on the section of trail I use</p> <p>Hard to find bathroom—1 port-a-potty</p> <p>Have bathrooms in winter</p> <p>Have not seen many bathrooms on the path</p> <p>I do not know of any bathrooms. There should be more signs and mile markers on prairie path.</p> <p>I don't know of any bathrooms for the trail</p> <p>I have not seen a bathroom</p> <p>I have only seen 1 bathroom from Forest Park to Wheaton.</p> <p>I only have seen port-a-potties.</p> <p>I'm not aware of bathrooms on the path</p> <p>If a business is open I use their bathroom.</p> <p>Let businesses put a sign so people can see stores!</p> <p>If you are feeling ill—there's no restrooms nearby</p> <p>Just a few port-o-potties. Little signage</p> <p>More bathrooms</p> <p>More port a johns more signs</p> <p>More port-a-potties</p> <p>More toilets</p> <p>Need more bathrooms</p> <p>Need more bathrooms, emergency phones</p> <p>Never seen a washroom on trail</p> <p>No bathrooms</p> <p>No bathrooms or drinking fountains</p> <p>No bathrooms or signs to bathrooms</p> <p>No bathrooms seen except here</p> <p>No John's</p> <p>No public bathrooms</p> <p>No restrooms along this stretch</p> <p>Not enough bathrooms</p> <p>Not enough bathrooms available</p> <p>Not enough public restrooms</p> <p>Not enough restrooms</p> <p>Not enough restrooms; there are many MANY on trail rest stops that have little/no rest-room access for the public</p> <p>Not enough toilets</p> <p>Not many bathrooms</p> <p>Not many bathrooms available</p> <p>Not many bathrooms past origin</p>	<p>Not much there on the trail section I use</p> <p>Older people need to use bathroom more frequently</p> <p>Other than portapotties can't imagine what you can do</p> <p>Poor bathrooms—not enough of them</p> <p>Runners need restrooms!!</p> <p>There should be a bathroom close by</p> <p>Very few bathrooms</p> <p>We need more ladies bathroom</p> <p>While having kids it's hard to find washrooms for them!!</p> <p>Could use a few more drinking fountains here and there</p> <p>Could use more drinking fountains in Lombard</p> <p>DF should be turned on earlier in year and later in the fall.</p> <p>Difficult to find water fountains and pumps. Too far apart!</p> <p>Drinking fountains are okay but there are too few of them</p> <p>Fountains (only 1 I've seen) does not look sanitary. Very little nature to be seen</p> <p>Fountains sometimes out of order</p> <p>More drinking fountains please</p> <p>Much of the trail is in rural areas (good) and away from municipal water supplies no improvement needed people should bring their own water</p> <p>NA [written next to drinking fountains]</p> <p>Need more water near Glen Ellyn</p> <p>Need more working water fountain/ existing often turned off</p> <p>Need more [written next to drinking fountains]</p> <p>Need water in Villa Park</p> <p>None [written next to drinking fountains]</p> <p>Not enough places for water</p> <p>Not enough water</p> <p>Not enough water fountains</p> <p>There are a limited number of drinking fountains</p> <p>There are no water fountains and no trail signs with amenities</p> <p>Water fountains</p> <p>Water fountains too spread apart</p> <p>Water in some areas has a strange taste</p> <p>Would love to see more drinking fountains and stay on</p> <p>? [written next to parking, bathrooms, and drinking fountains]</p> <p>? [written next to bathrooms and drinking fountains]</p> <p>Bathrooms and fountains are too far apart from each other.</p>
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Appendix Survey Participant Written Responses to Questions

Question 25—continued

Could use more bathrooms and drinking fountains. I don't see any signs for local sights

Did not see any bathrooms or drinking fountains on my trip

Didn't find any fountains or bathrooms

Didn't see any drinking fountains or bathrooms. Signage could be improved.

Don't know [written next to bathrooms and drinking fountains]

Don't know where the bathrooms and drinking fountains are

Drinking fountains and restrooms are frequently poor

Few portapotties which are disgusting not enough water fountains

Haven't seen any bathrooms or water fountains

I bring my own water bottle. Have needed bathroom facilities—had to go home

If there are bathrooms or fountains then I don't know where they are

Inadequate water and restrooms

Lack of fountains and bathrooms

Locations of water should be marked liked Hoffman Park. Very few bathrooms and their location should be marked.

Drinking fountains are turned off too early in fall.

Merely the fact that there are no bathrooms and very little drinking fountains, destination signage or parking

More bathrooms and drinking fountains

More drinking fountains/bathrooms, please!

More portapotties and water

Need more bathrooms along system and drinking fountains

Need more bathrooms on the trail with hand sanitizer that last longer and more water fountains

Need more drinking fountains

Need more restroom facilities and drinking fountains

Need restrooms and water more frequently

Never parked written next to parking. NA next to bathrooms. I wish I passed one on my route next to drinking fountains

No bathrooms, fountains

No water—No bathrooms

No water anywhere near here, only 1 bathroom on trail anywhere I know

No water fountains or bathrooms but I'm ok with that

Not a lot of bathroom or water opportunities on many trails

Not enough bathrooms or water fountains.

