

# Active Tourism Toolkit

June 2022



Bike rider at BaseCamp in Humboldt, KS. Photo: Credit Beth Barlow







The **Kansas Active Tourism Toolkit** is a companion to the **Kansas Active Transportation Plan (ATP)**. The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) ATP supports leveraging investments in walking, bicycling, and mobility infrastructure for transportation, recreation, and tourism purposes. This toolkit assists active tourism planning by:

- Describing benefits, key elements, target markets, and partners.
- Discussing how to identify and capitalize on community active tourism assets.
- Outlining methods of promotion and measuring success.
- Providing notable active tourism examples from across the country.

This toolkit can be used as a reference when developing active tourism initiatives in your Kansas community.

*Christopher Nichols*

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# What is Active Tourism?

Kansans are not alone in discovering that self-propelled activities are fun and healthy ways to explore. Active tourism is used as an umbrella term to identify a type of tourism that includes physical activity to reach a destination, as a location-based activity, or as an adventure such as bicycle camping or hiking to experience a place.

The term “active transportation” refers to walking, using a mobility device, bicycling, roller skating, or skateboarding and is an important supportive component to active tourism. Active transportation improvements, such as multi-use paths and convenient connections to places people want to visit, are being planned, designed, and built across Kansas, making active tourism more attractive and accessible.

Mobility investments can be leveraged to support active tourism. Unlike traditional tourism that often draws concentrations of visitors to a sporting event or vacation spot for a holiday, active tourism typically involves smaller-scale events and experiences. It is “a kind of tourism that includes activities in which the tourist has an active and participatory role in achieving a deep and engaging experience of the destination’s attractions”.<sup>1</sup>

Active tourism can provide opportunities for travelers to delve into a setting at a slower pace, seeking to discover, learn, and enjoy it. In addition, active tourism often incorporates recreational, entertainment, and adventure elements. It offers the chance to celebrate history, culture, and ecology while elevating human health.

The same safe, clear, and easy-to-navigate routes that connect people who walk, bike, and roll for transportation will make active tourism excursions possible as well.

## Active tourism could involve trips where friends, family, or tour groups explore what a community has to offer by:

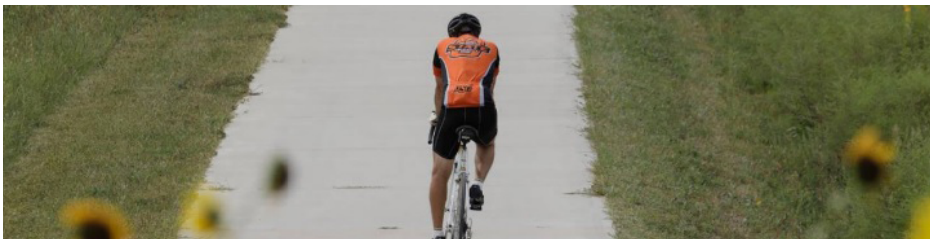
- Trying local foods and eateries,
- Shopping at distinctive retailers,
- Uncovering novelties,
- Exploring the trails network,
- Delving into historic sites,
- Learning about distinctive natural areas,
- Attending events, and
- Enjoying other happenings and sites.

<sup>1</sup>Aiello, Lucia. “Handbook of Research on Management of Cultural Products.” IGI Global. Universitas Mercatorum, Italy, 2014, [www.igi-global.com/dictionary/creative-tourism-and-cultural-heritage/39286](http://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/creative-tourism-and-cultural-heritage/39286) Accessed January 12, 2022.

## Benefits of Active Tourism

The ATP's **Economic Impact Analysis (July 2021 Draft)** notes active tourism investments support tourists and provide a range of benefits to local, county, regional, and state economies. The economic baseline for Kansas considers active transportation trends, including daily walking and biking statistics, existing trail and bikeway network development, active transportation-related events, and the economic sectors directly or indirectly benefiting from active transportation. Types of benefits Kansas communities may expect are:

- **Tourism spending** attributed to areas where existing active transportation facilities are attracting visitors. Tourism spending includes Kansans and visitors spending money on lodging, food, equipment rentals, transportation to sites, and indirect benefits generated from those expenditures.
- **Event expenditures** directly attributed to active tourism activities, such as bike and trail rides or races and goings-on experienced by foot, that draw people from adjacent areas or states.
- **Direct retail sales** of equipment. Vendors might include bicycle shops, outdoor recreation retailers, and running shoe stores.
- **Active transportation use** when people choose walking or bicycling instead of driving a car as part of their tourism experience. Increased safety and improved health and air quality are associated benefits along with more active trips when lodging, retail, and other uses that appeal to tourists are developed within close proximity to one another.
- **Accessibility** made possible when tourism and active transportation accommodations are integrated. The proximity of active transportation to development can impact property values, population levels, and incomes.



Loop Trail Bike Rider in Lawrence, KS. Photo Credit: Friends of Lawrence Area Trails

Investments in active transportation and trails have many benefits including increased tourism dollars. Several examples of tourism and other related economic multipliers are provided below from Kansas and peer communities:

- The total annual Tourism/Events Economic Benefits related to active transportation in **Kansas** in 2021 was \$42 million.\*
- For every \$1 spent on the **Kansas Prairie Spirit Trail**, a 51-mile trail between Ottawa and Humboldt that passes through nine other Kansas towns, the estimated benefit to the Kansas economy is \$10.81.\*
- The annual economic impact of recreational bicycling and bicycle tourism is estimated at \$924 million for the state of **Wisconsin**.\*\*
- For **North Carolina's Outer Banks**, the annual economic impact of bicycle tourists is estimated at \$60 million. In addition, 1,400 jobs are created or sustained annually because of these tourists.\*\*
- Every trail visitor to the **Virginia Creeper Trail** generated between \$24 and \$38 per visit. Trail visitors contributed an estimated \$1.2 million annually to the local economy.\*\*
- The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) at the **University of Montana** conducts nonresident surveys year-round throughout the state of Montana. Data from ITRR surveys indicate that an average of 500,000 nonresidents participate in road touring/bicycling in Montana each year and that they spend an average of \$75.75 per day, creating approximately \$38 million in economic activity.\*\*
- A 2012 **Oregon Bicycle Tourism Study** found that bicycle-related expenditures amounted to nearly \$400 million and supported 4,600 jobs within Oregon.\*\*

\* Kansas Active Transportation Plan Economic Impact Analysis <https://www.ksdot.org/KansasATP.asp>

\*\*The League of American Bicyclists <https://data.bikeleague.org/chapter-3/section-iii-strong-economies>



