

Central Park, NC

Cycling Tourism

SWOT Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to conduct market research that informs a marketing strategy, ultimately leading to an increase in cycling tourism in the Central Park region of North Carolina. This study provides a foundation for stakeholders (e.g., chambers of commerce, visitor and tourism bureaus, bicycle shops, local governments, micro-entrepreneurs) to collectively market the region as a bicycle tourism destination. The study also provides stakeholders with evidence of the potential benefits of bicycle tourism. This report presents summary findings of one component of the study, the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats) Analysis.

KEY FINDINGS

The rurality of the area is seen as a key asset, with informants finding the region scenic and quaint. However, informants also felt that there were opportunities to increase cycling infrastructure and that the location might not be ideal. Informants were also concerned with local communities' lack of support for cycling and cyclists.

TEAM

The North Carolina Tourism Extension project team have an extensive record of research and community engagement in rural North Carolina. We lead statewide projects like [People-First Tourism](#), and the [NC Birding Trail](#), and we have helped NC counties, regions and organizations with marketing planning and research (e.g., agritourism study with [VisitNCfarms](#)). Our work is evidence-based and grounded on mixed methods, and participatory action research with communities, entrepreneurs and stakeholder groups.



DUARTE B. MORAIS, PHD is an Associate Professor and Extension Specialist in Equitable and Sustainable Tourism at NC State University. He is the lead in(ve)stigator of the “People-First Tourism” project - a participatory action research project that shapes and supports a web-marketplace for tourism micro-entrepreneurs. Morais has 15 years of teaching, research and consulting experience in tourism marketing. He is widely published on topics ranging from relationship marketing, visitor constraints, and nostalgia. He has conducted market segmentation studies

for the outdoor outfitting industry and also for rural counties. And he is currently involved in research and training on social media marketing and the use of web marketplaces.

Morais provided overall leadership to the project, and worked closely with Barbieri and LaPan in the execution of data collection efforts, and contributed to the writing of the project deliverables.



CARLA BARBIERI, PHD is an Associate Professor and Extension Specialist in Equitable & Sustainable Tourism at NC State University. She leads the “Agritourism and Societal Well-being” lab which research and outreach activities aim to enhance community well-being and natural resources conservation through tourism development. Barbieri has over ten years of experience in marketing research across different forms of recreational activities and industry sectors (e.g., RVs and camping; boating; culture and arts). Her online research methodology has consistently yielded high response ensuring engagement across different stakeholders.

Barbieri assisted in the design and implementation of the online survey, and provided input on the overall research process.



CHANTELL LAPAN, PHD is a Research Associate with NC Tourism Extension. Her research centers on forms of micro-entrepreneurial development in rural areas. LaPan has expertise and professional experience in marketing and communications and has taught undergraduate courses on tourism marketing. She is an experienced research project manager, with expertise in quantitative and qualitative methods as well as in their integration.

LaPan contributed to all phases of the project and took the lead role in the operationalization of the data collection and writing.

METHODS



OVERVIEW

This study took place over the course of three months, between March and June 2015. The study was divided into phases and each component of the project was carried out during one (or more) of these phases. The findings presented from this report relate to the SWOT analysis, which was carried out during the first two phases of the research project.

SWOT

During Phase 1 of the project (early March; Table 1), we launched an initial evaluation of the state of cycling tourism in the Central Park region of NC (Anson, Davidson, Montgomery, Moore, Randolph, Richmond, Rowan and Stanly counties). This included “windshield surveys” of the area (i.e., driving through the Central Park region and observing cycling infrastructure and use) as well as informal interviews with cyclists, residents, and bike shop employees.

Table 1. SWOT Timeline

| SWOT ANALYSIS ACTIVITIES | Timeline | | |
|--|------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| | PHASE 1 March | PHASE 2 April-May | PHASE 3 May-June |
| Conducted structured interviews with key informants to identify key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats | | | |
| Analyzed input and draft SWOT infographic | | | |
| Presented and validated SWOT infographic in group stakeholder workshops | | | |

During this phase, a primary goal was to analyze the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the Central Park region as a potential destination for cycling tourism. A SWOT analysis is a structured planning method that helps identify the strong and weak points of an organization or project. According to Vass (2005)¹, “The goal is to determine which small market niches to focus on and dominate, and discover how to please customers in a better way than the competition”.

