

Sea to Sky Mountain Biking Economic Impact Study

Overall Results



Western Canada

Mountain Bike Tourism Association

c/o 2654 Eton Street, Vancouver, BC , Canada V5K 1K1

Web: www.mbta.ca

Email: info@mbta.ca

Executive Summary

British Columbia is well known for its unique and challenging mountain biking trails. While communities and tourism organizations acknowledge that mountain biking tourism generates economic activity, quantifiable data is needed to demonstrate the value of the trails, encourage investment in infrastructure, and establish appropriate trail management policies. To meet these objectives, the Western Canada Mountain Bike Tourism Association (MBTA) has conducted a pilot study to measure the economic impact of mountain biking in the Sea to Sky Corridor which includes the communities of the North Shore (North Vancouver and West Vancouver), Squamish, and Whistler.

The trail systems of the North Shore, Squamish and Whistler, are estimated to have collectively generated **\$9.8 million** in spending from riders that live outside of the host community over the period from June 4 to September 17, 2006.

Spending by visitors to Whistler accounted for two-thirds of the total, at just over \$6.6 million (note figure excludes Whistler Bike Park spending). On the North Shore, the expenditures by visitors to the GVRD as well as non-North Shore GVRD residents totaled just over \$2.0 million. Finally, Squamish saw spending from riders totaling over \$1.2 million as a result of non-resident riders visiting the trail system as well as training and participating in the popular Test of Metal mountain bike race held in mid June each year. The combined expenditures of non-resident riders on the trail systems in the three communities resulted in a total of \$8.9 million in new economic activity (GDP) and supported 186 jobs through the payment of just over \$6.0 million in wages and salaries.

In addition to the trail systems, the study also surveyed riders at the Whistler Bike Park (WBP) and the Crankworx festival. The WBP, the most visited mountain bike park in North America was a considerable source of revenue for both Whistler and the Province of BC. Non-resident visitors to the WBP spent an estimated \$16.2 million in Whistler. Finally, the Crankworx Mountain Bike Festival continues to grow, with the 2006 edition attracting in excess of 26,000 unique visitors to Whistler over the 9 days of the event, with non-resident expenditures totaling \$12.7 million.

The authorized trail system in the Whistler Valley generates considerably more economic activity than trail systems in Squamish and on the North Shore where few authorized trails exist. Whistler has been able to capture higher visitor expenditure in part by having the ability to promote its municipal trails and associated services (bike rentals, guides, camps, etc) directly to visitors both within the resort and externally.

Although one might draw the conclusion that the lift accessed Whistler Bike Park draws most riders to Whistler, the survey showed that just over half of the Whistler Valley riders indicated cycling was an important trip motivator (i.e. 52% gave cycling a 4 or 5 on a 1 to 5 scale of importance where 5 represents cycling being the only reason for taking a trip), illustrating the importance of the municipal trail system. Furthermore, the survey found that there was less than 10% cross over

between Whistler Bike Park riders and those on the Whistler Valley Trails reinforcing the notion that the Valley Trails were a significant stand alone draw.

The results of the study show that mountain bike trail systems of the Sea to Sky region attract significant numbers of visiting riders to the host communities and cumulatively generate a significant economic impact in the region. When the values of trail systems at the community level are compared, the results suggest that the level of economic impact is dependant on whether or not trails are authorized and offer some long term certainty for both public and commercial use.

For further information on this study, please send your request to info@mbta.ca