

CHAPTER 2 - PLANNING FOR TRAILS AND BICYCLE FACILITIES

Part of planning for trails and bicycle facilities involves understanding the benefits of trails and to understand the demand for trails. Similarly, it is also helpful to gain insight into who uses trails.

BENEFITS OF TRAILS AND BICYCLE FACILITIES

Interest in trails and bicycle facilities is driven in part by the recreational, environmental, quality-of-life and economic benefits they provide including:

Recreational Benefits

- Provides safe places for bicycling and walking including safe routes to schools.
- Facilitates connections to recreational and commercial areas, within and outside of the township.
- Provides access to historic and cultural sites.
- Increases access to streams, creeks, and rivers for fishing and water-based recreation.
- Offers opportunities for nature study and bird watching.

Quality of Life Benefits

- Encourages physical activity to improve the health and welfare of users of the trail.
- Inspires residents to participate in the ongoing maintenance of the trail and create a sense of community.
- Allows for the opportunity to use a bicycle as an alternative transportation mode.

Environmental Benefits

- Provides the opportunity to improve stormwater management, re-establish and rehabilitate riparian buffers along streams and creeks, and conduct streambank restoration.
- Provides opportunities for environmental education programs at schools in the area.
- Gives citizens the choice to either walk or bike, reducing the need to drive.

Economic Benefits

- Placement of trails close to historic boroughs and commercial centers can benefit both businesses and trail users. Businesses provide trail amenities to trail users in the form of restaurants and shops, thus bringing in a new source of income to help grow current businesses and create opportunity for the development of new ones.

DEMAND FOR TRAILS AND BICYCLE FACILITIES

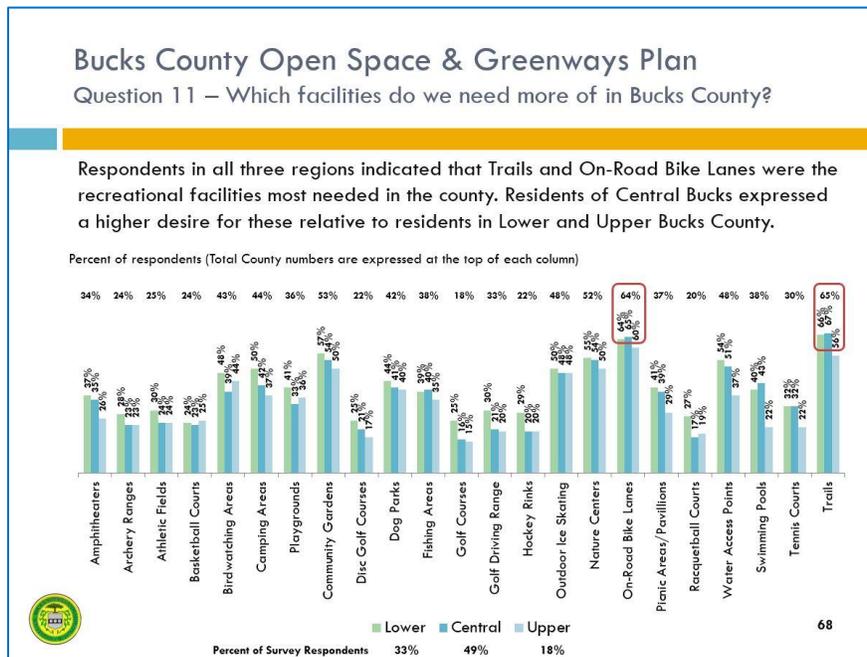
The interest in trails and bicycle facilities among the Northampton Township Board of Supervisors, and many in Northampton Township, is not unique. In fact, a variety of studies indicate that the demand for trails within communities is widespread and spans multiple generations.

Bucks County Open Space & Greenways Plan (2011)

<https://app.sharebase.com/#/document/280224/share/129-1Qaw3RHN6I5kfODvC-b6Jr--GOdM>

A survey completed as part of that plan, asked residents which types of recreational facilities they would like to see more of in Bucks County. The top two facilities residents expressed a desire for including Trails

(65 percent of County residents/67 percent of Central Bucks residents) and On-Road Bike Lanes (64 percent of County residents/65 percent of Central Bucks residents).