## Key Elements of Active Tourism

Active tourism pairs active transportation investments with thoughtful access, activities, attractions, accommodations, amenities,<sup>2</sup> and promotion to support memorable experiences. Specifically:

- **Access** involves how tourists get to destinations in general and via active transportation infrastructure specifically by providing accommodations for people with disabilities (hearing, vision, cognitive, and mobility), a comprehensive wayfinding system, a digital presence (websites, landing pages, social media), and easy links to features available away from the traditionally traveled path.
- **Activities** include what your tourists can do and experience. If your community is traditionally passed-through, emphasize why a tourist should stop. Specialized food tours and cooking classes, wellness and mindfulness activities, natural environment, cultural immersion, and physical activities are a few examples. Highlight what makes your community special.
- **Attractions** may entice tourists to target markets. Attractions can be experiences, things, people, or places that draw visitors because of what they represent. Examples could be natural, man-made, historic, cultural, special events, and other elements. Some may even integrate user-generated content.
- **Accommodations** (hotels, bed and breakfasts, short-term rentals, camping) respond to the needs of targeted tourists, such as the ability to easily roll bicycles into their rooms. Some active tourism destinations allow visitors to feel as if they are local to the community. Others provide a non-local experience. Put effort into promotions, so both the accommodation and nearby destinations are highlighted. Also, pay attention to customer reviews and your responses to them.
- **Amenities** impact how tourists view your destination. They involve roads and other infrastructure, emergency response, and public restrooms. They may also include visitor centers with information about destinations, websites with accurate community calendars, and more. Amenities that are targeted specifically to the active users such as water filling stations, bike fix-it stations, etc. are also important.

- **Promotions** are the activities you use to communicate and share information about your active tourism experience, event, activity, service, and/or other features. Promotional tasks and tools incorporate brand positioning and messaging into paid advertisements, social media, fan pages, websites, word of mouth, and other tools to spread the word. Success is often greatest when you plan, schedule, and target promotions to where customers will see and hear them.



Bike Trail near the River. Photo Credit: Dale LeBar

<sup>2</sup>Belton, Victoria. "Key Elements of a Destination, Part 5: Amenities." Stamp Destinations, [stampdestinations.com/good-work/insights/key-elements-of-a-destination-part-5-amenities/](https://stampdestinations.com/good-work/insights/key-elements-of-a-destination-part-5-amenities/). Accessed January 12, 2022.

## Active Tourism Partners

Many state and local organizations have goals related to transportation, land development, and community growth that can be reached by improving active tourism and active transportation. Opportunities to meet those goals will be stronger when organizations join forces. Potential candidates include:

- Municipal governments—public works and economic development
- Local chambers of commerce
- County governments
- Local businesses
- State and local foundations
- Non-profit agencies
- Advocacy or technical groups, such as Kansas Main Street and Kansas Historical Society
- Parks and recreation departments and associations
- Kansas Department of Transportation
- Kansas Department of Commerce (includes Kansas Main Street)
- Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)
- Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP)

Development of successful partnerships will involve agreement on roles, level of commitment, consistency with established marketing plans, communications practices, protocols, and metrics for evaluating success.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>“Creating Successful Partnerships in the Travel and Tourism Industry.” Destinations International, [destinationsinternational.org/creating-successful-partnerships-travel-and-tourism-industry](https://destinationsinternational.org/creating-successful-partnerships-travel-and-tourism-industry). Accessed January 12, 2022.

<sup>4</sup>ESRI. “Esri Tapestry Segmentation: Cozy Country Living.” ArcGIS, [doc.arcgis.com/en/esri-demographics/data/tapestry-segmentation.htm#GUID-8E48A406-99C4-4BC1-AA10-FE97A0BEB2BB](https://doc.arcgis.com/en/esri-demographics/data/tapestry-segmentation.htm#GUID-8E48A406-99C4-4BC1-AA10-FE97A0BEB2BB). Accessed January 12, 2022.

<sup>5</sup>ESRI. “Esri Tapestry Segmentation: Upscale Avenue.” ArcGIS, [doc.arcgis.com/en/esri-demographics/data/tapestry-segmentation.htm#GUID-7CABAEDF-FAF1-4ECC-B4D3-AE1F51D7AB00](https://doc.arcgis.com/en/esri-demographics/data/tapestry-segmentation.htm#GUID-7CABAEDF-FAF1-4ECC-B4D3-AE1F51D7AB00). Accessed January 12, 2022.

<sup>6</sup>“The Rise of Active Tourism and Fit Getaway.” peekPro, [www.peek.com/pro/trends/the-rise-of-active-tourism-and-fit-getaways](https://www.peek.com/pro/trends/the-rise-of-active-tourism-and-fit-getaways). Accessed January 12, 2022.

## Who’s Interested - Target Market

Consumer data from ESRI Community Analyst, which describes demographics, money spent on recreation and equipment, recreational participation in the last 12 months, and other information by market segment, suggests most of today’s Kansans are interested in active tourism. ESRI findings also indicate many Kansans (and those living outside the state but nearby) are within the “Cozy Country Living” and “Upscale Avenue” market segments:

- **Cozy Country Living market** “spend[s] less time online [and]...enjoy outdoor activities, such as fishing, hunting, camping, boating, and bird watching.”<sup>4</sup>
- **Upscale Avenue market** are “serious shoppers...active in fitness pursuits such as bicycling, jogging, yoga, and hiking.”<sup>5</sup>

Family-oriented experiences focused on nature, relaxation, health, and wellness may be of interest to both the Cozy Country Living and Upscale Avenue markets. Activities centered on exploration, which is a key component of adventure travel, should also be appealing. Adventure tourists are known to:

- Use social media and talk with friends when conducting research on travel options,
- Post to social media when traveling, and
- View “relaxation, exploring new places, spending time with family, and learning about different cultures as most important to their travel experiences”.<sup>6</sup>

The adventure tourism market is anticipated to grow in North America over the coming years. During July 2021, Allied Market Research released its summary of projected adventure tourism market growth. Factoring in COVID-19 impacts and comparing 2020 and 2026, their findings indicate growth:<sup>7</sup>

- In land, water, and air-based activities with most increases happening with land and water activities.
- Among solo, friends/groups, couple, and family markets with the greatest increase among couples and families.
- Amid all age ranges but quickest among people who are 30-41 years old.

According to the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) 2015-2019, Kansas has 1.1 million households and about 2/3 are families (married, single female family household, or single male family household). The median age is 36.7. Further, the ACS estimates the number of Kansas households will grow almost 10% between 2021 and 2027. Adjacent states (Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma) add over 17.5 million people to the potential market who are of similar age to, or slightly older than Kansas residents. Similar to Kansas, most of their households are families and the number of households are anticipated to grow over the next few years.