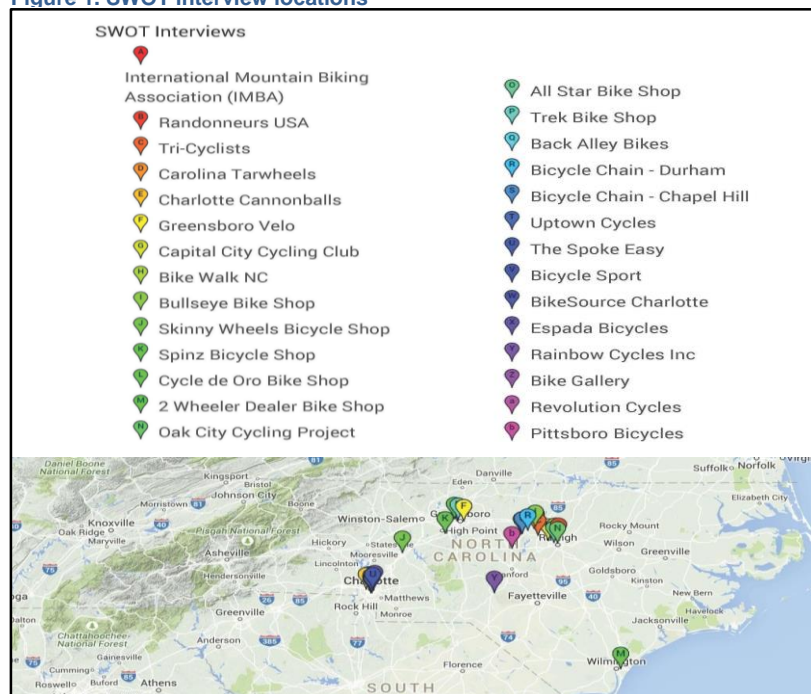
¹Kathy Vass. (2005). A solid marketing plan begins with SWOT. *Textile World*, 155(4), 18.

Data collection for the SWOT analysis was conducted through qualitative semi-structured interviews with key informants during this first phase of the research project. Data were then analyzed using frequency counts and word clouds to assess the most salient themes. These data were supported with quotes and excerpts from the interviews. Finally, the data were presented to stakeholders in group meetings in June and feedback from group meetings was incorporated into the findings.

INFORMANTS

SWOT analyses were conducted with key informants with specialized knowledge of biking in the urban crescent of North Carolina (NC), the Central Park region, as well as representatives from national and international bike clubs. In total, we interviewed 27 individuals from across the region (Figure 1).

Figure 1. SWOT interview locations



Informants represented the communities of Charlotte, Salisbury, Greensboro, High Point, Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, Southern Pines, Pittsboro and Wilmington. The informants were identified through online bicycle club websites, social media platforms or by visiting local bike shops. The interviews were conducted in person and via telephone at the interviewee's convenience.

RESULTS



OVERVIEW

Overall, interviewees listed a number of things that the Central Park region is doing well with regards to cycling tourism, as well as several areas for improvement (Figure 2). Informants listed 13 different strengths (S), 19 weaknesses (W), 23 various opportunities (O), and 14 threats (T). The most commonly listed strength was scenery (9 times), yet the most often listed weakness was location (5 times). Informants felt that the biggest opportunities in the area were to connect routes (5 times) and establish new pathways (5 times), but that local culture could be the biggest obstacle or threat (6 times). Despite varying views by informants as well as differing views on destinations within the region, certain themes were repeated throughout the key informant interviews. The results presented below reflect a range of opinions as well as common themes.

STRENGTHS

Overall, the NC Central Park region was characterized as a “dehumanized rural pleasure

Box 1. Central Park Region Strengths

INTERNAL

STRENGTHS

POSITIVE

- Rurality**
 - rural
 - quiet
 - less populated
 - quaint
 - low traffic
- Landscape**
 - nice scenery
 - good terrain (rolling hills, decent climbs)
- Infrastructure**
 - good roads (well-paved, few potholes)
 - good mountain biking
 - good trails
- Amenities**
 - adequate services (food, rest stops, etc.) in many towns
 - other attractions
- Location**
 - good location (accessible from cities)
- Safety**
 - respectful drivers
 - safe

periphery.” Key informants listed a number of strengths of the NC Central Park region (Box 1). The most often mentioned strength was scenery, with others agreeing that the area also offered a sense of rurality, nice terrain, good roads, low levels of traffic, and good mountain biking opportunities. Other strengths that were listed include: nice trails, adequate services, drivers that are more patient and respectful than in urban communities, safe for cycling, good location, a presence of wineries, quaint and quiet, variety of attractions, good camping, less populated, ample open land, and growing cycling in the area.



