

The Size & Impact of Road Riding Events

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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.

- 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 rides 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.

For questions or to learn more about Bikes Belong’s research efforts, contact Research and Statistics Coordinator Kate Scheider at kate@bikesbelong.org.

For the full report on Bikes Belong’s recreational road riding events survey, visit bikesbelong.org/research.



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