The Study

A positive by-product of the City of Portland’s investment and commitment to bicycling and bicycling infrastructure is a growing, vibrant bicycle-related industry. To get a picture of the economic impact of bicycling, staff conducted a survey of more than 100 businesses, from custom frame builders to component manufacturers, race promoters, and bike shops. The survey consisted of four questions related to:

- gross revenue related to bicycles,
- growth in revenues over the past decade,
- the effect of Portland’s bike-friendly reputation on business, and
- how the City could help their business grow.

Businesses were categorized by:

- Manufacturers and distributors,
- Retail and repair shops,
- Races, rides, events, and tours,
- Professional services: education and advocacy groups, planners, messenger companies, artists, and other professionals with a business focused exclusively on bicycling.

Note: This study does not include an estimate of the benefits of bicycling related to personal health, air quality, traffic congestion, real estate value, availability of parking, or other societal benefits. While most businesses contacted shared their information, many asked to keep their information anonymous. For those that did not respond, staff made estimates of their business revenue as appropriate.

Results

Manufacturing

Portland has a growing $11.6 million in manufacturing and distribution activity, including a number of small-scale, independent, high-end bicycle and part manufacturers, such as Sacha White (Vanilla Bicycles) and Ira Ryan (Ira Ryan Cycles) as well as larger companies like Kinesis, Mountain Cycle, and Chris King Precision Components. Companies such as United Pipe Bending and Fabrication and Huntco Supply, which each have a portion of their businesses producing bicycle racks, report growth over the past decade.

Retail and Repair

Close to 40 Portland specialty bike, bike clothing/gear, and rental shops report close to $34 million in gross revenue. Most shops have experienced growth in the past decade, and many shops are less than five years old. In addition, consumers buy an estimated $3.8 million worth of bicycles and accessories at larger discount, department, and toy stores.

Tours, Rides, Races, and Events

On an annual basis, an estimated 40,000 people participate in more than 2,100 rides and events of various lengths and sizes, an average of more than six per day. These events bring in more than $7 million annually to Portland’s local economy, on registration fees, food, lodging, and incidentals. All event/tour promoters contacted reported growth.

Professional Services

Professional services include bicycle delivery services ($2.5 million), companies (e.g., Alta Planning + Design) and organizations (e.g., the Bicycle Transportation Alliance) focusing entirely on bicycle issues (40 staff, $2.5 million annually), and creative entrepreneurs ($540,000).

Is Portland’s Reputation for Bike-Friendliness Good for Business?

“Very large part of why we moved here from SF is the unparalleled bike friendly reputation of this city with high livability. We can attract customers who wish to live well without a car, and that is within easy imaginative reach here, because of the city layout development policies, density, generally supportive approach of city government, and promotion and expansion of bike facilities.”

- Accessory Manufacturer

“94% of our participants are from the Portland area; they’re the casual biking crowd, not hardcore. Portland’s reputation draws them in. About 50% of registrants each year are new riders.”

- Rick Bauman, BridgePedal
Conclusion

This study should be considered a snapshot in time. The total estimated impact of bicycling on Portland’s economy is close to $63 million, with a growing number of jobs and revenue. Significant growth is occurring in all sectors, with burgeoning activity in the manufacturing areas of high-end components and bicycles, as well as in the tourist industry.

Portland’s bicycle-friendly reputation is attracting a wide variety of entrepreneurs who are helping fuel this growing economic sector. Job growth has been steady, with the availability of skilled and motivated workers a major attractor to these business owners.

“People love that we deliver on bike, great PR for us. Individuals that bike have loyalty; we have been featured on two national TV shows because of our bike delivery. Our growth has in large part been due to people that bicycle.”
- Restaurant Owner

“We see many, many people who have moved to Portland because of cycling and the lifestyle it represents.”
- Bike Shop Owner, reports six-fold growth in revenue in 10 years

“People that love that we deliver on bike, great PR for us. Individuals that bike have loyalty; we have been featured on two national TV shows because of our bike delivery. Our growth has in large part been due to people that bicycle.”

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This study was sponsored by the Portland Office of Transportation. For more information or copies of the full report, contact Linda Ginenthal, Program Manager, Transportation Options, 503-823-5266 or linda.gidenthal@pdxtrans.org or Mia Birk, Principal, Alta Planning + Design, 503-830-9862 or miabirk@altaplanning.com.