Community and Transportation Preferences Survey (2017) - National Association of Realtors
<https://www.nar.realtor/reports/nar-2017-community-preference-survey>

American Strategies conducted an internet survey of the top 50 metropolitan statistical areas in the United States on behalf of the National Association of Realtors. The survey explores Americans' wants regarding neighborhood characteristics such as proximity to parks and shopping, walkability, and commuting time, and the trade-offs in home type and size that people may be willing to accept in order to obtain those neighborhood preferences. Key findings from this survey included:

- When asked the relative importance of various community aspects in determining a place to live, walkability, bike lanes and trails were all cited as being Somewhat or Very Important by at least 50 percent of survey respondents.

Q.5 If you were deciding today where to live, please indicate how important each of the following would be to you.

(RANDOMIZE)

(ROTATE VERY IMPORTANT TO NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT)

	Very important	Smwt important	Not very important	Not at all important	(Don't know)	Total important	Total not important	Total not important
A. Being within an easy walk of other places and things in a community, such as shops and parks	42	38	15	5	0	80	20	59
B. Sidewalks and places to take walks	49	38	10	4	0	86	14	72
C. Being within a short commute to work	41	33	12	14	0	74	26	48
D. Easy access to the highway	38	42	14	5	0	80	20	61
E. Having public transit nearby	34	28	23	14	0	62	38	25
F. Bike lanes and paths nearby	21	34	28	18	0	54	46	9
G. Separated bike paths or trails	20	33	30	17	0	53	47	6

- 76 percent of survey respondents indicated the presence of sidewalks in their neighborhood. In comparison, only 26 percent of neighborhoods/34 percent of housing units in Northampton Township have sidewalks.

Q.3 Here are a few questions about your neighborhood and home. For each, please indicate whether you (ROTATE) agree or disagree with that statement.								
(RANDOMIZE)								
(ROTATE STRONGLY AGREE TO STRONGLY DISAGREE)								
	Strongly agree	Smwt agree	Smwt disagree	Strongly disagree	(Don't know)	Total agree	Total disagree	Agree - Disagree
A. There are lots of places to walk nearby, such as shops, cafes, and restaurants.	31	31	21	17	0	62	38	24
B. There are parks within walking distance.	41	28	16	15	0	69	31	39
C. There are sidewalks on most of the streets.	49	27	12	12	0	76	24	52
D. There are bike lanes and paths nearby.	30	32	17	21	0	62	38	24
E. There is public transit nearby.	42	28	12	17	0	71	29	41

Northampton Township		
	Number of Neighborhoods	Percent of Neighborhoods
With Sidewalks	36	26%
Without Sidewalks	100	74%
Number of Housing Units		
	Number of Housing Units	Percent of Housing Units
With Sidewalks	4,197	34%
Without Sidewalks	8,322	66%

- Although not ranking as high other transportation infrastructure, there was still some degree of priority given to the development of sidewalks and bike lanes. More importantly, providing convenient alternatives to driving such as walking, biking and public transportation was rated as being either a High Priority or Extremely High Priority by respondents.