Figure 3. Strengths Word Cloud

The primary theme within the listed strengths was related to the rural landscape, which was related to the physical and natural environment in the area. One informant explained,

“There are many rural areas with low traffic that have beautiful scenery and great terrain. The long roads with

rolling hills and challenging climbs are ideal for rides, especially since it easy to make loops around with the back roads crossing back and forth. We have wonderful parks in the area to ride out of for group rides. Mountain biking and Cyclocross are also perfect for the rural areas where trails could be developed. The wineries can be wonderful sponsors and destinations – to ride out of the winery, then come back for wine and entertainment is a great combination of industries.” [*President, local cycling club*].

Generally, informants felt that the Central Park region offered a lot in terms of quiet, safe areas to ride, with some places having sufficient amenities. Many thought that the region possesses



Figure 5. Designated bike route, Central Park region



Figure 4. Pisgah Covered bridge outside Asheboro; 1 of 2 remaining covered bridges in NC

many of the qualities bicyclists look for in a cycling destination. The area was seen to have quite a bit of potential for both mountain biking and road cycling, and even for developing other types of biking, such as cyclocross or BMX.



Figure 7. Deep River Nature Trail in Randleman, NC



Figure 6. View of water from Deep River Nature Trail, Randleman, NC

STAKEHOLDER RESPONSE TO STRENGTHS

When presented with the above findings, local stakeholders noted the following ways in which the region could capitalize on identified strengths:

1. Region should continue to promote the qualities identified in this study.
2. Tourism promoters should highlight attributes common to other tourism sectors (e.g., horseback riding, agritourism, etc.) – to inform co-marketing efforts.
3. Regional planners should engage groups, clubs and associations.

WEAKNESSES

The informants characterized the NC Central Park region as including perfect sections

Box 2. Central Park Region Weaknesses

INTERNAL

WEAKNESSES

NEGATIVE

- Location**
 - can't ride there from home
 - not easily accessible
- Infrastructure**
 - few bike lanes
 - poor bike trails
 - lack of greenways
 - poor cell service (especially if the rider is hurt)
 - narrow/dangerous road shoulders
 - insufficient mountain
 - poor signage
- Motors rule**
 - traffic moves fast
 - favor motorized sports
- Amenities**
 - no nightlife
 - few & difficult to find campgrounds
 - limited food options
- Unknown entity**
 - lack local organizers or change champions
 - no brand recognition of the "Central Park" region
 - nothing of note to tour

separated by danger. They identified several weaknesses facing the region, with the most salient being the location. Though a number of people mentioned the location as an asset (particularly in regards to its proximity to urban NC centers), others worried that some parts were not easily accessible. Some informants explained that the region was just far enough away from home to prevent them from being able to bike there, but not far enough to warrant staying overnight.



Figure 8. Weaknesses Word Cloud

Other weaknesses that were identified centered primarily on poor cycling and community infrastructure. This included a lack of interconnected cycling routes, greenways or mountain bike trails, or trails of appropriate length. There are many stretches of road and trails with good attributes, but it is difficult to link these together. This is especially important to intermediate cyclists. Informants indicated that even if casual cyclists complete 90% of their ride in good roads, they will remember the 10% they spent on a "bad stretch" and be unlikely to come back. Since there are often few bike lanes and/or narrow shoulders on many roads in the area (Figure 9), this

is of concern for many bicyclists.

These expressed concerns were closely related to the prevalent belief that “cars rule the road” and that motorized sports are prioritized in many rural areas. This is a major weakness for cyclists in two respects. First, they expressed concern for their safety because they feel that there is sometimes a lack of respect for cyclists, which is expressed by drivers greatly exceeding speed limits and not giving the entire lane to bicycles. Second, they describe that it is unpleasant for them to share space with motorized vehicles (as permitted on some trails in the Uwharries) because the interaction takes away from their experience.



Figure 9. Road on bike route 1 with no shoulder, Rowan Co.

