

Bikes Belong Survey: The Size & Impact of Road Riding Events

November 2009



Recreational road bicycling events are popular all across the United States. Participants are inspired by the opportunities to improve fitness, have fun, and raise money and awareness for a variety of important causes.

Bikes Belong conducted a survey of U.S. recreational bike-event promoters in order to estimate the size, number, and direct economic impact of these rides in 2008, and also to learn more about how these events benefit communities and causes nationwide.

Here's what we found...

Summary

- More than **1,700** U.S. recreational road riding events were organized in 2008.
- More than **1 million** Americans participated in recreational road riding events in 2008.
- Total 2008 revenue from recreational road riding events topped **\$240 million**.
- Two-thirds of these '08 rides were tied to a cause, raising nearly **\$200 million** total.
- Riders spent nearly **\$140 million** on food, lodging, and other purchases at these events.

Recreational riding events are important to the communities that host them, the causes they support, and the bike industry nationwide. For little to no cash investment, communities can benefit economically from recreational bicycling events of all sizes. The \$140 million in direct participant spending is only a portion of the greater economic impact these rides bring to host communities across the U.S. One study estimated that each ride participant generates \$535 in direct economic impact, which would total \$572 million based on our participation figures.¹

The majority of these rides also raise money for causes big and small. The average ride raises nearly \$12,000 for charity, with some of the bigger charity rides bringing in tens of millions of dollars for worthy causes.

The bike industry also gains from recreational riding events. These rides are often “gateway” events into the activity of bicycling. Participation in recreational road riding events is nearly 20 times the number of registered bike racers in the U.S. (55,392).² To get a sense of how the growth of recreational road riding events could benefit the bike industry, consider this fact: in 2008, the average participant in Iowa’s RAGBRAI ride spent \$950 on bicycle purchases specifically for RAGBRAI and \$179 on bike clothing and accessories for the ride.³ That’s a total of more than \$19 million spent annually on bicycle products for a single event.



¹ “The Economic Power of the NBTDA,” Gluskin Townley Group, NBTDA Annual Conference, November 7, 2008

² “Active Member Demographics,” USA Cycling, November 3, 2009, <http://www.usacycling.org/corp/demographics.php>

³ “The Economic Impact & Spectator Characteristics of RAGBRAI,” Lankford, S., et al., December 20, 2008

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to estimate the size, number, and direct economic impact of organized U.S. recreational road bicycle events in 2008.

Rides included in the study had to be organized, non-race, on-road events that occurred in the U.S. in 2008. These included events such as century rides, family fun rides, major charity rides (e.g. LIVESTRONG Challenge), and public bike tours (e.g. RAGBRAI). Events excluded from the study included randonnées, brevets, mountain bike rides, weekly bike shop or club rides, road races, and private bike tours. Rides that fit the criteria but were associated with an event that was restricted from the survey were included (e.g. a century ride that was held in coordination with a competitive road stage race).

Events were found through the following sources:

USA Cycling: conducted online event search by state for all 2008 Cat F (Road Fun Ride/Tour) events

VeloNews Race and Ride Guide: visited online listings provided on page 16

RunWalkRide.com: referred to Top-30 event figures, seven of which were cycling events

Google: conducted online search for websites that list events, e.g. “Alaska bike events,” “Alaska century bike rides,” etc.