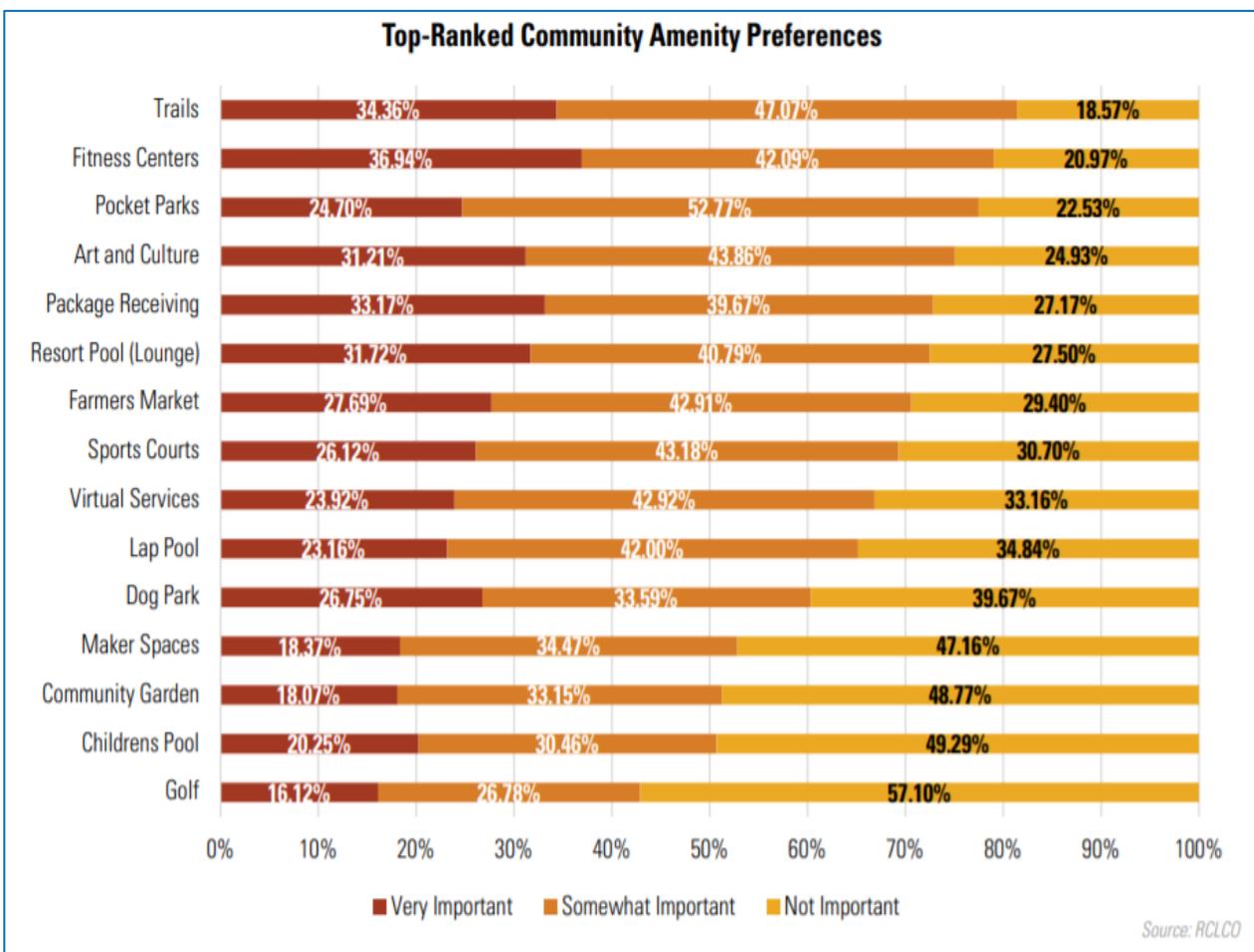
Q.8 Here are some issues your community may be facing over the next few years. For each one, please indicate how much of a priority it should be for the government:									
(RANDOMIZE)									
(ROTATE EXTREMELY HIGH TO EXTREMELY LOW)									
	Extremely high priority	High priority	Middle priority	Low priority	Extremely low priority	(Don't know)	Total High priority	Total Low priority	Total High priority - Total Low priority
A. Maintaining and repairing roads, highways, freeways, and bridges	39	35	22	3	2	-	74	5	69
B. Providing convenient alternatives to driving such as walking, biking, and public transportation	17	27	34	15	7	-	45	21	23
C. Building more roads and expanding existing roads to help reduce traffic congestion	25	29	31	12	4	-	54	16	38
D. Expanding public transportation, including trains and buses	22	24	32	15	8	-	45	23	22
E. Developing communities where more people do not have to drive long distances to work or shop	16	26	37	16	6	-	42	21	20
F. Building more sidewalks	13	24	36	19	8	0	37	27	10
G. Building more bike lanes and paths	10	16	35	26	13	-	25	40	-15

2018 Housing & Community Preference Survey - RCLCO Real Estate Advisors
<https://www.rclco.com/publication/2018-housing-and-community-preference-survey/>

RCLCO surveyed over 23,500 persons across the U.S., narrowing the respondents to include only those who either purchased a home in the last year or have intentions to purchase a home in the next 12 to 24 months. The survey gathered information on a variety of housing and community topics including:

- Preferred community locations (suburbs, rural areas, small towns, etc.)
- What is motivating a home purchase? (move closer to job, move to more affordable area, move into better school district, etc.)
- What particular housing features are buyers seeking? (house size, yard size, lower maintenance, higher quality, etc.)