Kansas communities should make active tourism investments that attract these potential customers. Investments in bicycle/pedestrian trails, sidewalks, bicycle accommodations (parking), connections between destinations and routes, streetscapes, parks, lake and river amenities, history, and culture will be important to attracting the market. Findings from **Promoting Safe Bicycle Travel Opportunities for Bicycle Tourism and Economic Development** indicate “[w]hile it may sound too good to be true, dozens of studies released between 2010-2020 show the profound impact that bicycling can have on local and state economies. From \$400 Million annually in Oregon to \$533 Million annually in Colorado to \$83 Billion annually in the U.S. economy as a whole.”<sup>8</sup>

Visitors survey results from Kansas State Parks show people are most interested in activities that provide camping, family time, and opportunities to observe wildlife and nature.<sup>9</sup> From a marketing perspective, consider targeting investments to present day and future adventure, destination, and event tourists plus casual visitors.

<sup>7</sup> Market Research. “Adventure Tourism Market by Type (Hard, Soft, and Others), Activity (Land-based Activity, Water-based Activity, and Air-based Activity), Type of Traveler (Solo, Friends/Group, Couple, and Family), Age Group (Below 30 Years, 30-41 Years, 42-49 Years, and 50 Years & Above), and Sales Channel (Travel Agents and Direct): Global Analysis and Industry Forecast.” Market Research, [www.marketresearch.com/Allied-Market-Research-v4029/Adventure-Tourism-Type-Hard-Soft-12863327/](http://www.marketresearch.com/Allied-Market-Research-v4029/Adventure-Tourism-Type-Hard-Soft-12863327/). Accessed January 12, 2022.

<sup>8</sup>Tuolumne County Transportation Council (TCTC). “Promoting Safe Bicycle Travel Opportunities.” <https://www.bikevalleytosierra.com/bicycle-tourism-plan-motherlode>. Accessed January 12, 2022.



- **Adventure tourists** from a broad range of economic backgrounds who are very likely to bring their own bicycles and equipment on trips. They will typically spend a night in town (either at a campsite or in a hotel) after spending the day exploring what it has to offer. If communities have well-connected infrastructure, casual visitors may spend a different night in each town, enjoying the sights, spending money, and more.

- **Destination tourists** oriented to a basecamp model. Their trips begin and end at an established campsite, hotel, bed and breakfast, or other vacation rental offering shelter, supplies, and communications for people who want to take an adventure lasting several days and including deep exploration opportunities. Communities support basecamps by offering good restaurants, natural exploration via hike/bike trails, tours (self-guided and guided), and other features. Destination tourists also enjoy a basecamp that is its own destination. BaseCamp Humboldt in Humboldt, Kansas, is an example.



- **Event tourists** attracted to happenings that draw groups of people or crowds for a determined time period. The events they attend are typically arranged by a director, coordinator, or promoter. Races, such as UNBOUND Gravel in Emporia, Kansas, are examples. Lodging options are important to event tourists. Keep in mind that they are very likely to spend money where the event is happening and in the communities beyond it.

- **Casual visitors** are those who rent a bicycle or scooter for a day while on vacation. They may also include those willing to take guided tours in and around your community. Casual visitors are individuals and families who enjoy exploring but do not consider themselves “explorers”, “adventurers,” or “cyclists”. They enjoy safe and low stress experiences. For example, a casual visitor is likely to take an easy bicycle tour on mostly flat terrain that makes lots of stops, swings by parks so families with kids can allow them to play, and provides short-cuts mid-ride.



Top Credits (Top to Bottom): Bike Across Kansas; Beth Barlow; UNBOUND Gravel; Jared Tremblay.

<sup>9</sup>Wichita State University. “Kansas State Parks: Economic Contributions to Regional and State Economies.” W. Frank Barton School of Business and the Center for Economic Development and Business Research. [ksoutdoors.com/content/download/54370/594916/file/ks-state-parks-impact-study.pdf](https://ksoutdoors.com/content/download/54370/594916/file/ks-state-parks-impact-study.pdf). Accessed January 12, 2022.





## BaseCamp Humboldt (Humboldt, KS)

Looking for your next destination? Well, look no further than the small town of Humboldt, Kansas. Beth (Works) Barlow and the Works Family are collaborating with friends and neighbors to add life to Humboldt, revamping several downtown buildings, and filling them with successful businesses. Their biggest success may be the newest project: BaseCamp Humboldt. It is an excellent example of how to integrate bicycling and bike tourism into smaller communities. BaseCamp includes a twenty-one-acre campground overlooking a quarry. It also offers small cabins for glamping, camping sites, a shower house, connecting trails throughout, and a cyclist challenge course all connected to the 61-mile Southwind Rail-Trail and to downtown.

Located right off the Southwind Rail-Trail, a \$1.3 million KDOT cost-share grant will help fund a bicycle/pedestrian path from downtown Humboldt to a BaseCamp rails-to-trails head and its parking lot. A \$119,000 KDWP grant will fund showers at the bike course. BaseCamp's private funding has come from a local investor. City officials and staff, the chamber of commerce, and an entrepreneurial team called A Bolder Humboldt, which includes Beth and others, are among BaseCamp's partners. The Pitch and Midwest Living recently featured BaseCamp in their magazines and triggered an influx of visitors to Humboldt. BaseCamp will also be on the cover of Kansas Tourism and is now featured in New York Times' "52 Places for a Changed World" 2022. The chamber of commerce handles downtown-focused marketing via social media and Southeast Kansas Living magazine.

Beth says the success of their efforts can be seen in more tourism, increased downtown business support and activity, and greater community pride. Further, improvements resonate with current residents and draw new homeowners, families, and residents to move in. The marketing mottos "Humboldt Has It" and "A Bolder Humboldt" serve the community well. Beth advises other communities interested in similar efforts to consider some of the keys to Humboldt's success:

- Clear and well-implemented branding from the beginning of the project;
- Initial trail and active tourism infrastructure (campsites, lodging, in-town bicycling parking);
- Philanthropic community members willing to help fund and work on projects;
- Involvement of local industries; and
- Funding.

