

Erie Canalway Trail End-to-End Recognition Program

2015 Report



Prepared by Parks & Trails New York for the New York State Canal Corporation.



**Canal
Corporation**

The Erie Canalway Trail End-to-End Program is made possible by financial support from the
New York State Canal Corporation.

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Executive Summary

The Erie Canalway Trail End-to-End Recognition Program honors individuals who complete, on foot or by bicycle, the entire 360-mile Erie Canalway Trail. Since Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) and the New York State Canal Corporation launched the program in 2012, 2,383 people have registered as End-to-Enders. In 2015 alone 589 people completed the trail, including three who walked its entire length.

Parks & Trails New York, in partnership with the NYS Canal Corporation, administers the program through an online registration process and recognizes each End-to-End with a place on the End-to-End Honor Roll, a decal, and certificate. The program is promoted through various publications and social media.

This report analyzes the data obtained from the 2015 End-to-End registrants. The findings of this analysis paint a rich picture of those who traverse the entire length of one of the nation's longest multi-use trails. In 2015, End-to-Enders came from 36 states, the District of Columbia, Australia, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom. A majority of End-to-Enders completed the trail in one trip, with most completing it in seven or more days.

The survey results show that the typical self-supported End-to-End is an affluent baby-boomer employed full-time. The median amount this group spent each day was \$125, with almost half reporting they spent more than \$150 each day. More than 79% stayed overnight in a hotel or motel along the corridor, and many indicated they visited restaurants and museums during their trip. These spending habits reinforce the message that bicyclists bring business to Erie Canalway Trail communities.

It is challenging to capture everyone making the End-to-End trek between Albany and Buffalo. Future promotional efforts, including signage, merchandise, and collateral materials, could help raise the program's visibility and build on the increasing number of End-to-Enders, which has grown by 10% in the past year alone. In addition to creating new materials, reworking the online registration survey to collect better travel data could help PTNY, the NYS Canal Corporation, and other tourism partners market the Erie Canalway Trail.

Background

At 360 miles, the Erie Canalway Trail (ECT) is one of the nation's longest multi-use trails. Each year more than 500 people bicycle the trail's entire length between Buffalo and Albany as part of Parks & Trails New York's (PTNY) Cycle the Erie Canal (CTEC) bicycle tour. It is challenging, however, to determine the number of other people completing the Erie Canalway Trail each year.

In 2012, in an attempt to determine this number and recognize the accomplishment of biking or walking across New York State, PTNY and the NYS Canal Corporation launched the Erie Canalway Trail End-to-End Recognition Program. PTNY, in partnership with the NYS Canal Corporation, administers the program through an online registration process and recognition of each End-to-End with a place on the End-to-End Honor Roll, a decal, and certificate. The program is also promoted through various publications and social media.

In 2015, 589 people registered as End-to-Enders, bringing the total number since the program began to 2,383 End-to-Enders.

Registration

PTNY has hosted the End-to-End registration form on its website since the program's start in 2012. In July, PTNY launched a new website dedicated to the ECT, CycletheErieCanal.com. The new website contains a [page](#) with specific End-to-End information, including a button that links to the [registration form](#).

Since 2013 Wufoo, an online form builder, has been used to design and collect End-to-End registration information. The Wufoo registration form is hosted on CycletheErieCanal.com to ensure that the program identity corresponds with the overall ECT marketing identity. In early spring 2015, the registration survey was also redesigned to refocus the questions towards self-supported End-to-Enders, and to offer registrants the space to share their stories regarding why they decided to complete the trail and upload a photo from their journey.

The redesign has not only streamlined the registration process, but it has also introduced a more personal perspective to the program. Several of the riders' stories have been included on the newly-launched Erie Canalway Trail [Facebook page](#) and on the [Rider Reviews and Trail Travelers](#) page on CycletheErieCanal.com. The redesign maintains the ability to collect information useful to joint efforts by PTNY, the NYS Canal Corporation, and other partners to market the Erie Canalway Trail. A copy of the End-to-End registration form is located in Appendix C.

To date, the End-to-End program has generated 2,383 registrants. 92 (16%) of this year's registrants used the Wufoo form to register as End-to-Enders, this includes 30 CTEC riders that self-registered in addition to being automatically registered at the end of the tour. Duplicate registrants are relatively common due to the fact that the Wufoo survey is publicly available and because people who have already completed the trail during a previous years' CTEC tour or on a self-supported trip register again. After removing duplicate registrations, the total number of *first time* End-to-Enders added in 2015 is 511, which is 17

more than PTNY registered in 2014. This total includes the 450 first-time End-to-Enders who participated in CTEC and 61 End-to-Enders who completed the trail on a self-supported trip.

Promotion

Compared to the past three years, PTNY has significantly increased promotion of the End-to-End program. This increase coincides with the launch of an Erie Canalway Trail Facebook page and website. Both of these platforms provide the End-to-End program greater visibility, including the ability to highlight End-to-Enders' stories and photos on the Facebook and Rider Reviews and Trail Travelers pages. Additionally, every mention of the End-to-End program on the Facebook page includes a link to the registration form.

PTNY also promoted the End-to-End program in the following ways:

- Annual LL Bean gift card raffle for registrants
- Posts to PTNY's Facebook page (9,034 likes) and Twitter (4,923 followers)
- A letter from PTNY that accompanies all *Cycling the Erie Canal* guidebook purchases (about 700 sold in 2015) (Appendix D)
- Profile of End-to-Enders in each *Canalway Trail Times* (7,000 subscribers), a quarterly newsletter jointly published by the NYS Canal Corporation and PTNY, and an advertisement for the program in the year-end print edition (Appendix D)

New promotional initiatives included the following in 2015:

- An ad in the new edition of the *Cycling the Erie Canal* guidebook. (Appendix D)
- Frequent posts on the new Erie Canalway Trail Facebook page (787 likes)
- Business card-sized information cards distributed to Canalway Trail Ambassadors and museums and attractions along the Erie Canalway Trail (Appendix D)
- Tabletop information sign displayed at ECT-related events, including Bicyclists Bring Business and CTEC tour; PTNY also included the sign at its Park(ing) Day display in September in Albany

Opportunity

End-to-Enders are a valuable resource for promoting the Erie Canalway Trail. End-to-Enders provide important feedback regarding their experience, such as the prevalence of bicycle-friendly services and ease of navigating the trail. In order to provide this feedback, however, they need to register as End-to-Enders. Many cyclists who complete the trail, mostly as part of a larger trip, such as a cross-country trip, do not register as End-to-Enders. This could be due to several factors, one of which is likely related to the limited exposure the End-to-End program has with infrequent trail users.

While recent increases in End-to-End promotion have certainly increased exposure, in the future additional promotion could make the program even more visible. Ideas include:

- End-to-End merchandise such as jerseys, patches, and pint glasses. Adding merchandise will increase the visibility of the program and may even incentivize completing the entire trail for some.
- Signage along the ECT at strategic locations to promote the program. These locations may include the Corning Preserve in Albany and Canalside in Buffalo, the Erie Canalway Trail's eastern and western termini. An alternative goal of this signage would be to promote the trail's continuity across upstate New York.
- Posters or rack cards to display at museums, visitor's centers, bike shops, and other destinations that Erie Canalway Trail users frequent.