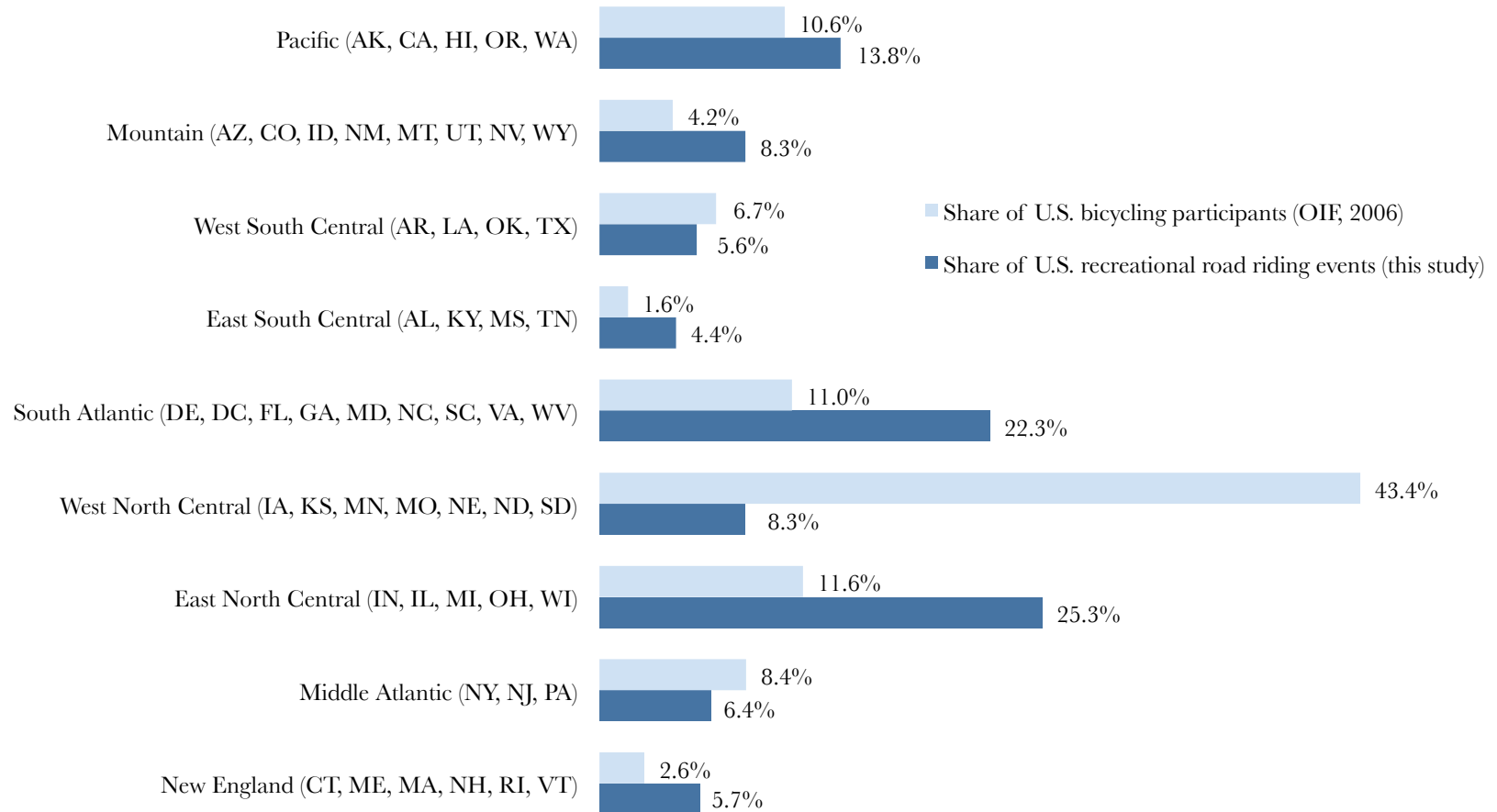
State and local bike advocacy group directors: e-mailed directors from 29 states and asked for event calendars

1,714 events were found to match the criteria for inclusion in the study. Of these, 1,399 had e-mail addresses listed. Of the 1,399 ride directors or contacts who were e-mailed about the survey, 492 (35.2%) opened the e-mail. Just less than half (223) of those who opened the e-mail clicked the link to the online survey.

The survey was created on SurveyMonkey.com and was open from July 7, 2009 to August 3, 2009. More than 200 ride contacts took at least part of the survey. After removing incomplete responses, non-2008 events, and other events (races, mountain bike rides, weekly shop rides) that did not fit the criteria, 156 responses remained, slightly less than a tenth of all rides found. Nine major charity rides were researched separately for their information, leaving 1,549 rides to be extrapolated.