**The Pitch.** Retrieved from [www.thepitchkc.com/ready-to-escape-this-world-try-humboldt-kansas-really/](http://www.thepitchkc.com/ready-to-escape-this-world-try-humboldt-kansas-really/)

**Midwest Living.** Retrieved from [www.midwestliving.com/travel/kansas/humboldt-kansas-revival/](http://www.midwestliving.com/travel/kansas/humboldt-kansas-revival/)

6 **52 Places for a Changed World.** Retrieved from [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/travel/52-places-travel-2022.html](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/travel/52-places-travel-2022.html)

**Interview** with Beth (Barlow) Works, Marketing Manager, B&W Trailer Hitches, on November 22, 2021.

**Thrive Allen County.** Retrieved from [thriveallencounty.org/files/SWRT-2014-04.pdf](http://thriveallencounty.org/files/SWRT-2014-04.pdf)  
**Humboldt Kansas,** Retrieved from [www.humboldtkansas.com/](http://www.humboldtkansas.com/)

# What's Available to Enjoy?

## Capitalizing on Existing Assets and Developing New Ones

Because active tourism is strongly experiential, it is important to consider and define why people should visit your community or destination. Express what they can enjoy by:

- **Defining your “claim to fame”.** Think about it from the visitor’s perspective; defining what might motivate them to visit, brainstorming the types of memories they could create, and outlining why they would tell others about it and thereby draw more people to your community. Focus on a theme. Then consider anchoring it with special features and explore how active transportation complements them. Consider unique stories and gifted storytellers, amazing people, notable locations, community assets (natural spaces, celebrations, buildings, art), and other offerings.
- **Designing an active tourism experience.** Develop an engaging active tourism “package” or series of packages that unfolds for visitors over time rather than making the visit about a single event and point in time. Provide opportunities for interesting encounters. Help tourists explore your “claim to fame” in ways that correspond to what resonates with and is of interest to them. Find and/or develop programming and events that elevate your offering and ensure visitors know there are opportunities to share their experiences and reactions with you.
- **Investing in improvements.** A robust, context sensitive, active tourism experience will make use of active transportation investments of various types.<sup>10</sup> For additional information on planning and implementing active transportation infrastructure visit the [KDOT Active Transportation website](#). Examples include:
  - Human-powered forms of transportation, such as bicycling, walking, skating, and canoeing.
  - Use of mobility devices (scooters and wheelchairs).
  - Safe and enjoyable transportation routes, involving sidewalks; shade, pedestrian-level lighting, landscaping, and seating; separated bicycle/pedestrian paths; lanes for scooters and/or other small-wheeled mobility options; and traffic-calming devices installed where appropriate.
- **Working with champions and partners.** Municipalities and local organizations may lead active tourism efforts while partnering with larger agencies and other entities. Champions could involve anyone from local residents to elected officials, regional organizations, and beyond. Champions and partners should collaborate with you to:
  - Brainstorm active tourism needs and options.
  - Pursue and/or secure funding.
  - Assist with programming and marketing.
  - Build capacity and leverage resources available to help more than one community at a time.
  - Coordinate branding and trail-town development efforts along linear routes or trails.
  - Develop a detailed implementation strategy.
  - Measure outcomes with the newly developed Kansas Active Transportation Economic Impact Evaluation Toolkit.
  - Determine improvements and timing.
- **Fostering business support for active tourism.** Active tourism efforts will be more successful and impactful if businesses and chambers of commerce at the local and/or regional level help develop the approach to it, champion efforts, and promote them. Conversations and activities should involve:
  - Developing an understanding of the active tourism industry and its customers’ interests.
  - Outlining what is currently available and missing in the local and/or regional market.
  - Identifying how community assets could be leveraged for business growth

<sup>10</sup>BC Healthy Communities. “Active Transportation.” Plan H, [planh.ca/take-action/healthy-environments/built-environments/page/active-transportation](http://planh.ca/take-action/healthy-environments/built-environments/page/active-transportation). Accessed January 12, 2022.

and start-ups and then targeting funding to their development.

- Organizing tourism trainings with assistance from experienced organizations, such as the United States Tour Operators Association ([ustoa.com](http://ustoa.com)) and the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute ([www.ahlei.org](http://www.ahlei.org)).
- Leveraging guidance from The League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly Business Program to create more welcoming environments for customers, workers, and community members who bike.
- Engaging Kansas Main Street and the Kansas Department of Commerce to help enhance the business environment and sense of place within your community's traditional commercial area.
- Defining and utilizing easy ways to promote offerings and new endeavors.



Cyclist on Rural Path in McPherson, KS. Photo Credit: Austin Russell

## Kansas Main Street

Kansas Main Street is a self-help, technical assistance program that targets revitalization and preservation of downtown districts in mostly rural communities through the development of a comprehensive strategy based on the four points of Organization, Design, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring. From 1985 to 2012, more than \$600 million in redevelopment took place in participating Kansas communities. This included the opening or expansion of 3,800 small businesses, creating more than 8,600 new jobs. With the return of the state program in 2020, 25 previously participating communities and new programs once again have the resources and tools they need to breathe new life into their communities and historic commercial districts.

Communities interested in becoming a designated member of the downtown revitalization program must apply and, once designated, receive:

- Comprehensive technical assistance in all areas of the Main Street Approach designed to further economic development downtown.
- Training in strategic planning, program capacity building, and organizational management for the Main Street organization.
- Individualized training for Main Street managers, boards, and other Main Street participants.

- Attendance to statewide, Main Street-specific, quarterly trainings and professional development opportunities for participant communities.
- Access to design services on an as-needed basis to help downtown property owners undertake effective rehabilitation, restoration, adaptive re-use, and infill projects, as well as the reimagining of public spaces within the district.
- Access to state and national grant funds (when available).
- Membership to the Main Street America network.
- At least one paid registration to participate in the annual Main Street America national conference.



[www.kansascommerce.gov/program/  
community-programs/main-street/](http://www.kansascommerce.gov/program/community-programs/main-street/) [www.mainstreet.org/home](http://www.mainstreet.org/home)



Bike Friendly Pop-Up Businesses. Photo Credit: UNBOUND Gravel



## Becoming a Bicycle Friendly Business

A Bike-Friendly Business (BFB) is one that understands people on bicycles are an important part of their customer base and provides additional support or services to bicycling customers. Programs that designate businesses as Bike-Friendly or Trail-Friendly can be found across the country, from the national League of American Bicyclists program to the statewide Travel Oregon program to the more localized programs on the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail or PA Route 6.

At their core, all Bike-Friendly or Trail-Friendly Business programs require that front-line staff are trained to be friendly and welcoming to customers who arrive on or with a bike (or other active transportation methods like scooters) and are able to answer basic questions like the location of the closest bike shop.