Analysis of End-to-End Program Registrants

As part of the online registration process, each registrant is asked several questions that help us better understand the demographics and travel habits of trail travelers. Since many of these registrants are traveling long-distances, their answers are a valuable complement to other trail surveys PTNY conducts in conjunction with the NYS Canal Corporation each year. In addition to the online registration form, data from the CTEC registration process is used. Much of the analysis below, however, focuses on self-supported End-to-Enders, who tend to have less predictable experiences along the Erie Canalway Trail. The complete raw data is located in Appendix A.

Demographics

Residence

For both Cycle the Erie Canal and self-supported End-to-Enders, an overwhelming majority (97%) called the United States home. Moreover, New York is the most common state of origin for both groups (36%). Foreign End-to-Enders hailed from Australia, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

End-to-End Snapshots



Lorenz Worden of Albany, NY completed his second round trip across NYS on the ECT in July.



Robert Shepherd of Alexandria, VA used the ECT to bike from Buffalo to NYC.



Olivia Seeman of N. Reading, MA enjoyed the scenery along the ECT.

Self-supported End-to-Enders represented 17 states and two foreign countries, with New York and the nearby states of Massachusetts, Ohio, and Pennsylvania being the most common places of origin. More far-flung states of origin included Colorado, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Washington. Cycle the Erie Canal End-to-Enders came from 37 states and four foreign countries, including Alaska, California, and Wyoming. Figure 1 in Appendix A geographically demonstrates End-to-Enders' states of origin.

Age

The median age of all End-to-Enders in 2015 is 57 years old. The median age for self-supported End-to-Enders is slightly younger at 54 years old. 50% of self-supported End-to-Enders were Baby Boomers (50 to 64 years old). Just over half (52%) of all End-to-Enders belonged to this category. More self-supported End-to-Enders also fall into the Millennial (18-35) category than the group combined with CTEC riders. Figure 2 in Appendix A breaks down the age distribution of End-to-Enders more completely.

Compared to 2014, the group of End-to-Enders who registered in 2015 skew more into the 50 and older age range. A similar percentage of younger End-to-Enders registered in 2015, however.

Annual Household Income

All 62 self-supported End-to-End registrants responded to the question regarding annual household income, though 40% (25) chose "I'd rather not say" as their response. Of those who chose a bracket, 57% indicated an income of \$75,000 or more, a similar percentage compared to last year. Almost 40% of registrants chose an annual household income of at least \$100,000, which is an increase from last year. Figure 3 in Appendix A details the breakdown of household income for respondents who chose an income bracket.

Current Work Status

Self-supported End-to-Enders have the option of indicating their current work status during the registration process. They can choose student, full-time, part-time, retired, or looking for work.

59 (95%) of registrants responded to this question. A majority (51%) chose full-time as their current work status. Retired and part time workers made up the next most common choice. A full break down follows in Appendix A.

End-to-End Trip Details

Month of Trip Completion

All End-to-Enders who participated in PTNY's Cycle the Erie Canal tour completed their trip in July. For self-supported End-to-Enders it is no surprise that a majority (89%) finished their trip during the summer months of June, July, August, and September. 44% of self-supported End-to-Enders completed their trip in August, the most popular month. In addition to the summer months, 12% completed their trip in October and November.

Means of hearing about the Erie Canalway Trail

Self-supported and bike tour participant End-to-Enders were asked how they heard about the Erie Canalway Trail. Word of mouth (162), followed by a web search (139), is the most common means of hearing about the trail. Other common responses included the PTNY website (96), participating in the Cycle the Erie Canal tour (77), and a brochure or rack card in the mail (56). Although these are relatively small sample sizes, responses to this question can help us understand which media are the most effective in promoting the Erie Canalway Trail. Figure 6 in Appendix A graphically breaks down each respondent's choice.

Mode of Travel

All but three End-to-Enders used a bicycle to complete the Erie Canalway Trail. The other three walked the entire length of the trail.

Nature of Journey

All Cycle the Erie Canal riders completed the Erie Canalway Trail as a through trip; of self-supported End-to-Enders, however, 87% completed the trail as a through trip and 13% completed the trail in stages.

Size of Group

The registration survey asked self-supported End-to-Enders how many other people they travelled with during their trip. 44% traveled in groups of two, meaning they traveled with one other person. Solo travelers also made up a significant portion (26%) of End-to-Enders. Several large groups made the journey across the state together, with one as large as 24. It's important to note that the size of a group does not inform the total number of End-to-Enders; for many large groups, only one or two group members register as End-to-Enders, despite attempts by PTNY staff to encourage all group members to register.

Primary Reason for Visiting the Erie Canalway Trail

The survey asked self-supported End-to-Enders to choose their primary reason for visiting the Erie Canalway Trail. All 62 registrants answered the question, with 42% choosing a physical or personal challenge as their primary motivation. The next largest group chose the fact they considered themselves bike enthusiasts and enjoy cycling as their primary reason for visiting



Bill and Ann Testerman of Fruita, CO used the ECT to bike across NYS as part of a longer trip from Washington, DC to Albany.



Paul Henderson is a history teacher from Newmarket, NH who rode the ECT End-to-End to learn more about the Canal's history he teaches to his students.



Thomas Dixon and Caito Bowles-Roth of Minneapolis, MN used the Erie Canalway Trail to bike from Michigan to New York City.

the trail. Somewhat unsurprisingly, only four registrants selected using the trail as part of a larger journey (i.e. across the United States) as their reason. Capturing more of these longer-distance riders is difficult but a worthy goal nonetheless. The full breakdown of registrants' choices is located in Figure 8 in Appendix A.

Additionally, self-supported End-to-Enders had the option to provide an open-ended response to the question that asked why they chose to complete the entire ECT. In general, these responses fit into categories similar to the ones listed below. However, some do not, such as this one: "I was doing genealogical research on families who spent a couple of centuries in Upstate New York. I really enjoy biking and I needed something to work toward. So I made it a goal to bike the trail. I spent the next year getting in shape, recruiting family to ride and to be our supply drivers, and preparing. And then I biked it!" Their full responses are located in Appendix A.

Nights Spent Along/Near the Erie Canalway Trail

Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour riders spend eight nights at campsites along the ECT. Their responses are not included in the following analysis.

All 62 self-supported End-to-Enders answered this question, with an overwhelming majority (82%) indicating they spent at least five nights along the Erie Canalway Trail. Among this group, 45% took more than seven nights to complete their journey. The three respondents who chose "none" also indicated they completed the trail as a through trip and even listed their accommodations in the following question, suggesting they may have misinterpreted the question. Figure 9 in Appendix A fully outlines these responses.

Type of Overnight Accommodations

79% of self-supported End-to-Enders reported staying in a hotel or motel at least one night, far surpassing the next most common type of accommodation, bed and breakfasts (39%). Many also indicated they stayed at private campsites or canalside campsites located at several of the Erie Canal locks. The greatest change over the previous year came in the form of a significant gain (15, 166%) in the number of respondents who chose bed and breakfasts. Figure 10 in Appendix A has a full breakdown of End-to-Enders' accommodation choices.

Spending per day

Self-supported End-to-Enders reported spending anywhere from \$0 to \$2,500 per day; this daily spending amount includes accommodations, food, souvenirs, any other expense associated with their trip. Almost a third (31%) reported spending more than \$200 per day, while 29% reported spending fewer than \$100 per day.