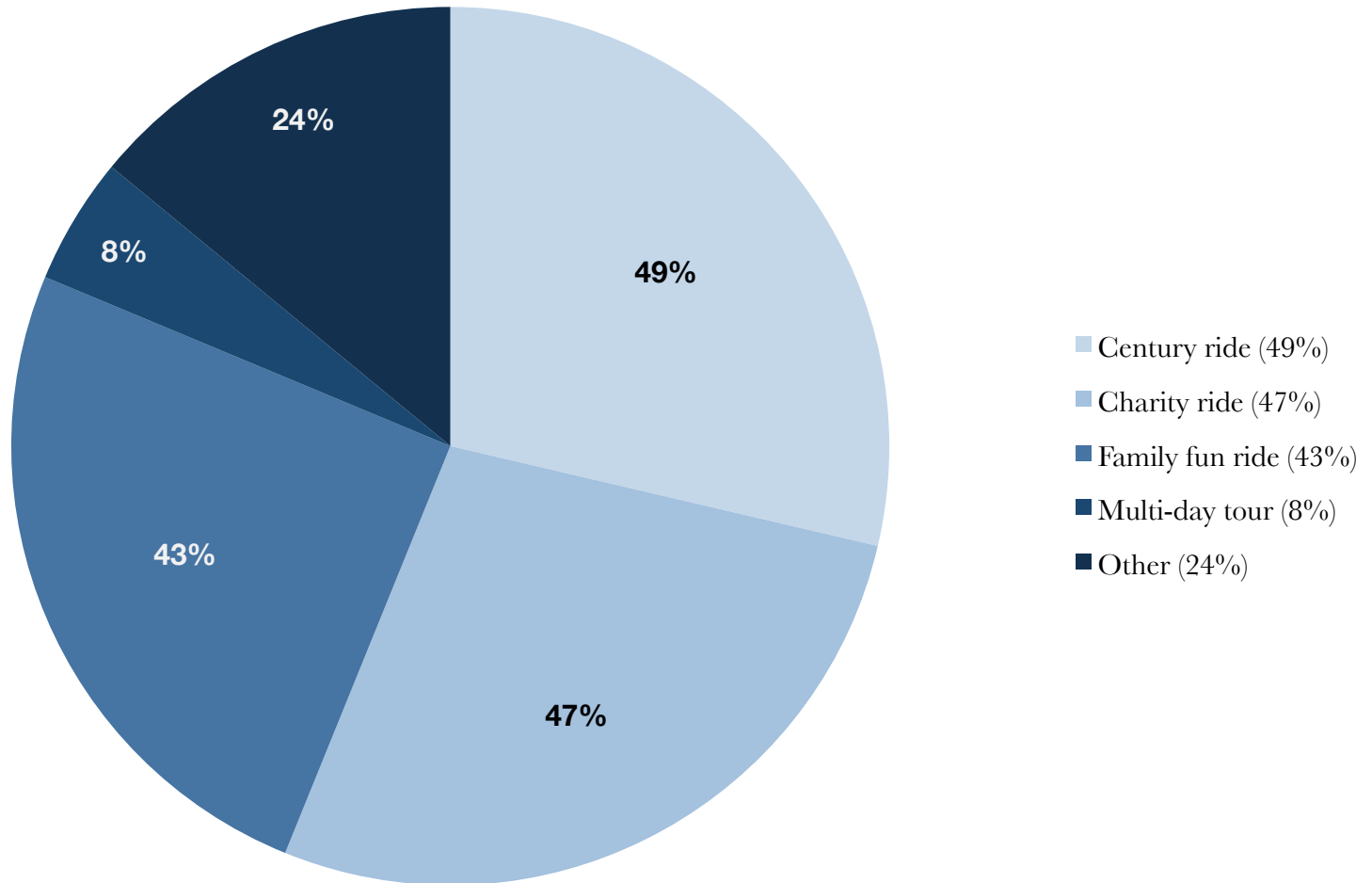


Where are the riders; where are the rides?