The survey also asked about the importance of particular community amenities. The number one amenity cited as being very important (34%) or important (47%) are trails with over 80% of respondents indicating a preference for them.



The desire for trails is not unique to any one age group as shown by a variety of surveys:

Marketing to Baby Boomers One More Time (2019) - RCLCO Real Estate Advisors

https://www.rclco.com/publication/marketing-to-baby-boomers-one-more-time/?utm_campaign=Urbanexus%20Update&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Revue%20newsletter

Trails were in the top 5 community amenities across all age groups

Top Community Amenities			
Art and Culture Grow in Importance for Older Market; Trails and Fitness Are Constants			
RANK	UNDER 35	35-54	55+
1	Package receiving	Gated entry	Gated entry
2	Fitness centers, such as weights, yoga studio, trainers, and classes	Trails	Fitness centers, such as weights, yoga studio, trainers, and classes
3	Gated entry	Fitness centers, such as weights, yoga studio, trainers, and classes	Art and culture, such as concerts, food, wine, art, educational trips, etc.
4	Trails	Resort pool (lounge)	Trails
5	Resort pool (lounge)	Package receiving	Resort pool (lounge)
6	Art and culture, such as concerts, food, wine, art, educational trips, etc.	Art and culture, such as concerts, food, wine, art, educational trips, etc.	Package receiving
7	Farmers market	Farmers market	Virtual services, such as community intranet, virtual education, Amazon locker, etc.
8	Sports courts, such as pickleball, bocce, basketball, sports fields, tot lots, tennis courts, etc.	Dog park	Farmers market
9	Dog park	Sports courts, such as pickleball, bocce, basketball, sports fields, tot lots, tennis courts, etc.	Lap pool
10	Pocket park	Pocket park	Dog park

Source: RCLCO

Housing Preferences of the Boomer Generation (2016) - National Association of Homebuilders
<http://eyeonhousing.org/2016/02/boomers-prefer-suburbs-and-cul-de-sacs/>

Top 8 Community Amenities by Generation

	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Seniors
1	Park area	Typically suburban	Typically suburban	Typically suburban
2	Typically suburban	Park area	Near retail space	Near retail space
3	Walking/jogging trails	Walking/jogging trails	Park area	Walking/jogging trails
4	Playgrounds	Near retail space	Walking/jogging trails	Park area
5	Near retail space	Lake	Lake	Outdoor maint. service
6	Swimming pool	Swimming pool	Outdoor maint. service	Lake
7	Lake	Exercise room	Swimming pool	Swimming pool
8	Exercise room	Playgrounds	Exercise room	Exercise room

Housing Preferences of the Boomer Generation, NAHB

Consumer & Product Insights - What Do You Call Home? (2018) - John Burns Real Estate Consulting
<https://www.realestateconsulting.com/our-value/consumer-insights/>

All generations rated walking trails as one of the top amenities they wanted most in their next community.

Consumer Insights

Top Amenities

Check out what more than 20,000 new home shoppers shared as the amenities they most wanted in their next community. Below are the **top 25 preferences by generation**. The major differences relate to the presence of children for the younger generations.

	Boomers <small>Born 1946 to 1964</small>	Gen X <small>Born 1965 to 1979</small>	Gen Y <small>Born 1980 to 2000</small>
1	Grocery Store Close By	Grocery Store Close By	Grocery Store Close By
2	Restaurants Close By	Restaurants Close By	Restaurants Close By
3	Walking Trails	Walking Trails	Fitness Center
4	Fitness Center	Fitness Center	Walking Trails
5	Village Square	Recreational Center	Children's Park
6	Shopping	Village Square	Shopping
7	Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Areas	Shopping	Recreational Center
8	Community High-Speed Internet	Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Areas	Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Areas
9	Recreational Center	Community High-Speed Internet	Village Square
10	Community-Wide events	Shaded Areas	Community-Wide events

* Today's shoppers rated Service & Retail as the most important amenities for their next community purchase.

* All three generations ranked Fitness Center and Walking Trails as top amenities above retail shopping.

* Wi-Fi Internet Access and a Community Intranet with Events, Clubs, etc. are more important to the Boomers than they are to Gen X and Gen Y.