Travelers who reported spending nothing may have either misunderstood the question or may have been travelling with someone covering their expenses, although it is even possible they legitimately did not spend anything. Using the median amount of \$125 takes these outliers into consideration and provides a more accurate representation of End-to-Enders' spending habits. Figure 11 in Appendix A shows the complete breakdown of daily spending.

Resources Used During the Journey

At 71% of registrants, PTNY's *Cycling the Erie Canal* guidebook is the most common resource that self-supported End-to-Enders reported using. More than half (53%) reported using the PTNY website and 50% used PTNY's Erie Canalway Trail Interactive Map. All three of these resources have been updated and enhanced during the past year to ensure more accessible and accurate trip-planning information. Last year's report indicated similar popularity for these three resources among End-to-Enders.

CycletheErieCanal.com launched after the 2015 redesign of the End-to-End survey, so it may be difficult to determine which website registrants were referring to when they chose "PTNY website." See Figure 12 in Appendix A for the full list of respondents' selections.

Open-ended Questions

The registration survey also asked four open-ended questions. Answers to these questions can be found in Appendix B.

Briefly tell us about your trip and why you chose to become an End-to-End.

52 (83%) of self-supported End-to-Enders answered this question. One respondent who rode the trail is a history teacher in New Hampshire and wanted to ride the trail to experience firsthand the materials he teaches his students. Another respondent did the trail as part of a larger goal to lose weight and live a healthier lifestyle.

What did you enjoy most about your journey? This can be a specific activity, such as visiting a particular community or attraction, or more general.

58 (94%) of self-supported End-to-Enders answered this question. Respondents reported enjoying the people they met along the way, the scenery, the locks, the history, and visiting specific towns such as Little Falls and attractions like Fort Stanwix.

What suggestions do you have for improving the trail?

60 (97%) of self-supported End-to-Enders answered this question. Almost all respondents suggested improving signage in general or in specific locations such as through Syracuse or at either trail end in Albany or Buffalo.

Do you have any other comments?

42 (68%) of self-supported End-to-Enders answered this question. Most comments were positive and many again suggested the need for better signage along the route.