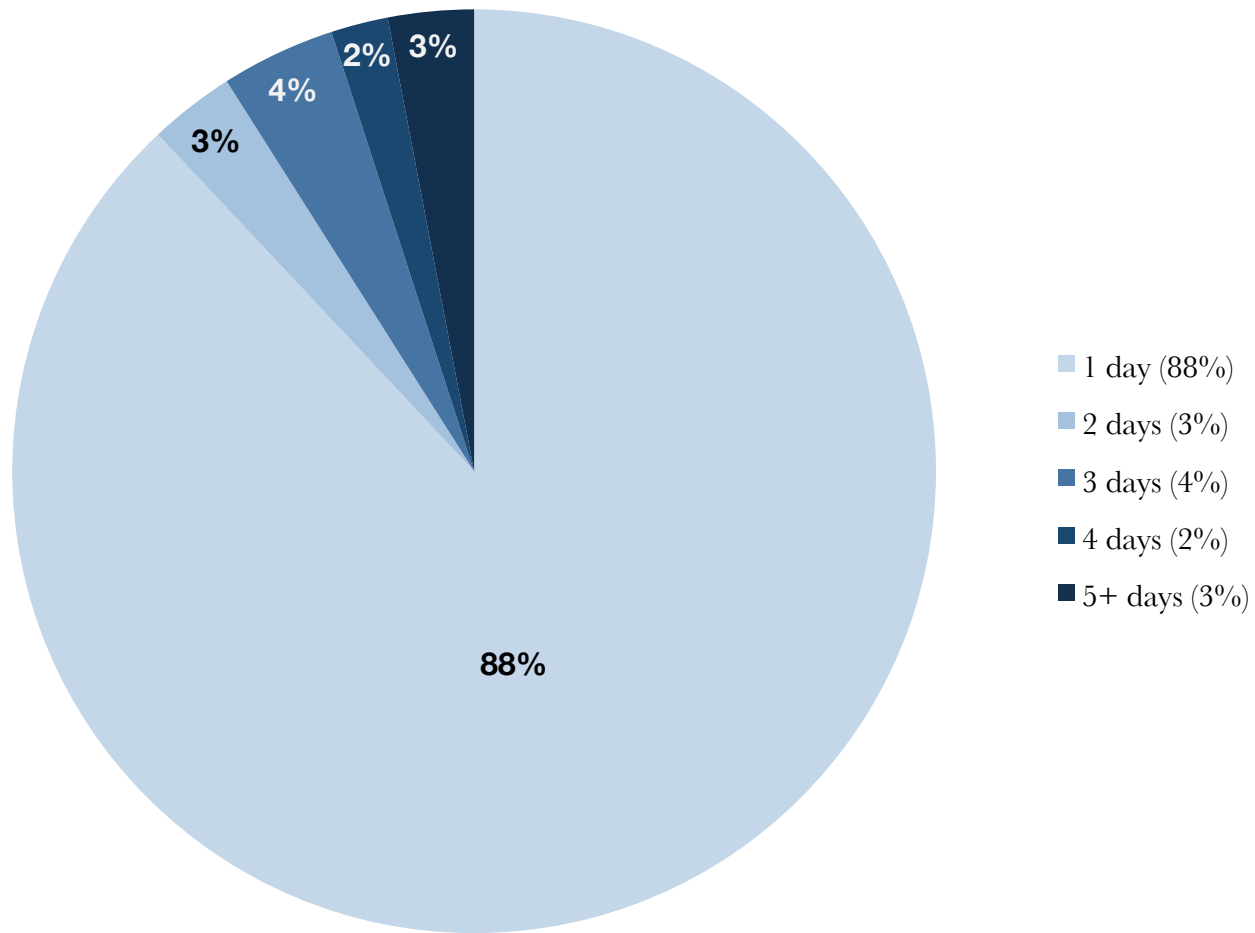
Notes: N=1693. 21 rides were listed as occurring more than once and in different states and were not counted in the above census divisions. Bicycling participation figures (participation per census division/sum of nine census divisions) from "The Active Outdoor Recreation Economy," Outdoor Industry Foundation, 2006.

How do promoters categorize their events?



Notes: N=156. Percentages total more than 100% because respondents could choose more than one event category.

How many days did the events last?



Notes: N=156

How many people participate in these events?

“Big Nine” rides (N=9)	178,896	participants
Survey respondents (N=156)	121,011	
Remainder (N=1,549)	769,549	
TOTAL	1,069,456	participants

More than 1 million Americans participated in recreational road riding events in 2008.



Notes: “Big Nine” rides are from the 2008 Run Walk Ride Thirty Survey Summary and include Team in Training, Bike MS, Pan-Massachusetts Challenge, Tour de Cure, AIDS LifeCycle, LIVESTRONG Challenge, and Rodman Ride for Kids. The Audi Best Buddies Challenge and RAGBRAI are also included in the “Big Nine” but are not on the Thirty Survey Summary. Two events included more than just bicycle events and were adjusted to reflect the share of cyclist participation. Team in Training organizers would not provide their bike event figures nor the exact share of their bike participants, so their published 2008 totals were divided by 1/3, reflecting century rides being one of their three event types in 2008 (the other two are marathon/half-marathon and triathlon). LIVESTRONG Challenge organizers estimated their share of bike participants at 60%, so their published 2008 totals were multiplied by 0.6 to reflect the other 40% being running participants.

