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Cycling is Utah's \$425 million booming business, study says

By Liesl Nielsen, KSL.com | Posted Jul 20th, 2017 @ 7:30pm

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SALT LAKE CITY — Bicycle-related business and tourism in Utah has an economic impact of \$425 million and is responsible for more than 3,500 jobs across the state, according to a [recent study](#) by the Utah Transit Authority and Bike Utah.

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The year-and-a-half long study analyzed the economic and health benefits associated with active transportation, which has recently witnessed a push across Utah as state leaders call for an increase in accessible infrastructure for alternative forms of transport.

In May, Gov. Gary Herbert announced a goal to “develop an additional 1,000 miles of family-friendly trails and bike paths over the next 10 years to provide and promote active connections to school, work and outdoor recreation in urban and rural communities throughout the state.”

In 2015, the League of American Bicyclists named Utah the fifth most bike-friendly state thanks to its pro-bike legislation, planning and education programs. Utah is currently 12th in the nation for commuting to work via bike with a 0.9 percent commuting bike share.

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The economic impact of cycling-related businesses in Utah was \$303.9 million in

2015, responsible for nearly 2,000 jobs and accounting for over \$46 million in income. Over \$61 million is spent on bike tourism each year in Utah, multiplying to over \$121 million in economic output or total sales, 1,500 jobs and \$46 million in earned income.

The study focused on two oft-visited trails to gauge the economic impact of multi-use path and bicycle trails, including the Murdock Canal Trail in Utah County and the Dead Horse point trails in Moab.

The Murdock Canal Trail costs \$113,000 each year to maintain, but generates over \$3.6 million annually in economic impact. Bicyclists visiting Dead Horse Points trails generate \$19 million annually in economic impact, \$11 million of that from overnight trips.

"UTA encourages people to ride their bikes and take trails to get to our trains and buses. We do this by partnering with communities to build bike paths and trails along our routes. We have also added bike lockers and racks to our trains and buses," said UTA CEO Jerry Benson in a news release. "This study validates what we at UTA already knew, that biking and walking is an important part of local economies and a healthy choice for our passengers."

Nearly 45 percent of Utahns get less than the 150 minutes of recommended physical activity each week, according to the study, but those same people could save \$3.07 in annual health care costs for every mile

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they walk or \$0.75 for each mile they bike.

If someone walked 2 miles a day each day of the year, they could average \$2,235 in annual savings on their health care costs, the study said. If the same person bikes 10 miles a day, they would save \$2,730 each year.

"We are very excited about both the outcomes of this study and the associated tools that were created to quantify benefits of active transportation," said Bike Utah executive director Phil Sarnoff in a news release. "This study is a great first step in showing the general public, municipalities, the business and health communities and our elected officials that investing in bicycling and walking for both transportation and recreation can pay dividends in numerous sectors and all across the state of Utah."



Liesl Nielsen, KSL.com



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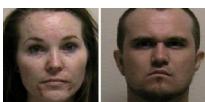
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