All raw data for this report can be found in Appendix B

Appendix A

Figures

Demographics

Figure 1 – End-to-Enders' State of Residence

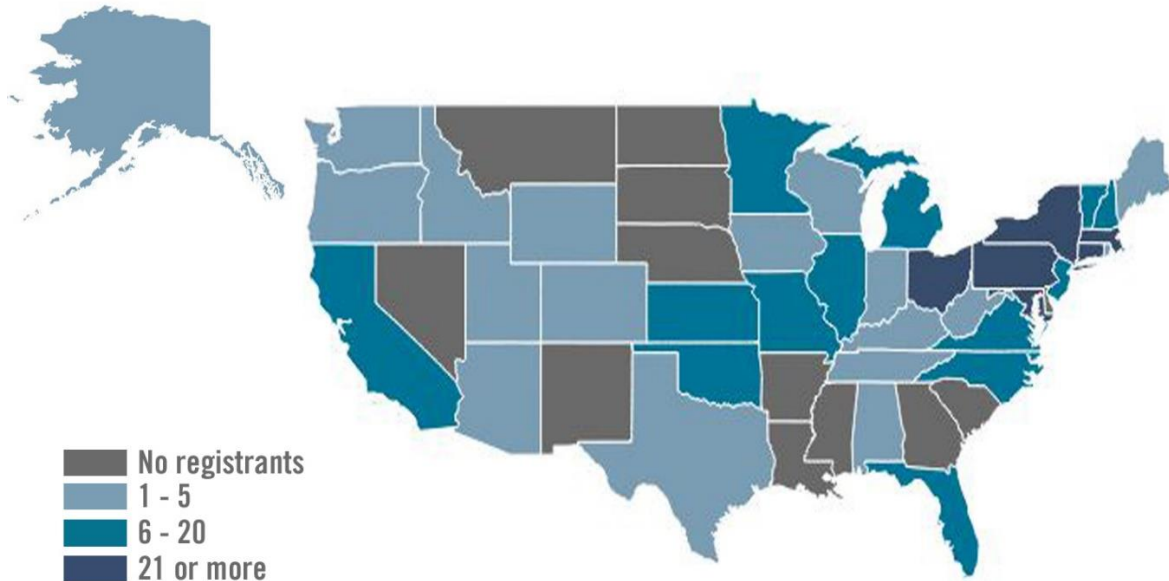


Figure 2 – End-to-End Age Distribution

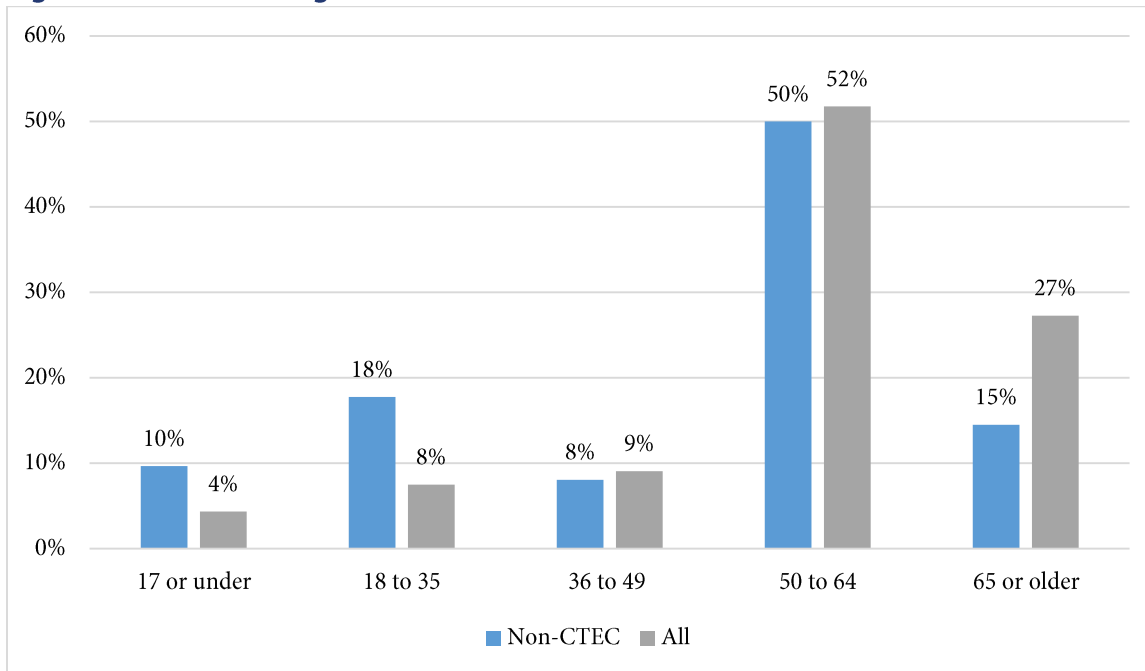


Figure 3 – Annual Household Income

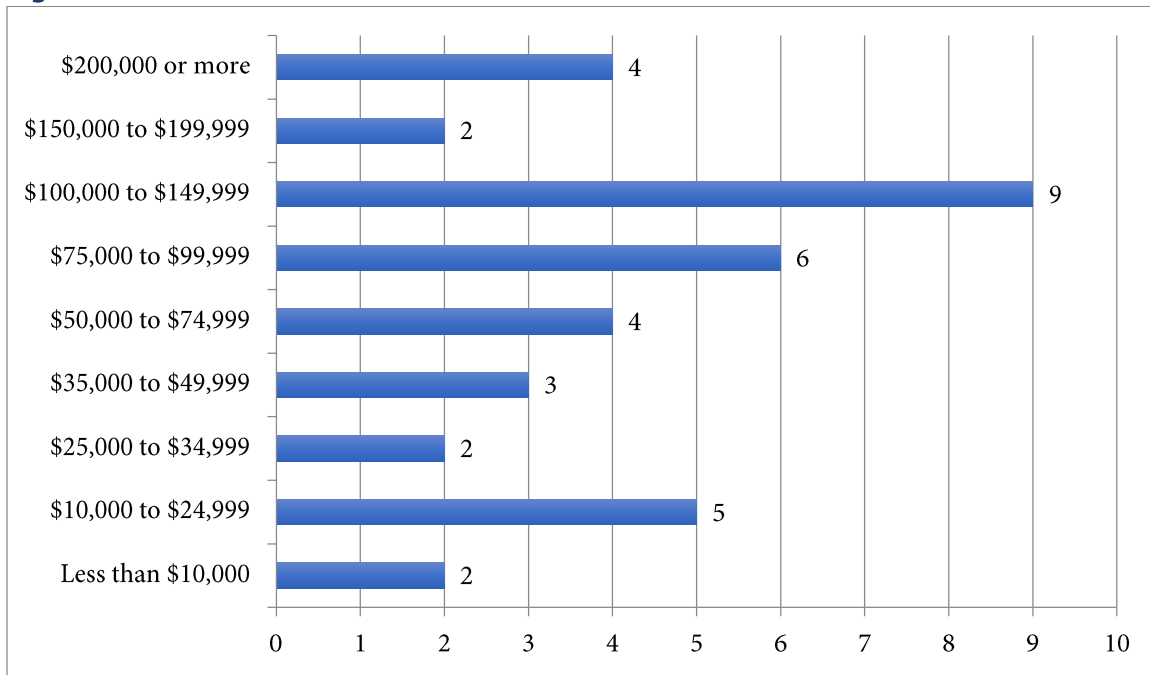
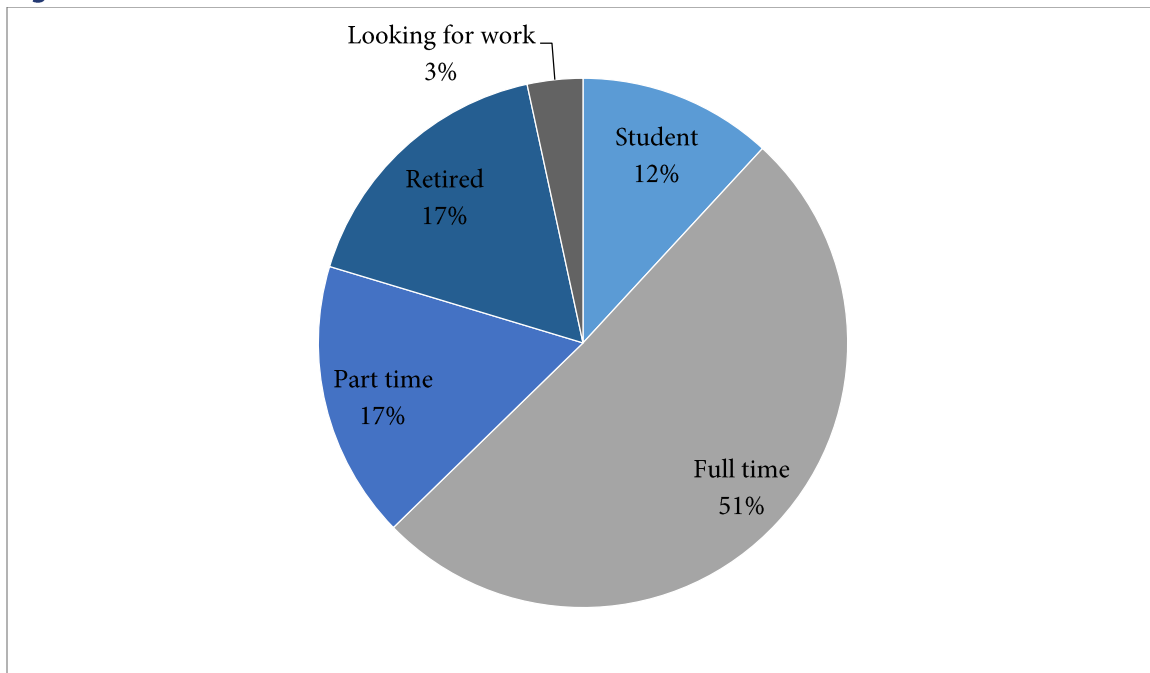