Survey respondents were asked how many individuals participated in their ride. If they provided a range, the middle of the range was used. If they provided rider and volunteer figures, only the rider figures were used. Responses ranged from 10 to 20,000 participants. To extrapolate the remaining 1,549 events, the mean minus three outliers (20,000, 17,500 and 7,500) was calculated (497 participants) and multiplied by 1,549.

Entry fees and total revenue

Total entry fees collected

“Big Nine” rides (N=9)	\$ 10,523,960
Survey respondents (N=156)	\$ 4,263,672
Remainder (N=1,549)	\$ 24,959,445
TOTAL	\$ 39,747,077

Total revenue

“Big Nine” rides (N=9)	\$ 211,013,333
Survey respondents (N=129)	\$ 4,203,808
Remainder (N=1,576)	\$ 27,425,552
TOTAL	\$ 242,642,693



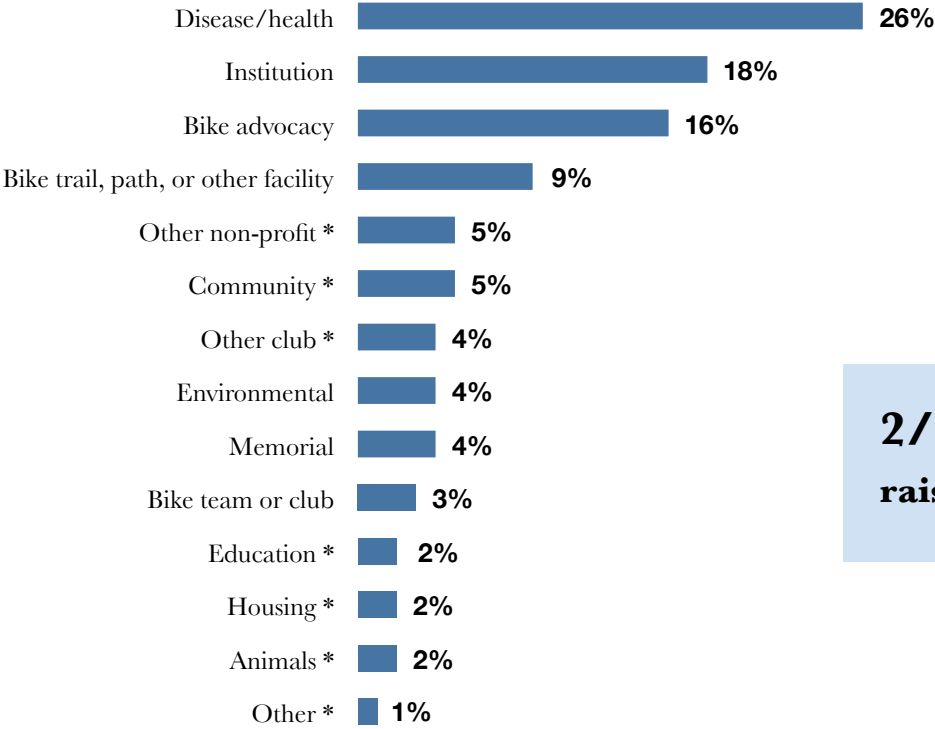
Revenue from recreational road riding events totaled more than \$240 million in 2008.

Notes: Total entry fees collected was calculated by multiplying the number of participants by the individual entry fee, which did not include any required donations. If survey respondents provided a range for the entry fee, the middle of the range was used. If they provided a non-member and member entry fee, the non-member fee was used. Entry fees for the survey respondents ranged from \$0 to \$365. The mean with four outliers (\$200, \$200, \$300, \$365) removed was \$32.42, and the median was \$30. To calculate the total entry fees collected by the 1,549 remaining rides, \$32.42 was multiplied by the mean number of participants (497) by 1,549. The “Big Nine” ride entry fees were researched online and through personal communication. For some, only the 2009 fee was available and was used. Entry fees ranged from \$0 (Rodman Ride for Kids) to \$170 (Pan-Massachusetts Challenge). Again, these entry fee figures were separate from any required donations.