Further, key informants were concerned that many parts of the region could only offer limited amenities, including few food options (particularly for the health conscious), limited lodging choices and no nightlife. One informant explained, “When we have events, sometimes we flood the town. Food can be a problem. Once during CycleNC, in one town, the town council didn’t tell them we were coming, so they weren’t prepared for it.”

Additionally, our informants felt that “Central Park” was not easily recognizable as a unified region and could benefit from more cohesive branding of the area. Along these lines, for many informants, it was difficult to identify county lines and understand the region in this way. They know *destinations* (i.e., Uwharrie area, Salisbury, Pinehurst, Asheboro), but much of the more rural areas become increasingly difficult to identify. As there is no geographic boundary delimiting the Central Park region, the understanding of it is somewhat nebulous. For example, most of interviewees would not know if they had crossed into Iredell from Rowan Counties, a distinction which is not of particular importance to them.

STAKEHOLDER RESPONSE TO WEAKNESSES

When presented with the above findings, local stakeholders noted the following ways in which the region needed to mitigate the identified weaknesses:

1. Regional leaders should implement healthy initiatives campaigns – for example, vegetable stands selling fresh produce should be identified and added to cycling maps.
2. Regional planners should provide information and assistance for the development of new private campgrounds and cabin rentals with desirable amenities.
3. Tourism marketers should identify key attractions appealing to cyclists, and use them to draw visitors interested in doing mid-length trips from the urban crescent locations to the region.

OPPORTUNITIES

Box 3. Central Park Opportunities

EXTERNAL

OPPORTUNITIES

Pathways

- establish verified routes

Organized events

- charity rides
- marquis events

Partner with local attractions

- wineries
- breweries
- coffee shops

Good weather/location

- riding can happen year round
- nice spring weather
- pretty fall foliage
- convenient location to NC cities

Create a “buzz”

- find cycling celebrity to endorse the area
- use social media platforms to inform about new initiatives and planned projects

Better branding/marketing

- better use of social media
- engage local cycling businesses
 - support local bike shops
 - expand "bicycle benefits" program in the region
 - bicycle-friendly camping app
- increase awareness of health benefits of cycling

Education

- driver education
- cyclist education

Improve stakeholder communication

- better signage on main thoroughfares
- take advantage of cyclists willing to volunteer to make improvements

Informants offered many suggestions for improving cycling in the Central Park region. The general thought was that, “Cycling is good in the region, but it could be better” [owner, local bike shop]. Many of the perceived opportunities were expressed as ways to improve identified weaknesses. While a good number of the suggestions were made by only one or two individuals, several were echoed a number of times and therefore deserve closer examination.



Figure 10. Opportunities Word Cloud

Many of the repeatedly mentioned opportunities related to the expansion of places to cycle including, connecting routes, establishing pathways, expanding mountain biking, designating verified routes, and hosting more organized events (Figure 10). One informant explained in regards to cycling trails that, “If it’s there, it’s going to get used.” Another added, in reference to building greenways that, “People will move there just for that.”

POSITIVE

Other suggestions included partnering with other local attractions or service providers. Informants regularly discussed the synergy between cycling and breweries or wineries (Figure 11). In the urban areas, many regular road rides conclude at local breweries where the cycling activity gives way to a social gathering. There also appears to be a similar relationship with coffee shops, which are seen as an ideal place to refuel.

Other suggestions by informants included partnering with other outdoor recreation attractions (e.g., camping, fishing, bike-packing) to diversify the offerings for the tourist. Bike-packing is a relatively new activity, utilized primarily by mountain bikers, that combines cycling with camping, but where cyclists carries all of their camping needs on a specially outfitted bike.



Figure 11. Morgan Ridge Vineyards & Brewery, 0.3 miles off designated route #5 (Gold Hill, NC).

Informants also felt that partnering with local stakeholders would be beneficial to increasing local involvement and eventually support for the sport. This included involving local bike shops, having better communication with the regional cycling community, and promoting local businesses. One particular suggestion was through the nationwide “[Bicycle Benefits](#)” program, an initiative that enables small businesses to showcase their support for cycling by giving special discounts to cyclists.