Figure 4 – Current Work Status



End-to-End Trip Details

Figure 5 – Month of Trip Completion

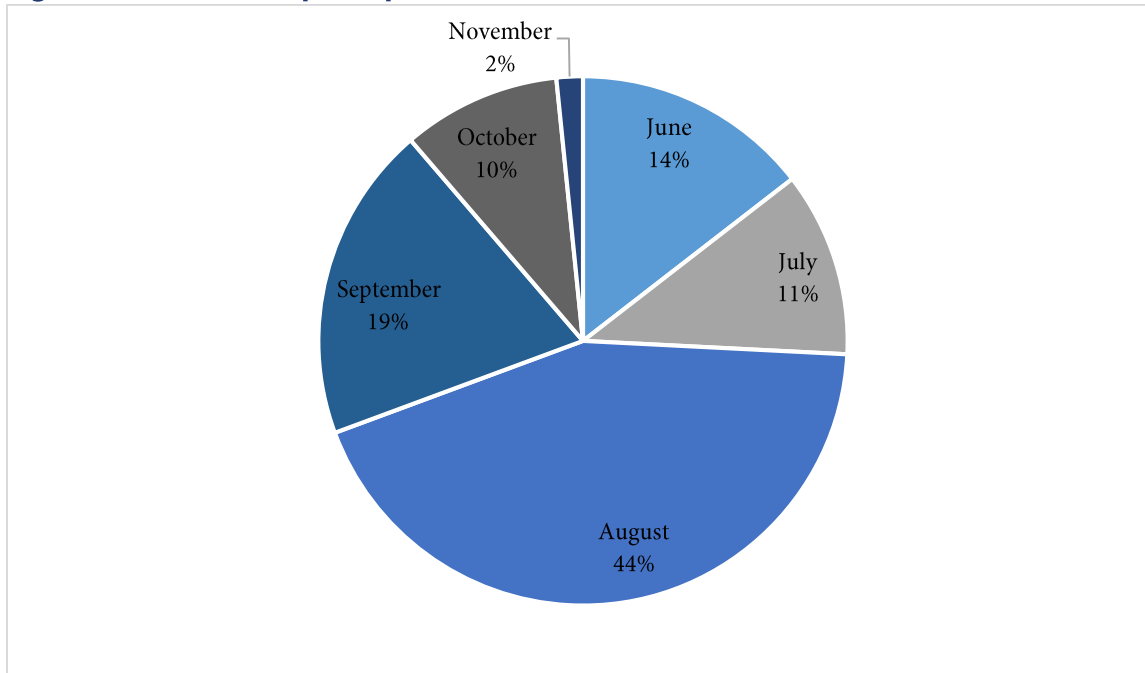


Figure 6 – First Exposure to the Erie Canalway Trail

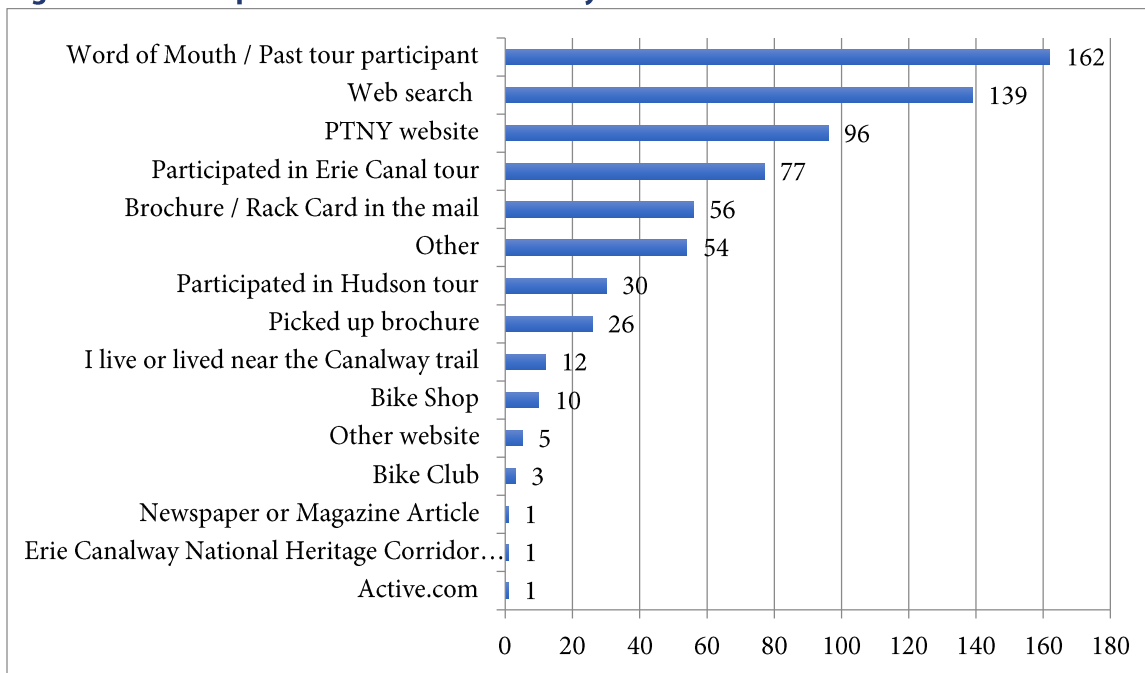


Figure 7 – Size of Group

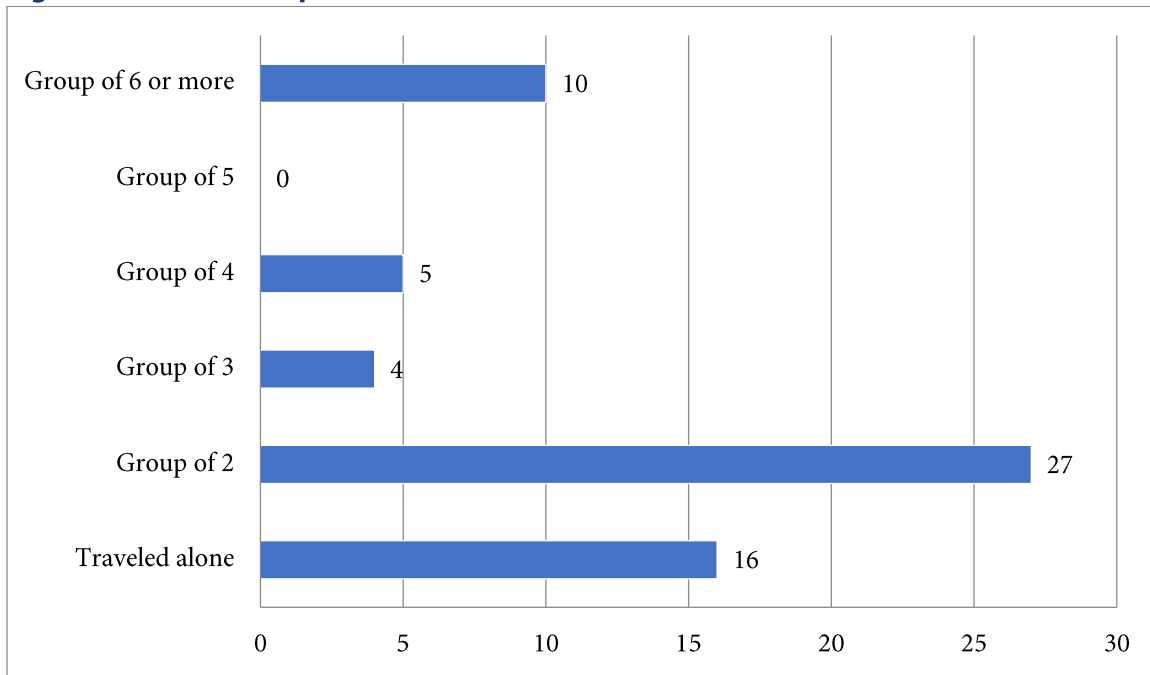


Figure 8 – Primary Reason for Visiting the Erie Canalway Trail

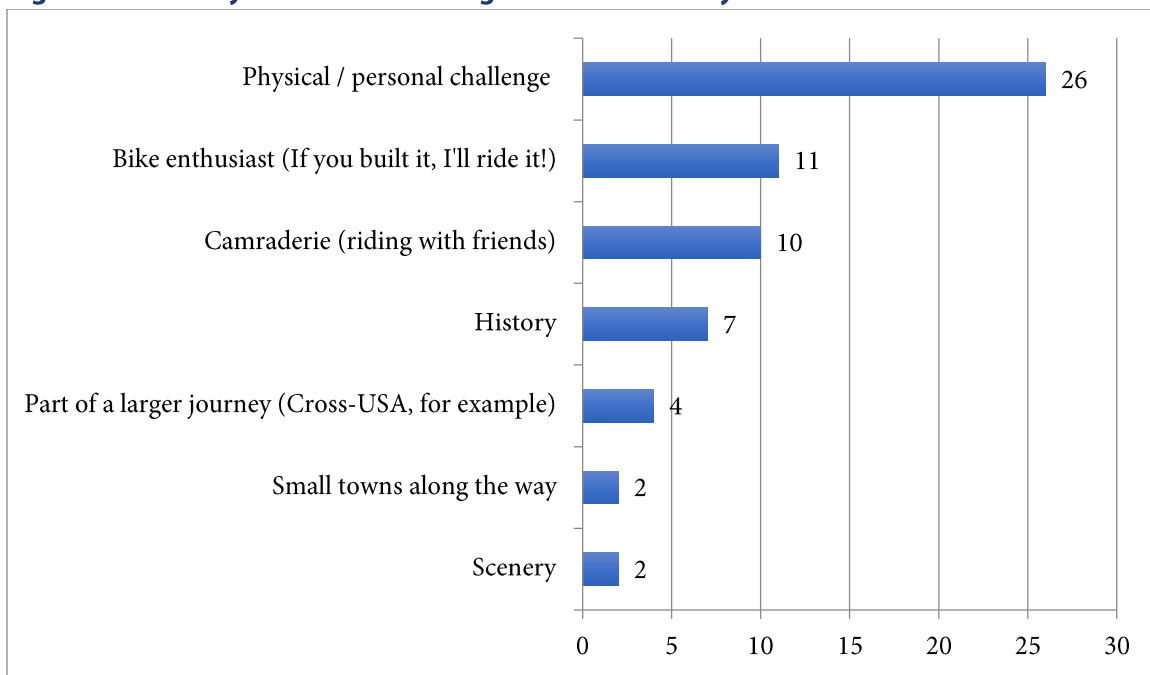


Figure 9 – Nights Spent Along/Near the Erie Canalway Trail

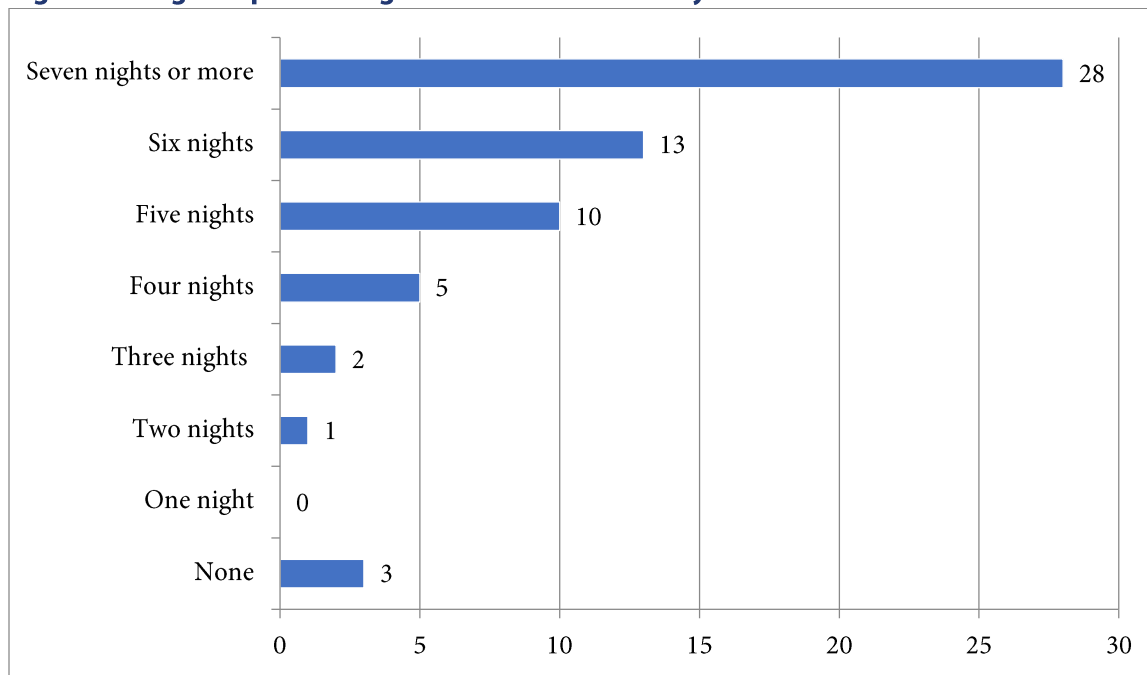


Figure 10 – Type of Overnight Accommodations

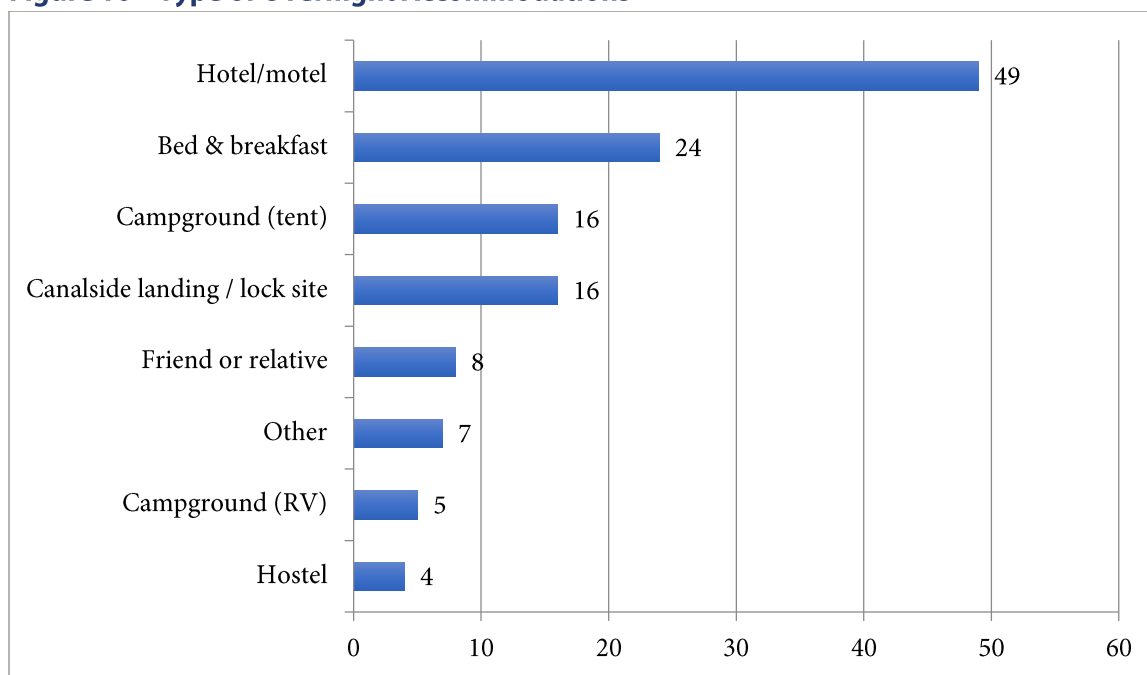


Figure 11 – Spending Per Day

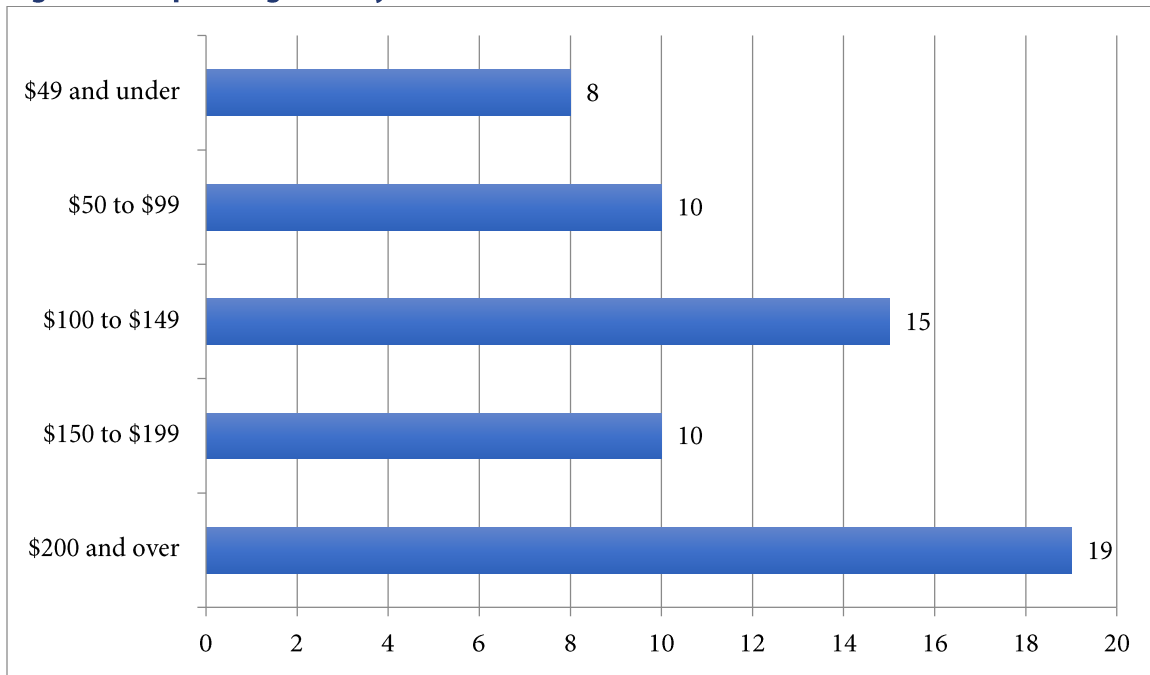
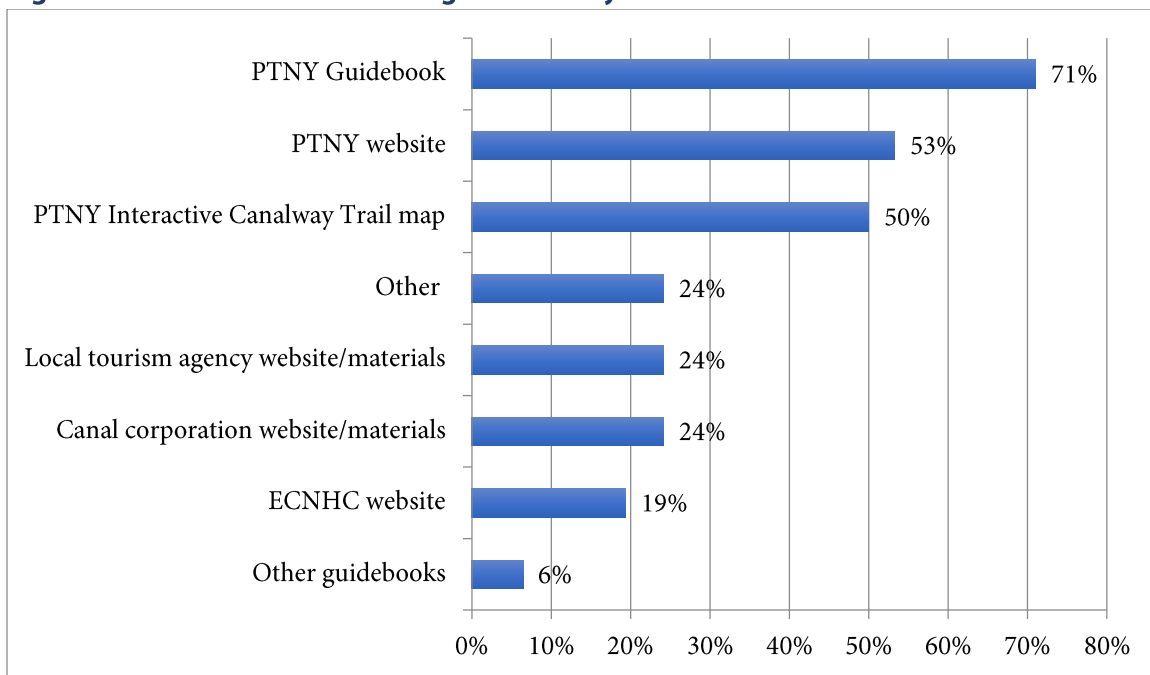


Figure 12 – Resources Used During the Journey



Appendix B

Raw Survey Data

1.1 Wufoo Registrants		% of total
Self-supported	62	67%
CTEC Tour	30	33%
Total	92	