More signs to close by food/drink locations would be nice

Not sure where bathrooms are. Could use more drinking fountains

Shortage of bath and water

The area of the trail I jog I don't see any fountains or bathrooms.

There are no rest rooms or drinking fountains.

There are no water fountains or bathrooms directly on the part of the path I use.

Next to parking—Use Walgreens or strip mall Next to bathrooms—only know of 1.

Next to fountains—none

There aren't many bathrooms and more would be nice! Drinking fountains, too!

Very few restroom/water fountains available in Glen Ellyn/Wheaton

We need bathrooms and drinking fountains and drinking fountains need to stay on thru fall

What bathrooms? Fountains

? [written next to automobile parking]

Don't feel safe in low light as a female

1. Need safe access to trail on Burning Trail entrance—is heavily used and very unsafe 2. Bikers need to announce on your left

Asphalt would be nice

Bathrooms—need more—water too.

I bike all year, please pave trails for all year use. Pea gravel sinks in late winter early spring.

Better maintenance on transitions between road and trail (some large bumps)

Better pedestrian—blinking light maybe on busy main street crossings

Between Liberty and Geneva Rd it's great.

North or south of that section, horrible Bridge at route 25 repair grading [illegible]

Charles over railroad

Cleanliness—needs running water

Don't know just started using

Don't know what I'd do without the Prairie Path and Great Western Trail. Really depend on it for fun and recreation.

Appreciate the new bridge in Lombard. Thanks!

Don't see signs for eating places

Drinking fountains and signage

Elmhurst Trail—poor redesign of Elmhurst Train crossing

Finish connection between Stearns Rd and Redgate

Glass in path. Water fountain on

First is broken.

Great trail!

Haven't seen too much parking along the path. Use to see police officers on bikes but haven't in a long time. Only seen two water fountains. Never seen public bathrooms.

I have followed several trails shown on DOT or Trail link maps only to find them closed or under construction or unable to get where I am going

I have seen no evidence of any security (ever)—no trail specific pkg lots, but that's NOT a problem—just a fact

I never know where I am unless I got my phone

I was on east side of trail. Not very scenic, very industrial.

I would love to have trail access without having to drive to it. Also would be nice to have trail connect to other places like restaurants, coffee shops, library, etc

Improve crossing

Just need more signs and bathrooms, or bathrooms signs/access

Lack of parking, few bathrooms, poor signage in W. Chicago

Loose limestone in some areas—dangerous for biking. Trails poorly marked; get lost often

Love Prairie Path

Maintenance of IPP and Forest Preserve Trails is the only thing I welcome on my county tax bill.

Many bike riders: 1 pass horses w/o warning and w/o slowing down 3. do not announce that they're passing 4 slow down when asked by those on horse-back 5. and act as if the path is their personal racing path. They are rude and pose real dangers

Many communities don't have an out-house usable w/o going into a public bldg. Too much horse poop on path. Dog owners required to pick up after dog, why do horse owners not have to pick up after or bag their horse?

Maywood/Bellwood trail always has broken glass. 9 times out of 10 I have a flat tire due to broken glass.

My biggest concern is biking through Maywood. I've been threatened for being a "white boy in the wrong neighborhood"

Need better access

Need more benches

Need more routes between trails

Appendix Survey Participant Written Responses to Questions

Question 25—continued

Never see security—No bathroom facility
Parking hit or miss on Wiesbrook
No room for parking
Not many things to see around here.
Over the winter very poor maintenance,
only a few towns plough
Park Dist. bathroom not always open
Park District does an excellent
job and is nearby but strictly those
aren't on the path
Parking does not apply
Parking for Lincoln Marsh
Path in Maywood is in poor condition.
No bathrooms. Broken glass on path
frequently. Crossing at 1st Ave. &
Mannheim is lethal. Drinking fountain
on 1st Ave is broken barely works

To report problem need website or email.
Need bathroom (porta) every 5 miles.
Signs at most destination points are
confusing. For example at Prince
crossing where pp and Grand Western
join then Western ends. Aurora branch
needs safe crossing of Farnsworth and
indicate trail
Riding too fast to notice
Suggested improvements—commercial
strip between Ardmore and Central—
bring in coffeehouse etc for greater
community

The Prairie Path was a major factor in my
decision to accept a job in Wheaton
and move to the area.
Trail maintenance is usually good, but it
was difficult to run on in early spring
when the snow melted. The ground
was wet and vehicles on the path left
ruts in the road.
We need a bike-in primitive campground
in DuPage county. Also, too few
drinking fountains
West Chicago water access?
Would like to see police on trail now
and then.

A photograph of a person running away from the camera on a gravel path covered in fallen autumn leaves. The path is lined with trees whose leaves are in various stages of turning, from green to bright yellow and orange. The scene is captured from a low angle, emphasizing the length of the path and the canopy of trees above.

Credits

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May your home be your trailhead.