Some informants also felt that it would be a good idea to capitalize on the location, especially as it relates in proximity to the urban areas. Others suggested that the weather and climate in this region could give it a comparative advantage, particularly in regards to visitors from the northern part of the U.S. They felt that increasing signage of cycling routes and destinations, specifically on main thoroughfares, would help increase awareness of initiatives. In a similar vein, they also felt that the area could benefit from better branding and by “creating a buzz” about their cycling opportunities. This could happen through several approaches. First, it was suggested that a cycling celebrity or local cycling enthusiast be identified to help promote the region. Second, informants suggested that getting out information early on planned cycling infrastructure projects (particularly through social media outlets) would also help to increase interest.

A common theme that was echoed by several informants was related to both cyclist and driver education. They felt that many of the dangers of cycling could be mitigated through greater education efforts. Additionally, there was an expressed interest in volunteering, particularly by mountain bikers. One bike shop owner said, "If they want to build more trails, let us know! We'll volunteer." There is a lot of interest by local riders to create more trails in the Uwharrie area and throughout the Central Park region more generally. It is common practice for mountain bikers to volunteer to maintain trails and it appears that this would hold true in Central Park.

STAKEHOLDER RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITIES

When presented with the above findings, local stakeholders noted the following ways in which the region could embrace key opportunities:

1. There is a need for improved coordination/communications across agencies within and between counties. A clearing house about resources and ideas.
2. The region should adopt a process for disseminating upcoming events to all interested agencies, groups and businesses in the region. For example, when a large race is organized in one town, other towns should be prepared to accommodate the overflow of demand for lodging, side trips, food, etc.
3. Local governments should invest in bike racks throughout local towns. Ways to fund such infrastructure with grants and sponsorship are needed.
4. Region businesses need to identify ways to show visitors that they are bike friendly (e.g., Bike Benefits).

THREATS

Box 4. Central Park Threats

EXTERNAL

THREATS

NEGATIVE

- Local culture**
 - no cycling culture among locals
 - unwelcoming
 - conservative politics
- Bureaucracy**
 - time
 - money
 - lack of access to land
 - maintenance of trails
 - poor communication by government leadership
- Safety**
 - high traffic areas lead to greater chances of being hit by a car
 - uneducated motorists
 - dogs off leash in rural areas
- Competition**
 - Wilkesboro
 - Pisgah
 - Tsali
- Other**
 - bad weather
 - unintereest young people in cycling (or physical activity more generally)

While informants identified a number of threats to the development of cycling tourism in the Central Park region, by far the biggest concern was related to the local culture (Figure 12). There is a perception that the area could become much more popular for cycling if local communities gained a greater appreciation for cycling - as a healthy and sustainable form of transportation and recreation, as well as a new economic source. Cyclists identified destinations where communities have embraced cycling – and explained they have felt welcomed there, and that in those areas cycling was recognized as positive sources of economic revitalization and community wellbeing.



Figure 122. Threats Word Cloud

They also recognize that there may be cultural distinctions between local residents and groups of cyclists. Several informants explained that

they were concerned that local communities wouldn't be welcoming of cyclists or that their political priorities might not align. One bicycling club president expressed concern over seeing "stars and bars" in the region. While some of this may be related to long existing stereotypes and a lack of understanding of local people, observations show that confederate culture is still prominent in the area (Figures 13 and 14).

Respondents, particularly those that resided within the Central Park region, also felt that cycling was not a priority to local (and to some extent state) politicians. Some expressed that they had experienced outright hostility toward the sport and felt that, “They [conservatives] don’t want to spend *their* tax dollars to support *our* recreation.”



Figure 133. Sign displaying confederate benefit party in Randolph Co.



Figure 14. House displaying confederate flag in Rowan Co.

Others felt that they were at the mercy of slow moving bureaucracies and that both time and money were the true threats to developing cycling tourism in the region. They also control access to land that could be used for cycling and may not maintain trails that are already established. Furthermore, many informants felt that they would like better communication from local governmental organizations about cycling planning and initiatives. While one informant was not entirely optimistic that much would change in his lifetime, he did concede, “Ten percent of something is better than 100% of nothing; at least it’s something... But sometimes it takes too long”.