1.2 All 2015 End-to-Enders		% of total
Non-CTEC	62	11%
CTEC	527	89%
Total	589	

2.1 Group Size		% of total
Traveled alone	16	26%
Group of 2	27	44%
Group of 3	4	6%
Group of 4	5	8%
Group of 5	0	0%
Group of 6 or more	10	16%
Did not answer	0	0%
Total	62	

3.1 Non CTEC: Where are you from?		% of total
Canada	2	3%
United Kingdom	1	2%
United States	59	95%
Total	62	

3.2 All End-to-Enders: Where are you from?		% of total
Australia	1	0.2%
Canada	12	2%
Germany	2	0.3%
United Kingdom	2	0.3%
United States	557	97%
Total	574	

Table 3.3 Where are you from?		% of total
United States	557	97%
Overseas/Canada	17	3%
Total	574	

Table 3.4 Non-CTEC: State of Origin		% of total
Colorado	2	3%
Massachusetts	6	10%
Michigan	2	3%
Minnesota	3	5%
Missouri	1	2%
New Hampshire	1	2%
New Jersey	3	5%
New York	21	34%
North Carolina	2	3%
Ohio	6	10%
Oregon	1	2%
Pennsylvania	4	6%
Texas	1	2%
Utah	1	2%
Vermont	3	5%
Virginia	1	2%
Washington	1	2%
Outside USA	3	5%
Total	62	

Table 3.5 All End-to-Enders: State of Origin		% of total
Alabama	1	0.2%
Alaska	2	0.3%
Arizona	3	1%
California	17	3%
Colorado	4	1%
Connecticut	21	4%
District of Columbia	5	1%
Florida	14	2%
Iowa	3	1%
Idaho	1	0.2%
Illinois	8	1%
Indiana	4	1%
Kansas	7	1%

Kentucky	2	0.3%
Massachusetts	33	6%
Maryland	30	5%
Maine	2	0.3%
Michigan	9	2%
Minnesota	10	2%
Missouri	7	1%
North Carolina	14	2%
New Hampshire	10	2%
New Jersey	20	3%
New York	207	36%
Ohio	26	5%
Oklahoma	6	1%
Oregon	3	1%
Pennsylvania	43	7%
Rhode Island	4	1%
Tennessee	2	0.3%
Texas	5	1%
Virginia	14	2%
Vermont	15	3%
Washington	2	0.3%
Wisconsin	1	0.2%
West Virginia	1	0.2%
Wyoming	1	0.2%
Outside USA	17	3%
Total	574	

Table 4.1 Non-CTEC: What is your age range?		% of total
17 or under	6	10%
18 to 35	11	18%
36 to 49	5	8%
50 to 64	31	50%
65 or older	9	15%
Total	62	

