

Summary of Multi-Use Trail Surveys  
 Conducted by Michigan State University  
 Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies  
 2001 - 2004

Since 2000 researchers from Michigan State University's Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies have studied several Michigan rail-trails to ascertain a variety of usage characteristics. For the most part, communities wanted to know who is using their trails, for what purpose, how often, how would they like to see them improved, and how much revenue is associated with trail use. The following trails were included in the studies:

- Pere Marquette Trail of Mid-Michigan (Midland County): urban/rural – 22 miles
- Leelanau Trail (Leelanau County): rural – 15 miles
- T.A.R.T. Trail (Grand Traverse County): urban – 10 miles
- Lansing River Trail (Ingham County): urban – 8 miles
- Paint Creek Trail (Oakland County): suburban – 11 miles

While the studies were customized towards what each community wanted to know about the usage of their trail, many of the questions in each of them were identical. The following is a comparison of the findings of the five trail studies where queries were identical.

**Total Number of Uses**

The total number of uses varied with the type of landscape the trail traverses, with the most uses recorded in an urban setting and the least amount of uses recorded in a rural setting.

<u>Trail</u>	<u>Total # of Uses</u>	<u>Survey Period</u>
Pere Marquette	178,000	April – September, 2001
T.A.R.T.	154,803	May – September, 2002
Leelanau	29,318	May – September, 2002
Lansing River Trail	72,040	May – September, 2004
Paint Creek	66,420	May – September, 2004

**Age Profile**

At least two-thirds of all trail uses were by adults. The studies did not show whether the uses by children were in accompaniment with an adult or by themselves.

<u>Trail</u>	<u>Adults 18+</u>	<u>Child 0-17</u>
Pere Marquette	76%	24%
T.A.R.T.	79%	21%
Leelanau	76%	24%
Lansing River Trail	86%	14%



<u>Trail</u>	<u>Resident</u>	<u>Live in Nearby Town</u>	<u>Live Elsewhere</u>
Pere Marquette	77% (Midland County residents)		
T.A.R.T.	79%		
Leelanau	84%		
Lansing River Trail	56%	15%	29%
Paint Creek	90% (Oakland County residents)		

### **How Did Trail Users Get to the Trail**

At least half of all trail users accessed the trail by means other than driving to it, which reinforces the above hypothesis that trails are used most often by those who find it easier to get there.

<u>Trail</u>	<u>Did Not Drive to Trail</u>	<u>Live How Far Away</u>
Pere Marquette*		
T.A.R.T.	60%	>50% traveled $\leq$ 1 mile
Leelanau	45%	45% traveled $\leq$ 1 mile
Lansing River Trail	54%	60% traveled $\leq$ 3 miles
Paint Creek Trail	55%	48% traveled $\leq$ 2 miles

\*The Pere Marquette Trail study did not include this question.

### **Primary Reason for Using the Trail**

The majority of uses on the trails were focused on exercise, with the exception of the Lansing River Trail where more usage was targeted at general recreation. The T.A.R.T. Trail, which links up many residential areas with businesses along Bus. 131 and the downtown core, experienced more use for transportation.

<u>Trail</u>	<u>Recreation</u>	<u>Exercise</u>	<u>Race Training</u>	<u>Transportation</u>
Pere Marquette	35%	61%	*	3%
T.A.R.T.	38%	44%	*	18%
Leelanau	39%	56%	*	5%
Lansing River Trail	59%	35%	3%	3%
Paint Creek	37%	48%	11%	4%

\*The training category was not included in surveys for these trails.

### **Trail is Primary Reason for Visiting the Area**

A new question was added in the two latest trail studies, the Lansing River Trail and the Paint Creek Trail, about whether the trail was the primary reason for visiting the area. The Lansing River Trail was the primary reason for the visit in 7% of those surveyed and for 6% of those surveyed for the Paint Creek Trail. For the Pere Marquette Trail, the majority of those who

had placed inquiries about the trail with the Midland Convention and Visitors Bureau, were visiting the Midland area due to the trail.

### Frequency of Use

While it was found each trail has a group of regular users, such as the Pere Marquette, whose most frequent use it more than 100 days per year, the average use ranged between 10-15 times per year on all the trails.

Trail	Number of Uses per Year	
Pere Marquette	Average 15/year	
T.A.R.T.	94% ≤ 10/year	6% ≥ 10/year
Leelanau	93% ≤ 10/year	7% ≥ 10/year
Lansing River Trail	Average 10/year	
Paint Creek	Average 11/year	

### Tourism Expenditures

For all of the trail studies except the Pere Marquette study, those who described themselves as being from outside the area were given a postcard questionnaire to complete and mail back in. The Pere Marquette study used postcard questionnaires from *intercepted tourists* using the trail and *travel inquirers*, those who asked for information from the Midland Convention and Visitors Bureau. The following purchases were evidenced by those returning the postcards:

Trail	Lodging	Restaurant/ Bar	Groceries	Vehicular Expense	Other
Pere Marquette	66%	* <sub>1</sub>	* <sub>1</sub>	* <sub>1</sub>	* <sub>1</sub>
T.A.R.T.	93%	* <sub>2</sub>	* <sub>2</sub>	* <sub>2</sub>	* <sub>2</sub>
Leelanau	93%	* <sub>3</sub>	* <sub>3</sub>	* <sub>3</sub>	* <sub>3</sub>
Lansing River	21%	77%	31%	46%	39%
Paint Creek	9%	54%	18%	18%	9%

\*<sub>1</sub> Respondents to the Pere Marquette Trail Study's special tourist study showed that 8 out of 10 "travel inquirers" and 2/3 of "intercepted tourists" visited businesses along its length. Those most visited were restaurants and convenience stores.

\*<sub>2</sub> The T.A.R.T. trail study asked for actual dollar amounts spent, not percentages. Tourists spent an average \$437 per party per trip on lodging, \$165 on restaurant/bar meals and drinks/trip, \$72.00 on grocery and convenience store goods, \$151 on motor vehicle expenses, \$74.00 on recreation and entertainment, and \$50 per trip on other goods, such as souvenirs and clothes.

\*<sub>3</sub> The Leelanau trail study asked for actual dollar amounts spent, not percentages. Tourists spent an average \$671 per party per trip on lodging, \$234 on restaurant/bar meals and drinks/trip, \$145 on grocery and convenience store goods, \$98 on motor vehicle expenses, \$70 on recreation and entertainment, and \$51 on other goods, such as souvenirs and clothes.

**The more trails that are studied in Michigan, the more that is learned about their importance to the quality of life in communities, both economic and the health and enjoyment of its citizens. Through studies such as this we can learn a lot about how to develop them and what extensions may be needed to fully realize the potential of a trail network.**