

Summary

Clay and Platte Counties conducted a citizen survey during Summer 2000 to determine the public's interest in a trail system for the unincorporated part of the two counties. Community input was received through a statistically valid mail survey, with responses received from almost 1,000 households. A total of 2,640 persons live in the 987 households for an average of 2.7 persons per household. The overall results have a 95% confidence with a precision of +/-3.5%. The results for each of the counties have 95% confidence with a precision of +/-5%.

A majority of households use trails and think they have benefits for residents in the two counties. Residents would use more trails for walking, jogging, equestrian and recreational biking, if available.

Current Trail Use

Just over 51% of all households have at least one member of their household using trails. The highest participation is for households with at least one person ages 5 to 24. Overall, responses were similar for all users in both counties except for roller blading, which is highest (27%) for households with a child ages 5 to 14. The top four reasons for using trails given by households using trails were:

- Walking (93% Clay residents, 94% Platte residents)
- Recreational biking (40% Clay residents, 38% Platte residents)
- Jogging (29% Clay residents, 33% Platte residents)
- Children's biking (24% Clay residents, 20% Platte residents)

Benefits of Trails

Clay and Platte County residents think trails can provide benefits by providing opportunities for exercise and recreation and trails can protect natural areas from development. Trails are viewed as less effective at increasing property values and as alternative transportation routes. The benefits rated as "very important" by at least half of the residents are shown below:

- Opportunities for exercise (70%)
- Opportunities for recreation (63%)
- Protect important natural areas from development (60%)
- Quality of life improved (51%)

Although fewer persons rated the other four features as "very important," those features were important to some residents.

- Good use for flood plain areas that cannot be developed (43%)
- Promote or protect historic sites (33%)
- Increase property values (27%)
- Alternative transportation routes (13%)

Core Activities for County Trail Systems

The five most important core activities for a new trail system as measured by the percentage who gave a “very likely” response to possible use of trails are:

- Walking (69%)
- Combined use trails that would permit multiple uses (49%)
- Go to park areas (48%)
- Recreational biking (41%)
- Jogging (34%)
- Go to historic places (30%)

Responses of “very likely” by two important user groups of the trail system: horseback riding (7%) and those who would travel to work or other daily destinations (7%).

The six most important activities to be included in the design of a trail system in Clay and Platte Counties based on the sum of the top three choices given by respondents are shown below:

- Walking (72% overall; 71% Clay respondents, 74% Platte respondents)
- Recreational biking (42% overall; 42% Clay respondents; 41% Platte respondents)
- Combined use trails that would permit multiple uses (39% overall; 40% Clay, 39% Platte)
- Go to park areas (37% overall; 36% Clay respondents, 37% Platte respondents)
- Jogging (25% overall and for both Clay and Platte Counties)
- Go to historic sites (24% overall; 25% Clay respondents, 24% Platte respondents)

Important Features for County Trails

The important features for a trail system as measured by the percentage that gave a “very important” response is shown below.

- Regularly scheduled garbage/trash cleanup (78%)
- Restroom (77%)
- Drinking water (72%)
- Convenient parking lots (69%)
- Safe walking corridors by rivers and streams (64%)
- Map displays which show the system (58%)
- Emergency phones (57%)
- Loop routes that allow users to return to starting place without having to retrace their route (55%)
- Rest areas (53%)
- Corridors for wildlife (49%)

Use of Trails, Locations and Amenities

Household members indicated they would be most likely to use the trail system at least once a week (43%) if it had the amenities they wanted. Another (39%) would use the system either monthly or a few times a month.

The top five most important locations and amenities for the trail system to connect to, based on the sum of the top five responses were:

- Neighborhood parks (82% overall; 84% Clay, 81% Platte)
- Regional parks (77% overall; 76% Clay, 78% Platte)
- Lakes (68% overall; 66% Clay, 70% Platte)
- Community centers (52% overall; 57% Clay, 48% Platte)
- Schools (41% overall; 43% Clay, 40% Platte)

Almost three-fourths (73%) of the respondents thought developing a trail along the Missouri River was a “great idea” (46%) or a “good idea” (27%). Only (10%) thought it was “not a good idea.”

A majority of respondents are willing to drive to a site in their county to use trails. One-half (50%) of respondents are “very willing,” while (34%) are “somewhat willing” to drive to a site in their county. Only (7%) responded they would be “not willing.”

The two most important factors for determining the final locations and types of trails as measured by the percentage of “very important” responses.

- Easy access by walking or biking (77%)
- Easy access for those who may travel by car to a site to walk, jog or bike (74%)

Other factors include the following:

- Location in natural areas along rivers or streams (59%)
- Low cost to maintain (54%)
- Cost of the land (43%)
- Cost of developing the site (43%)

Level of Support for Improvements

The majority of residents (57%) of Platte County were very supportive of a 10-year extension of the ½ cent sales tax for the development of parks, trails, and stormwater improvements. Over half (57%) are “very supportive” of the extension of the tax that is currently projected to expire in December 2000. The percentage of “very supportive” was at least (50%) for all age groups. One-fifth (21%) were “somewhat supportive”, while (7%) were “not sure” and (15%) were “not supportive.” Voters in Platte County approved a 10-year extension of the 1/2 cent sales tax for trails, parks and stormwater improvements on August 8, 2000.

Less than half (42%) of the respondents in Clay County are “very supportive” of a ½ cent sales tax for up to 10 years for the development of parks and trails. Another (26%) are “somewhat supportive”, (14%) are “not sure”, while (18%) are “not supportive”.

The level of support in Clay County decreases with age; (35%) of households with persons ages 55 and older were “very supportive” in contrast to (50%) of households with a child under age 5. The percentage of “not supportive” was (28%) for households with persons ages 55 and older in contrast to (9%) of households with a child under age 5.

Most residents believe that either a high or medium priority should be placed on developing new trails when compared to other community issues. More than half (53%) of respondents believe that a “very high” (18%) or “high” (35%) priority should be placed on developing new trails. An additional (32%) think that new trails should be a “medium” priority. Only (12%) believe trails should be a “low” priority.

Willing to Help

One-fourth (26%) of the respondents expressed an interest in being involved in the development and maintenance of the trail system. Most of these persons were interested in being a member of a group whose goal is to develop, promote and maintain the trail system. Some are willing to make a financial contribution or donate supplies