In some ways, apprehensions about local culture extended to concerns with issues of safety. This is particularly relevant for cyclists' experiences with drivers. Uneducated motorists pose a real threat to road cyclists. One respondent explained, “My biggest concern as a cyclist is the danger of sharing the road. We need better education and acceptance among motorists. I don’t think people realize how to safely navigate around cyclists, so I am obviously a strong advocate of bike lanes wherever possible.” It is also more culturally appropriate to allow dogs to run free in rural areas, which cyclists perceive as a real threat to them. Others explained that they had even had items such as soda bottles thrown at them by what they perceived as “rednecks”. This was often expressed as a general culture gap between cyclists and locals in the Central Park region. One informant explained that many local residents had a “chip on their

shoulder”. Yet, he acknowledged that “There are going to be rednecks. We just hope for nice rednecks.” Overall we collected ample evidence for a marked conflict between cyclists and local communities; conflict that is negotiated only by the most daring cyclists as noted by this informant: “I have been buzzed by locals that are making a point. It is us versus them.”

Another prominent threat that was addressed was competition with other cycling destinations. Depending on the location of the informant, they explained that it wasn’t much further to visit destinations such as Pisgah, Wilkesboro, Beech Mountain, Nantahala, or Tsali. Particularly for mountain bikers, these destinations are viewed as places to which they could make multi-day trips. At this moment, they don’t see themselves being able to do that in the Central Park region.

STAKEHOLDER RESPONSE TO THREATS

When presented with the above findings, local stakeholders noted the following ways in which the region should address key threats:

1. Interested towns should invite cyclists and local residents to meet and greet events – but it is unclear how to create a mutually accepting space for such gatherings. There should be a clear incentive to local residents.
2. Local governments should increase police bike patrols. These dismiss local stereotypes about cycling and motivate police to enforce motorist respect for bikes.
3. Counties need to develop a speed management plan. Sharing the cycling heat map for the region with the police would help them identify where cycling traffic is most intense, so that they can prioritize enforcement in those areas.
4. Communities should collaborate with “Share the Road” campaign, with motorcycle interest groups, and with AAA.

THOUGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



VISITATION

While respondents generally agreed that the Central Park region holds much potential for developing cycling tourism, visitation is actually rather low. This is supported by the heat map of bikers in the area (Figure 15).

Though there is some visible activity in the Uwharrie region and some in the larger towns, it is much more limited in rural areas. This reality was confirmed during several visits to the area by the research team, including targeted visits to state approved bike trails where no bicyclists were observed.

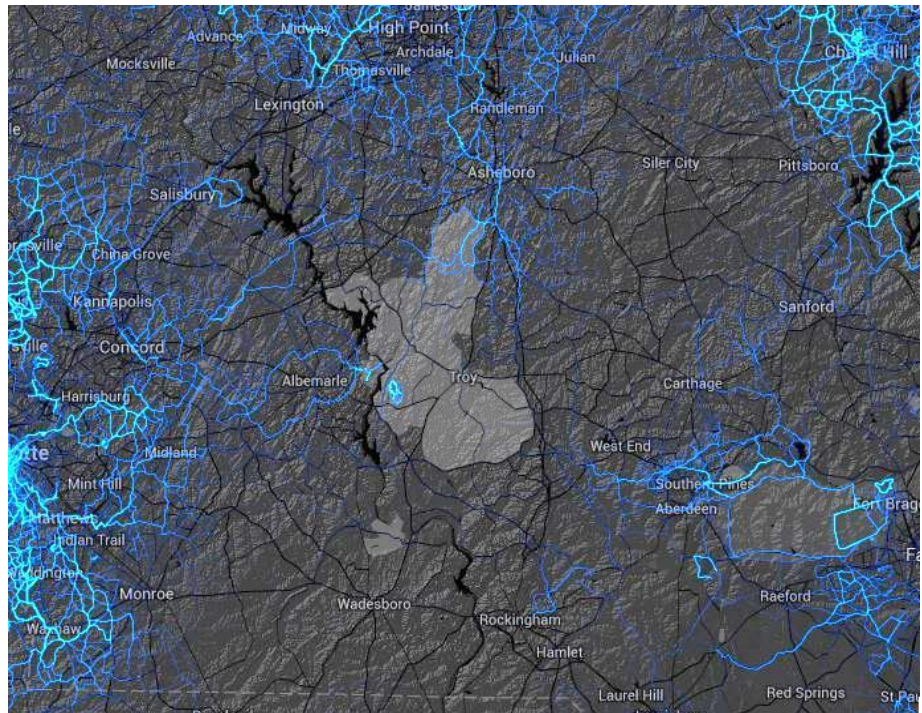


Figure 15. Crowdsourced heatmap of people riding in Central Park NC region during 2014. Map gives an “unbiased” image of most popular routes in the area.