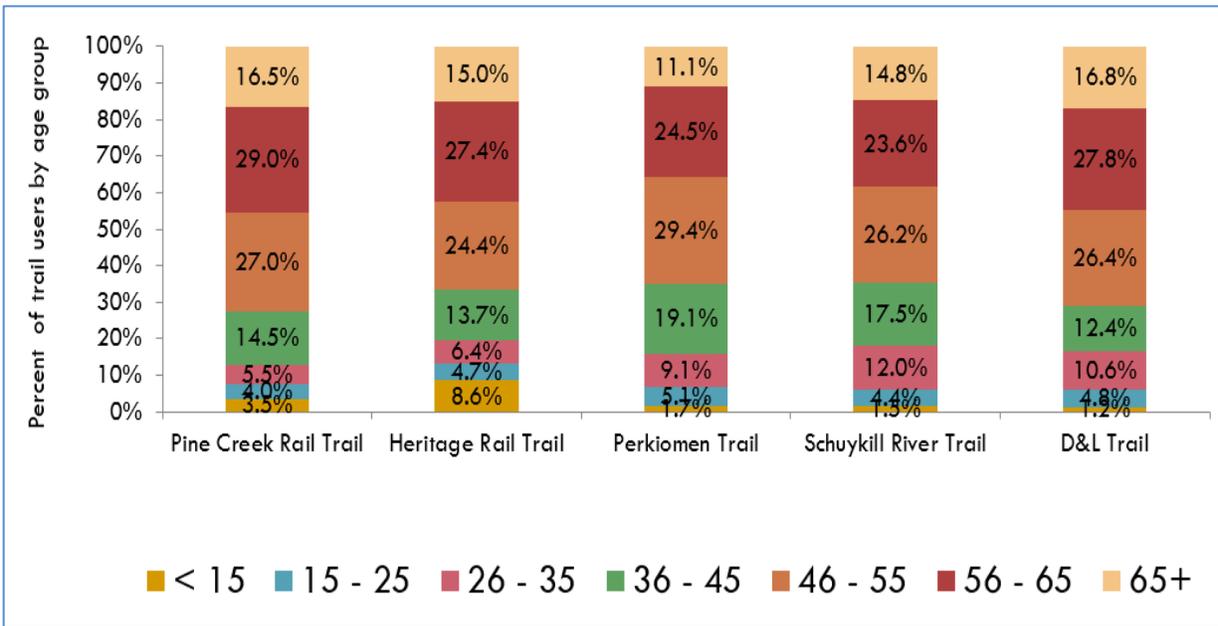
OVERVIEW OF TRAIL USAGE AND USERS

A variety of User Surveys and Economic Impact Analysis studies have been conducted on trails across the country. However, in recognition of potential regional differences, this plan focuses on five studies conducted within Pennsylvania, with three of these being within the Philadelphia region. These studies included:

- Pine Creek Rail Trail - 2006 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis (62.6 miles)
- Heritage Rail Trail County Park - 2007 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis (21.0 miles)
- Perkiomen Trail - 2008 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis (19.0 miles)
- Schuylkill River Trail - 2009 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis (56.0 miles)
- D & L Trail - 2012 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis (165.0 miles)