27 survey respondents did not provide their events’ total revenue and were added to the remainder calculation. Two events gave their gross revenue instead of the total revenue. Total revenue for the survey respondents ranged from \$0 to \$641,000. The average with five outliers (\$200,000, \$330,000, \$400,000, \$475,000, \$641,000) removed was \$17,402, and the median was \$10,000. To calculate the total revenue of the remaining 1,576 rides, \$17,402 was multiplied by 1,576. Total revenue for the “Big Nine” rides came from the Thirty Survey Summary and from personal communication with the Audi Best Buddies Ride and RAGBRAI. As with the participation figures (page 4), Team in Training and LIVESTRONG Challenge figures were adjusted to reflect the additional, non-bike portions of these events.

Riding for a cause: donations

What causes do rides support?



Total donations

“Big Nine” rides (N=9)	\$ 180,286,667
Survey respondents (N=105)	\$ 2,438,959
Remainder (N=1,033)	\$ 12,294,766
TOTAL	\$ 195,020,392

2/3 of rides surveyed were tied to a cause, raising nearly \$200 million in 2008.

Notes: 105 of the 156 survey respondents (67%) said that their event was held to benefit a cause. Respondents were asked the total amount donated to the cause, if any. Ten answered “all” or “100%,” one answered “95%,” and one answered “30%,” for these responses, the percentage given was taken from the mean donation (\$11,902). One respondent answered “10-12 new kids bikes,” which was converted to \$1,500 for the study. The total donations distributed by events ranged from \$0 to \$641,000. The mean amount donated with four outliers (\$120,000, \$170,000, \$316,900, \$641,000) removed was \$11,902, and the median was \$7,000. Because only 2/3 of the events surveyed donated to a cause, only 2/3 of the remaining 1,549 events were assumed to be for charity. 1,033 was multiplied by \$11,902 to get the donations figure for the remainder of rides. The “Big Nine” donation figures were researched online and through personal communication. As with the participation figures (page 4), Team in Training and LIVESTRONG Challenge figures were adjusted to reflect the additional, non-bike portions of these events.

* These categories were not provided in the survey and were written in by respondents.

How much do participants spend at these events?

“Big Nine” rides (N=9)	\$ 80,467,042
Survey respondents (N=139)	\$ 5,673,429
Remainder (N=1,566)	\$ 51,007,752
TOTAL	\$ 137,148,223

Bike riders spent nearly \$140 million on food, lodging, and other purchases at recreational road riding events in 2008.



Notes: Survey respondents were asked to estimate how much participants spend on average on the event outside of registration and donations, e.g. food and lodging. 139 of 156 respondents answered. If they provided a range, the middle of the range was used. Responses ranged from \$0 to \$500. Total participant spending was calculated by multiplying the number of participants for each event by the estimated mean participant spending provided by the event. To extrapolate participant spending for the remaining 1,566 events, the mean minus two outliers (\$400 and \$500) was calculated (\$68) and multiplied by the mean number of participants (479) and 1,566.

Participant spending for the “Big Nine” rides was estimated to be \$400 per participant after personal communication with event directors. \$400 was multiplied by the total number of participants for all rides except RAGBRAI (158,896) to get the total participant spending. A separate report on 2008 RAGBRAI participant spending was used for the RAGBRAI figures (Lankford, S., et al., 2008, “The Economic Impact & Spectator Characteristics of RAGBRAI”).

Survey Methodology:

The original survey is available at <http://bikesbelong.org/Surveys/recriides.pdf>. The complete public dataset and any other information can be requested by e-mailing kate@bikesbelong.org.

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Page 10 image “where *did* i leave the bike” by Flickr user estherase used under a Creative Commons license.



About Bikes Belong:

Bikes Belong Coalition is the U.S. bicycle industry organization dedicated to putting more people on bicycles more often. Bikes Belong works to increase federal bike funding, awards grants to support innovative bike projects, promotes bicycling and its benefits, and backs crucial national efforts such as Safe Routes to School, Bicycle Friendly Communities, and the National Bike Summit. The affiliated Bikes Belong Foundation focuses on improving bicycle safety and enhancing children's bike programs.

Visit us on the web at bikesbelong.org.