Additionally, there appears to be a bit of tension between what the area has to offer and what types of cyclists it might attract. The rolling hills and rural terrain are attractive to cyclists of moderate skill levels, but they will likely be turned off by the lack of connectivity between trails or routes – which would allow safe and predictable rides of various lengths. Generally, the region was viewed as a convenient place to play, but not necessarily a must-visit destination. It simply seems to be suitable for the needs of some riders and is close enough to home. Few informants expressed that they would be willing to make an overnight or extended visit to the region.

Yet, there are several ways that we have identified to increase visitation to the region. One way is to *create and celebrate influencers*. Specifically, we recommend using technology to nurture *influencers*. Influencers are cyclists whose opinion fellow cyclists trust and who are often trendsetters in their social circles. We found that many cyclists are using smartphone apps like Wikiloc, Strava (Figure 15) and MapMyRide to research routes and to record and share their rides. Often, riders log and publish GPS tracks of their favorite rides, and then others upload those tracks and follow them using their phones. Many of these apps have social and/or competitive aspects. Mining these data will quickly reveal which cyclists are influencing others and help identify which cyclists to target.

Additionally we suggest that organizations, local governments, businesses and community groups in the Central Park region should collaborate to:

- a. Organize rides in pre-determined routes and instruct the participants to log them in their phones - i.e., influence the crowdsourced data.
- b. Organize a seasonal or annual competitions using one of the apps - participants that log the most verified miles during that period would receive a prize; or influencers that log trails accumulating the largest number of followers would win.
- c. Pursue strategic partnerships with *pied pipers*. Opinions about cycling destinations (especially mountain-biking destinations) are highly influenced by charismatic cyclists that endorse specific regions through social media.
- d. Partner with nonprofit organizations and local businesses to offer theme and/or rides (these marquis events are particularly popular among road cyclists).
- e. Consider providing free return shuttle services from key communities in the urban crescent for riders that may want to ride to locations in the Central Park region but would not be able to do a return ride.

GOVERNMENT ROLE

While resources in North Carolina are managed and distributed through a county system and it makes perfect sense for local government to operate within this organizational structure, cycling destinations in Central Park are not viewed in that manner by potential visitors. It makes little difference to them where county lines are drawn. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that Central Park focus on recognizable destinations within the counties and partner closely with neighboring counties when rural routes and trails may overlap.

Cyclists from the urban crescent and cycling enthusiasts within Central Park fear that conservative rural governments will be unwilling to devote resources to promote cycling because cycling does not align with local interests. Forms of tourism development focused on urban leisure seldom bring significant benefits to rural communities; therefore, we strongly recommended that planning for cycling tourism in the region must include strategies for helping locals capture real economic and social benefits from cycling tourism! When local communities experience and understand the benefits of cycling tourism for them, political support will gradually follow. Specifically, we recommend exploring micro-entrepreneurship opportunities for local residents. This may include, but is not limited to, roadside stands with local goods and refreshments (recommended about every 15 miles for road cyclists), farm stays, privately maintained camping locations, shuttle services and local guides. A training program explaining how local food businesses may cater to cyclists should also be developed.

SUMMARY

Overall, Central Park, NC is viewed as having great potential for cycling tourism, both for road cyclists and mountain bikers. However, certain steps will be needed to develop the area as an attractive cycling destination. Infrastructure investments (e.g., better route and trail connectivity, additional lodging and food options) are necessary. Furthermore, concerted efforts should be made to engage local communities and garner support for cycling as a recreational activity for healthy living and as a new economic driver. Currently, the region's scenic highways and natural resources are being used by some cyclists in relative isolation from local communities that do not understand cycling and do not know how to benefit from cycling tourism.

Branding efforts, improving infrastructure, and the efforts of sympathetic local leaders and cycling enthusiasts are gradually improving visitation by cyclists. However, with increased cycling visitation, so is conflict. The future of Central Park, NC as a recognized cycling destination sits at a crossroads... This study suggests that, in addition to current efforts, there is a dire need to meaningfully engage local businesses and communities with cycling and cyclists.