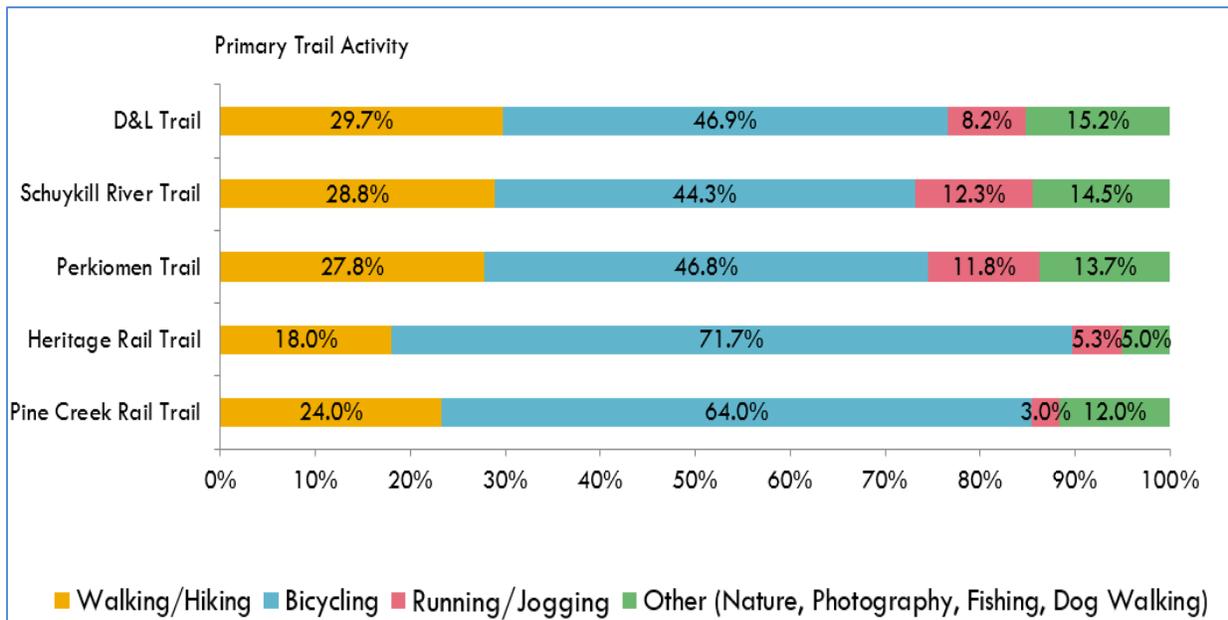
Trail User Ages

50 to 56 percent of all trail users are in the 46-65 age groups.



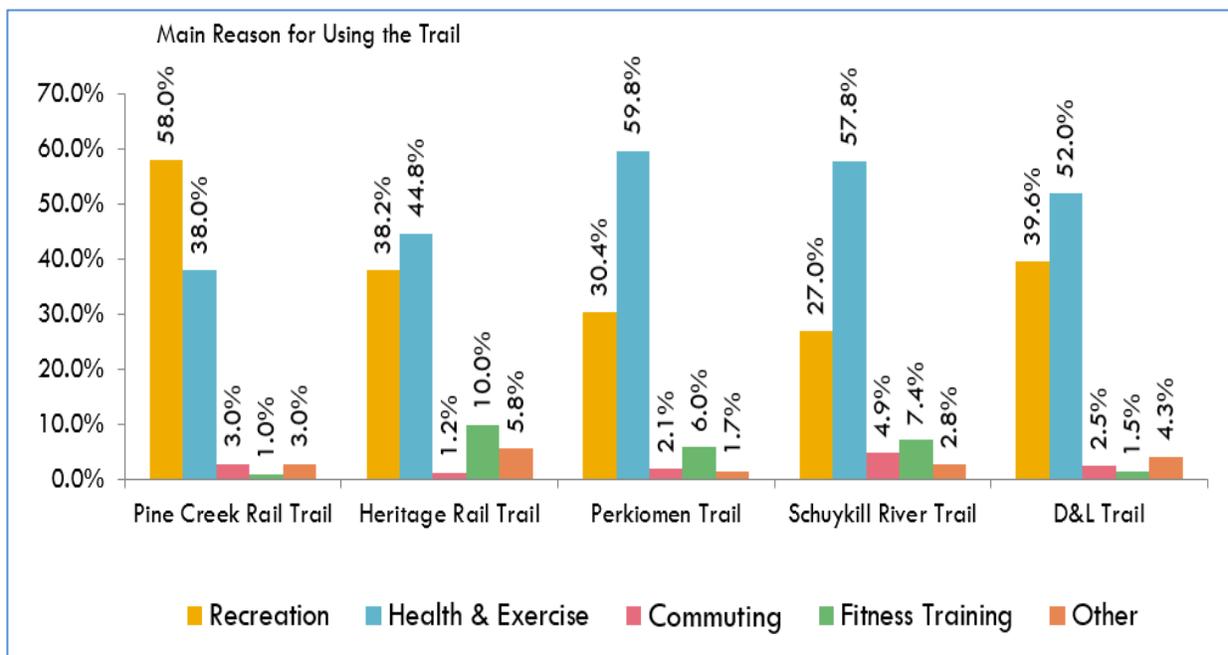
Trail Activities

Bicycling is the number one activity across all five trails.



Reasons for Trail Usage

Health & Exercise and Recreation are the primary reasons people use the trails.



Access to the Trail

While the majority of trail users accessed the trail by car, nearly one third of trail users biked, walked or ran to the trail. This seems to indicate that these users were likely nearby residents.