Businesses that are recognized as Bike-Friendly or Trail-Friendly might include eating establishments, lodging, camping, visitor or welcome centers, tour operators, bike shops, retail, attractions, gas stations, groceries, and more; and are generally required to provide a few of the following amenities and services:

- Bike cleaning station
- Bike floor pump and tools for repair and/or bike mechanic available to hire
- Bike maps and area information
- Complementary lock for bikes while at the business
- Designated bike parking area in close proximity (bike rack, secure courtyard)
- Electronic charging available for devices
- Free water bottle refill
- Long-term vehicle parking for visitors taking multi-day bicycling trips
- Public restroom
- Shipping available for customer purchases
- Wifi

In addition, lodging properties should allow guests to bring their bicycles into their room, or provide space in a secure and dry location like a locked storage room; and camping properties should accommodate bicyclists who arrive by bike without a reservation.

Kansas does not currently have a program that designates BFBs. However, programs can be designed and implemented at the local level by looking to out-of-state programs for more detail.

MVRT: <https://www.mvrailtrail.org/trail-friendly-businesses>

PA Route 6: <https://www.paroute6.com/bfb-program>

Travel Oregon: <https://industry.traveloregon.com/bfb>

# Promoting the Experience

A scalable, multi-pronged approach is needed to promote your active tourism experiences. It should also apply targeting tactics to ensure marketing efforts reach key audiences in the ways that resonate with them most. A manageable promotions effort should involve:

- Attracting customers' attention.** Use market data and key person interviews (formal and informal) to understand what your customers like, why they enjoy it, and how they tell others about it. Allow your findings to inform the development of compelling messages and promotional materials for your general customers as well as identified target audiences. For example, if you learn that your customers enjoy sharing stories about vacations and great places via social media, develop stories about active tourism in your community and/or for key destinations nearby. Then share them through social media such as Facebook and Instagram, where customers gather to express their own stories. Package the stories into multiple formats (blog posts, social media, videos, and television commercials) and develop a schedule for frequent deployment.
- Branding and marketing.** Ensure your community and/or active tourism destination has a clearly identifiable brand. It should consist of a meaningful set of colors (primary and secondary), fonts, images, logo, and promise statement or tag line.



## Trout Run

The Trout Run Trail is a scenic themed trail that is open year-round in around Decorah, Iowa (population 8,109). The Trout Run Trail crosses five streams and offers non-motorized access to trout streams. Visitors enjoy fishing, biking, walking, running, cross-country skiing, camping, visiting local parks, picnicking, and viewing art along the 11-mile route.

Source: [www.mycountyparks.com/County/Winneshiek/Park/Trout-Run-Trail.aspx](http://www.mycountyparks.com/County/Winneshiek/Park/Trout-Run-Trail.aspx)

Apply the brand identity to the marketing materials developed for your active tourism experience(s). Initial items might include fliers, brochures, posters, social media with hashtags, email marketing, videos, and a website or web pages. Additional materials could consist of banners, informational and wayfinding signs, clothing, key chains, water bottles, virtual and/or augmented reality applications, and other items. To ensure consistent brand application, develop a simple branding guide demonstrating appropriate and inappropriate use of the brand when applied to marketing materials.

- Theming, wayfinding, and events.** For specific projects, consider theming. As an example, you could theme trails after historic happenings, people, wildlife, natural features, activities, and other things, to help promote your experience or destination. As an example, Decorah, Iowa, has the Trout Run and Prairie Farmer Trail. You could also upload your themed routes to an online mapping service with GPS and promote it, so visitors can plan their experience around them. Further, you could add branded wayfinding signs to trail routes and help promote their name(s) and/or theme plus orient visitors toward local businesses and/or

Figure 1. Trout Run Trail Map - Decorah, Iowa



Source: [parks.decorahia.org/trail-maps](http://parks.decorahia.org/trail-maps)

activities close to the route. Events could also be themed and temporary signs produced and strategically placed to complement them.

- **Communications strategies.**<sup>11</sup> Continuing to apply your market research findings, develop pitches and collateral materials that remain sensitive to your audiences' needs and preferences will be important. Market segmentation data from ESRI Community Analyst (shown in the chart and map on page 12) shows many Kansas consumers relax through outdoor activities when they can find the time. Others like vacations focused on driving to destinations. To reach them, utilize audience-specific marketing and leverage cross-promotional opportunities. In so doing you will be able to market your own outdoor experiences and those of nearby communities. Also, pursue opportunities to build new types of partnerships, remaining open to both traditional and non-traditional connections that could advance the active tourism experience in your area.
- **Getting the most bang for the buck.** One of the best ways to stretch funding for promotions is to pair your resources with those from partners, such as restaurants, hotels, chambers of commerce, and others. Making sure to review marketing research findings from data analysis and conversations with target audiences, develop specific marketing tools and deploy them over a purposeful timeframe. Focus marketing campaigns on your target audiences and the types of things they are known to like, use, and support. In addition, recognize that the local news media should play a key role in communications deployment. Reach out to them, sharing active transportation stories, happenings, and opportunities. The effort will save marketing dollars and help you reach larger audiences more effectively.



People Hanging Out on Prairie Sunset Trail. Photo Credit: Prairie Travelers

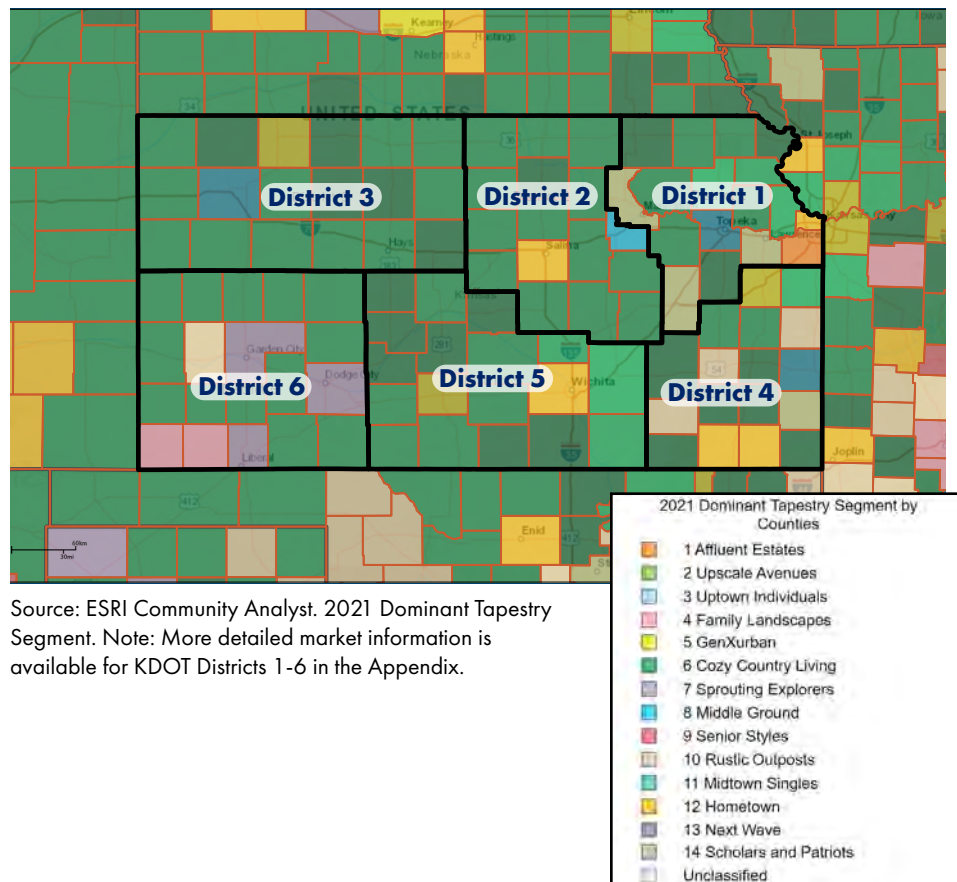
Consumers can be organized into groups by their common characteristics. The groups are known as Market Segments. The top market segments in Kansas to consider for active tourism communications include:

- **In Style:** Located in northeast Kansas (KDOT District 1), In Style “[a]ctively support the arts, theater, concerts, and museums.” In Style spend more than the average American household on housing, food, apparel and services, transportation, health care, entertainment and recreation, education, pensions and social security, and other items. They also spend more money on athletic shoes for walking and running than other athletic shoe types, such as cross-training and aerobics. In addition, In Style jog, bike (road), and hike more than the typical US family.
- **Prairie Living:** Found in north central, northwest, and southwest Kansas (KDOT Districts 2, 3, and 6), Prairie Living like “[l]eisure activities include fishing, hunting, boating, camping, and [going to]...concerts.” Prairie Living spend a bit more than the average US family on transportation and healthcare. District 2 and 3 Prairie Living walk more as a passive recreational activity than the typical American and buy running and walking shoes when it comes to athletic footwear. District 6 Prairie Living purchase the same kinds of athletic shoes, using them for walking and mountain biking, but a little less so than the national average.
- **Heartland Communities:** They “support their local community, residents participate in public activities [and]...[m]otorcycling, hunting, and fishing are popular; walking is the main form of exercise.” Heartland Communities live in southeast Kansas (KDOT District 4) and spend less than the average US household on housing, food, apparel and services, transportation, health care, entertainment and recreation, education, pensions and social security, and other items. Heartland Communities spend more on walking and running shoes than other types of athletic shoes but use them for activities less than the typical American household.
- **Traditional Living:** Living in south central Kansas (KDOT District 5), Traditional Living “[e]njoy outdoor activities such as fishing and taking trips to the zoo.” Their spending habits are more conservative than Heartland Communities. Like the other markets, Traditional Living spend more on walking and running shoes than other kinds of athletic footwear. They use them for walking activities slightly more than the average US family.

<sup>11</sup>Cipalla Communications. “Kirkland Tourism: Communications Strategy and Earned Media Action Plan.” MRSC, [mrs.org/getmedia/2cc3322b-4d6e-454e-ac4a-67cd9ea5a3a2/k53tourism.pdf.aspx](https://mrs.org/getmedia/2cc3322b-4d6e-454e-ac4a-67cd9ea5a3a2/k53tourism.pdf.aspx). Accessed January 12, 2022.



Figure 2. Market Segments for Kansas and Adjacent Communities by County



Source: ESRI Community Analyst. 2021 Dominant Tapestry Segment. Note: More detailed market information is available for KDOT Districts 1-6 in the Appendix.

## Measuring Success

Your community's active tourism successes could be measured multiple ways. This toolkit focuses on:

- **Setting goals, outcomes, and metrics for active tourism.** What is achieved via active tourism, its results, and measurements can be tied to your community's "claim to fame," an immersive experience and its programming, and much more. Goals for what you intend visitors to experience should be connected to the implementation of your communications and promotions

plan. Goals and corresponding metrics might also include the number of people who choose to walk, bike, and/or roll during experiences scheduled for your community. In addition, targets should be set for scheduled events and the number of people who attend them, revenue generated directly and indirectly (economic development), the creation of new business opportunities, the number of new partnerships generated, and other factors.

- **The key tourism metrics to track are the tourists (people) and money spent (receipts and expenditures).** Other metrics involve travel durations and stays (time) and trip distances and length (space).<sup>12</sup> In addition, you may want to tie specific outcomes to key elements of the unique active tourism experience you and partners have developed. Depending on the selected metrics, capturing them can be as easy as counting your events' visitors with a clicker and a clipboard and then saving the information in a digital file. You could count visitors for all scheduled events within a single year and then track the change in visitors from one year to the next. Further, you could monitor the revenue generated from sales at your business for the period when events are scheduled and compare the difference between the event period and non-event period on an annual basis. Over time, you should notice visitor and revenue generation patterns.
- **Reporting:** Active tourism reporting could be accomplished at the state level, by KDOT region, by county, and/or by municipality. The results can be provided annually, semi-annually, quarterly, monthly, and/or weekly, depending on the needs of your community and partners. Identified metrics could be tracked by hand with clipboard, pen, and paper or electronically with software. The selected method should allow easy data entry and development of infographics, such as charts and tables, so data can be communicated and shared with others. If you track bookings, consider investing in software that allows you to manage them along with online and offline sales activity.<sup>13</sup> Communities may even find opportunities to partner and acquire software that serves their region.

<sup>12</sup>Baggio, Rodolfo. "Measuring Tourism: Methods, Indicators, and Needs." In: The Future of Tourism: Innovation and Sustainability, Springer Link, 2018. [www.iby.it/turismo/papers/baggio\\_MeasTourism.pdf](http://www.iby.it/turismo/papers/baggio_MeasTourism.pdf). Accessed January 12, 2022.

<sup>13</sup>"Tour Operator Software." Capterra, [www.capterra.com/sem-compare/tour-operator-software/?utm\\_source=ps-google&utm](http://www.capterra.com/sem-compare/tour-operator-software/?utm_source=ps-google&utm). Accessed January 12, 2022.

## Noteworthy Experiences

Examples of active tourism can be found across the United States and beyond. Several notable examples include Biking Across America and Biking Across Kansas (Kansas), Katy Trail Tourism and Trail Towns (Missouri), and UNBOUND Gravel (Emporia, Kansas). Continue reading to learn more about each of them. As you read, note their origins and/or goals, impact on the communities in which they are situated, the types of visitors or participants who enjoy them, and how they have grown over time with help from partners. By reading and understanding how other cities have capitalized on active tourists, you and your city could learn some techniques and events that may promote more economic and tourism revenue in your city too. Whether the experience is small- or large-scale, communities in Kansas and beyond are finding active tourism is worth it!

### Biking Across Kansas (BAK)

**Location:** Kansas

**Website:**

- <https://bak.org>

**About the Event:**

Biking Across Kansas (BAK) is an annual, eight-day, supported bicycle tour across Kansas. The goal of the event is to promote health and wellness through bicycling, while introducing people from all over the country to the history, beauty, and warm hospitality of the towns and people in Kansas.

The first BAK was held in June 1975 and was organized by Larry and Norma Christie of Wichita as part of the “bike boom” of the early ‘70s. The event has been held annually ever since, with the exception of 2020, making it the second longest-running statewide bicycle tour in the U.S. The route changes each year, allowing BAK participants to sign up year-after-year and see different parts of the state. BAK produces a participant route guide that outlines many historical sites, museums, and places of interest along the route.

**About the Participants:**

BAK currently limits the number of event participants to 850 and riders range in age from six to 80+ years old. Participants are hosted by the small towns along the route and local schools serve as a place for tired riders to shower, repair their bikes, eat, and sleep. About half of the participants bring tents and camp out, while the other half prefer to spread out their sleeping bags inside the gymnasiums. Participants are responsible for most of their own meals throughout the week, which encourages them to visit the burger joints and “watering holes” of the overnight towns or support the local civic groups who often provide meals as a fundraising project.

**About the Partners:**

BAK is almost entirely self-supported through its non-profit organization, Biking Across Kansas Inc. A board of 11 directors and an executive director govern its committee and committee members. BAK partners with the towns along the route, who agree to host the event and welcome the riders in exchange for the event-related tourism and economic impact. BAK also relies on volunteers to make the event a success.



Mike & Carolyn Patterson Participating in BAK. Photo Credit: BAK.

**About the Marketing:**

BAK markets the event through social media and with the help of word-of-mouth (especially from returning participants). The host towns along the route also help to market the event.

## Katy Trail Tourism and Trail Towns

**Location:** State of Missouri

**Websites:**

- [mostateparks.com/park/katy-trail-state-park](https://mostateparks.com/park/katy-trail-state-park)
- [katytrailmo.com/katy-trail-events](https://katytrailmo.com/katy-trail-events)



Horse Riders on Trail. Photo Credit: Jeffrey Bender

**About the Destination:**

The Missouri-Kansas-Texas railroad stopped running in 1995. Ten years later, the Katy Trail State Park was dedicated. At 240 miles in length and managed by Missouri State Parks, it is now the United States' longest rails-to-trails project. The Katy Trail crosses nearly the entire state, from Clinton to Machens, Missouri, winding through a vast variety of Missouri landscapes, including forests, open pastures, and wetlands, and closely following the Missouri River. Not only is the Katy Trail a major attractor, but many "trail

towns" of all sizes along its route have leveraged this asset and experienced economic success and increased visitors as well. The Katy Trail helps enhance the cities it passes through, encouraging users to stop, stay, and adventure through small-town Missouri life. People travel the Katy Trail to reach events, music venues, festivals, craft fairs, and unique shopping locales. Popular events include, but are not limited to, the Roots N Blues BBQ Festival, Saint Charles Oktoberfest, Big Muddy Folk Festival, and multiple 5Ks, 10Ks, Half-Marathons, and Turkey Trots. **The Katy Trail Economic Impact Report: Visitors and MGM2 Economic Impact Analysis (June 2012)**<sup>14</sup> indicated 400,000 people visit Katy Trail State Park every year, generating about \$18.5 million of economic impact each year.

**About the Visitors:**

Katy Trail visitors—active outdoor enthusiasts, professionals, dual-income adult couples, empty nesters, and families—come from surrounding Midwestern states and larger cities like Kansas City and St. Louis, Missouri. Covered in finely crushed, compacted limestone gravel, the trail rarely exceeds 5% grade. Users include bicyclists, walkers, hikers, horseback riders, nature lovers, and history buffs.

**About the Partners:**

The following partners coordinate to make the Katy Trail experience possible: Missouri State Parks, the Missouri Division of Tourism, and the many towns through which the trail passes.

**About the Marketing:**

The Katy Trail has its own website ([katytrailmo.com](https://katytrailmo.com)) and a blog that includes posts about seasonal trail conditions, trail incentives, trail events, and other trail news. The Katy Trail website also offers general information, trail maps for trailheads, parking, and camping, trail conditions, trail events, travel guide information such as bike rentals, shuttles, camping, and tours. Gear is also available for purchase on the website. Visitors can purchase branded apparel, framed canvas prints of the trail, and trail branded water bottles.

<sup>14</sup> Synergy/PRI/JPA, Synergy Group, Pragmatic Research Inc., and James Pona Associates. "Katy Trail Economic Impact Report: Visitors and MGM2 Economic Impact Analysis." MO State Parks, [mostateparks.com/sites/mostateparks/files/Katy\\_Trail\\_Economic\\_Impact\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](https://mostateparks.com/sites/mostateparks/files/Katy_Trail_Economic_Impact_Report_Final.pdf). Accessed January 12, 2022.



## Katy Trail Town: Windsor, Missouri

One of the many “trail towns” along the Katy, is Windsor, Missouri located where the Rock Island Trail Spur intersects the Katy Trail. Windsor (population 2,937 in 2019) has leveraged its location and small-town hospitality to attract visitors. It takes pride in its countryside location and being a getaway from bigger city life. With cafés, restaurants, shops, Amish “bulk food” stores, and cozy rooms for nightly rental, Windsor is the place to stop, shop, and stay. Only four short blocks from the Katy Trail, downtown Windsor’s Main Street is particularly popular. Recently, the city has had significant increases in new businesses including a local retailer and boutique, a family-run flower shop, two new event venues, and several restaurants.

Less than two hours away from downtown Kansas City, Windsor, has become a big draw for families, offering them affordable housing, recreation, entertainment, good schools, and great food. It is also home to 1900s era Farrington Park, which was envisioned back in the day, to be a place where summer visitors can boat, fish, swim, picnic, hold gatherings and winter tourists can cut ice. Considered the “Northern Gateway” to Truman Lake, Windsor is a perfect pit stop for cyclists and hikers alike to rest up before exploring more of the Katy Trail, the Rock Island Spur Trail, or heading south to the Ozarks, rich with rivers, lakes, wildlife reserves, and parks.

Overall, Windsor tourism is booming and driven by entrepreneurs. Kim Henderson of Kim’s Cabins saw a need for lodging and decided to fill it. She saw travelers simply passing through the intersection of the Katy Trail and the Rock Island Trail Spur, unphased by the small town and leaving no positive benefit, economic or otherwise. Kim saw untapped potential and decided to open her first cabin in 2015. Since then, she has built three more and now books year-round. Her small cabins thrive as pitstops along the trail and as getaways for people who live in the bigger surrounding cities.

The cabins (and Windsor) thrive on connections—personal, social media, surrounding cities, and local businesses. Kim’s connections help her maintain up-to-date information on what attractions and connections are available

around the cabins, so she can then share it with existing and potential visitors. With start-up costs of about \$50,000, Kim believes she has doubled her investment, if not more. By seeing a need and filling it, she has helped bring new life and an increase in tourism to Windsor. Her advice to any other future or current small business owners is to “find the need first and accentuate what you have. Be honest with people and take care of them.”



Cyclists Relaxing on Porch of Kim's Cabins. Photo Credit: Kim Henderson.

Source: [www.windsormo.org](http://www.windsormo.org)  
 Interview with Kim Henderson, owner of Kim’s Cabins in Windsor, Missouri on November 22, 2021

## Everglades City, FL Trail Town



Everglades City, located in south-central Florida, was designated a Florida Trail Town in 2019, one of 11 communities with a similar designation. The goal of the Florida Trail Town Program is to create vibrant destinations for trail users. Due to its location and natural features, Everglades City boasts bike trails, hiking trails, and paddling trails.

**Impacts:** In the first two years, Everglades City has focused on improving tourism access, activities, attractions, and amenities. They opened a new visitor center, installed trail town signs and kiosks with local maps, improved landscaping, distributed bike racks to local businesses, and completed the Everglades City Master Plan to identify immediate bike/ped needs throughout the city. In the same time span, two new bike rental companies opened, as well as new restaurants, and a bait and tackle shop. While the city has seen Covid-19 restrict visitation, they reported 1,600 visitors in the first two months of 2020.

### Other Trail Town Programs and Resources:

- [Kentucky Trail Towns](#)
- [Michigan Trail Towns](#)
- [GAP Trail Towns](#)
- [Trail Town Guide](#)

## UNBOUND Gravel – Emporia Dirt Race

**Location:** Emporia, Kansas

**Website:** [unboundgravel.com](http://unboundgravel.com)

### About the Event:

In 2006, a 200-mile endurance, gravel ride event was founded in Emporia, Kansas, to challenge an ever-increasing community of gravel cyclists. Starting with only 34 local riders, there are now over 4,000 participants who travel from all over the world to experience this once-a-year event. In the event's fourth year, the starting line was moved downtown to encourage more tourism and participants' interaction with downtown Emporia. Since then, the event has taken off. There are now a total of 5 races over the course of 4 days as well as an expansive expo for all things gravel cycling. Cyclists compete in the 200-mile loop, the 100-mile loop, the 350-mile loop, 50-mile loop, 25-mile loop, and the Junior's event.

UNBOUND Gravel, in coordination with Emporia Main Street, Emporia State University and local business owners, has put Emporia on the map as a cycling destination known around the world. Also, a beloved community event, UNBOUND Gravel has Emporia residents, business owners and tourists benefiting all-year round from its influence. Casey Woods, 2018 Executive Director of Emporia Main Street, said, "Even though it's a singular event, people ride the Flint Hills all year long because of the event."



### About the Participants:

Over 100 different vendors support the event and UNBOUND Gravel has logged participants from all 50 states and 38 different countries. Along with its 4,000 cyclists, there are over 150 regional, national, and international vendors who exhibit at the Gravel Expo each year. Vendors exhibit, promote, and demo products, services, and brand experiences for all things gravel and cyclist related. The minimum racing age is 16 years old and there is no age limit. Whether you are 16 or 66, you are welcome to race.

In addition, the UNBOUND Gravel race has become a huge part of Emporia's community and culture. Its businesses welcome, riders, fans, families, volunteers, tourists, and residents to join the fun and race for the ultimate prizes. Several downtown businesses have since rebranded to benefit from the event. Gravel City Roasters coffee shop is a flavorful example.

### About the Partners:

The Emporia Dirt Race event is presented by Garmin, Craft, and the City of Emporia. There are also 25 partners and sponsors of the event, including BeautyRest, Invisalign, Emporia State University, Emporia Main Street, Lifetime Foundation, and other local and national vendors of bike-related events or products. Individual vendors and exhibitors support and participate through the Gravel Expo.

### About the Marketing:

You can find this event advertised through the website [unboundgravel.com](http://unboundgravel.com), at "The Dirt," blog, and via various partners. Gravel City merchandise can be purchased straight from their website. Individual businesses, residents, and the UNBOUND Gravel team members provide other branding and advertising.

## Additional Resources for Communities

The toolkit is intended as a helpful guide that introduces active tourism to Kansas communities. For additional resources, visit the following:

- Promoting Safe Bicycle Travel Opportunities - <https://www.bikevalleytosierra.com/bicycle-tourism-plan-motherlode>
- Designating Scenic Bikeways - [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/clas/pdfs/bikeway\\_designation\\_framework\\_fhwa\\_flh\\_19-004.pdf](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/clas/pdfs/bikeway_designation_framework_fhwa_flh_19-004.pdf)
- Bike Tourism - <https://www.adventurecycling.org/advocacy/building-bike-tourism>
- Rails to Trails: Building Trail Towns - <https://www.railstotrails.org/build-trails/trail-building-toolbox/planning/trail-towns>
- Trail Towns Guide - <https://www.trailtowns.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/TrailTownGuide.2.pdf>

## Conclusion

Beyond serving as a companion document to the updated **Kansas ATP** that introduces active tourism to you, the **Kansas Active Tourism Toolkit** is intended to pique your interest and excite your community about the possibilities of active tourism. Kansas communities and experiences, such as Basecamp Humboldt, and beyond are finding great success. Some are enjoying not only local tourism benefits like improved economic outcomes (more visitors, shoppers, and related development) but also regional and national recognition and exposure. Working with partners, you will want to chart a strategic path forward that leverages the active tourism experiences your community could offer successfully while keeping the potential market for them in mind. Whether you choose to leverage a key bike route, entire trails system, your community's history and culture, or something else, you will find your work to be worth the effort. Start the process of creating an experience people have to talk about, share with others, and celebrate. Become Kansas's next great active tourism destination!



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Cyclist on Rural Path. Photo Credit: Tim Shafer