Youngest	10
Oldest	74
Median Age	54
Average Age	49

Table 4.2 All End-to-Enders: What is your age range?		% of total
17 or under	25	4%
18 to 35	43	8%
36 to 49	52	9%
50 to 64	296	52%
65 or older	156	27%
Total	572	

Youngest	2
Oldest	91
Median Age	57
Average Age	53

Table 5.1 Non-CTEC: Annual Household Income		% of all respondents	% who selected income bracket
Less than \$10,000	2	3%	5%
\$10,000 to \$24,999	5	8%	14%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	2	3%	5%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	3	5%	8%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	4	6%	11%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	6	10%	16%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	9	15%	24%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	2	3%	5%
\$200,000 or more	4	6%	11%
I'd rather not say	25	40%	
Responded	62		

Table 5.2 Non CTEC: My Work Status Is		% of total
I am a student	7	12%
I work full time	30	51%
I work part time	10	17%
I am retired	10	17%
I am looking for work	2	3%
Responded	59	

Table 6.1 Non-CTEC: What was your primary reason for visiting the Erie Canalway Trail (Check only one)		% of total
Bike enthusiast (If you built it, I'll ride it!)	11	18%
Camraderie (riding with friends)	10	16%
History	7	11%
Part of a larger journey (Cross-USA, for example)	4	6%
Physical / personal challenge	26	42%
Scenery	2	3%
Small towns along the way	2	3%
Responded	62	

Table 6.2 All End-to-Enders: Where did you hear of the Canalway Trail?	
Active.com	1
Brochure / Rack Card in the mail	56
Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Website	1
I live or lived near the Canalway trail	12
Newspaper or Magazine Article	1
Other	54
Other website	5
PTNY website	96
Web search	13
Word of Mouth / Past tour participant	9
Bike Club	16
Bike Shop	2
Participated in Erie Canal tour	3
Participated in Hudson tour	10
Picked up brochure	77
	30
	26

Table 7.1 Non-CTEC: Did you complete the trail as a through trip or in stages?		% of total
Through trip	54	87%
Stages	8	13%
Total	62	

Table 7.2 Non-CTEC: How many nights did you stay during your trip?		% of total
None	3	5%

One night	0	0%
Two nights	1	2%
Three nights	2	3%
Four nights	5	8%
Five nights	10	16%
Six nights	13	21%
Seven nights or more	28	45%
Total	62	

Table 7.3 Non-CTEC: What accommodations did you utilize?		% of total
Hotel/motel	49	79%
Bed & breakfast	24	39%
Canalside landing / lock site	16	26%
Hostel	4	6%
Campground (tent)	16	26%
Campground (RV)	5	8%
Friend or relative	8	13%
Other	7	11%

Table 8.1 Non-CTEC: What resources did you utilize on your journey		% of total
PTNY Cycling the Erie Canal Guidebook	44	71%
Other guidebooks	4	6%
Canal corporation website/materials	15	24%
PTNY website	33	53%
PTNY Interactive Canalway Trail map	31	50%
ECNHC website	12	19%
Local tourism agency website/materials	15	24%
Other	15	24%

Table 9.1 Non-CTEC: Month you completed your tour		% of total
June	9	15%
July	7	11%
August	27	44%
September	12	19%
October	6	10%
November	1	2%

Table 10.1 Non-CTEC: Approximately how much did you spend in total each day?		% of total
\$200 and over	19	31%
\$150 to \$199	10	16%
\$100 to \$149	15	24%
\$50 to \$99	10	16%
\$49 and under	8	13%

Highest amount spent per day	\$2,500
Lowest amount spent per day	\$15
Median amount spent per day	\$125
Average amount spent per day	\$228.32

Briefly tell us about your trip and why you chose to become an End-to-End	
We had done the GAP/C&O Canal trip earlier this year and were looking for a similar experience - a challenge ride through small town America, with history and scenery en-route, and an opportunity to connect with people on a personal level.	
We bicycled from Ludington, Michigan to Brooklyn, New York, and the canal end to end was a part of this journey. We chose the canal for it designated paths, as opposed to major roads, and we also wanted to learn about the history of the canal.	
We are infrastructure enthusiasts and cyclists, as well as completists.	
Wanted to see New York state, and became interested in a cross state trail.	
Trip was such an experience! The 61 and 68 mile days were a challenge (especially since it was 88 degrees in September!). The rest of the days were easy, but I trained hard. Why did I do it? Lived in Brockport for 45 years and always said I would do it some day. Not getting any younger, so the time was NOW!	
Trip was great. Physical Challenge	
To have a great vacation with friends and see the NY country side in safety. We had spoken of riding the trail for a couple of years and finally just did it. The overall experience was fantastic and the weather was beautiful.	
Time with my dad. And I love riding my bike!	
This was my second round trip from Albany to Buffalo. The Parks & Trails New York's "Cycling the Erie Canal" is an invaluable resource. The Erie Canalway Trail is one of New York State's greatest assets. My motto for the Trail is "everyone should do it." I will head out again on 6/6/16. LW 7/21/15	
This was a father / daughter trip and a special 16th birthday gift for my daughter.	
The trip was great. I was disappointed that some sections are not good shape where the history is decaying with vegetation growing wild. The trail was well marked and the painted marks on the road were helpful.	
The trail is flat and a lot of it is off road. There's a lot of history	
Scenery was nice. Good challenge	
Road for a fund-raiser to help orphans through my church. Having the support of each other made it a blessed time; we encouraged and motivated each other. And knowing we were helping those less fortunate kept me personally motivated.	
Partly exercise, partly personal challenge, partly wanted to see Erie canal and experience Upstate New York (the people, economies, local culture).	
Our group consists of 10 cyclists and 4 SAG team members from Cleveland, Ohio. We are a mission group from Cuyahoga Valley Church raising funds for orphanages in South Sudan, Uganda, and El Salvador. We believe that as Christians we are called to care for those who cannot care for themselves. James 1:27 says, "Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God, our Father, means that we must care for orphans..." And so, we are using our passion for cycling to provide those children with basic necessities, education, and medical treatment.	
Our church used this trip as a fundraising effort for 3 orphanages that we support.	

Our 12 day end to end bicycle ride was the best bicycle trip we ever rode. We've ridden many rail to trails and the Erie Canal was always one that we wanted to do. We meet so many wonderful folks, many through cross country riders, and residents of New York State.
My wife and I decided to bike from Wisconsin to Brooklyn. Originally we were going to cycle down thru the finger lakes, but my wife's father who used to live in Rochester NY, suggested the Erie Canal and that it was flat with mostly bike path. After some online research we decided to do the canal.
My sister had trained for it and it sounded like a fun adventure and a challenge to take on and conquer.
My pals and I do about 2 bike tours/year. We've done GAP, Palmetto, C&O, New River, DelMarVa, etc. We wanted to see the Erie Canal area, upper NY state, etc., and this was a good opportunity. I am a member of Adventure Cycling Org and recommend their monthly magazine to spread the word about the Erie Canal path.
My husband, Don Secrist, and I had never been to upstate New York. We love to use our bikes to explore. The Erie Canal was a perfect combination of history, a bit of fall color, and charming small towns plus a few big cities. We also added a side trip to Seneca Falls, Ithaca, and Auburn so we could get a taste of the Finger Lakes. Plus we had never seen Niagara Falls. And one can't just see a piece of the Erie Canal. One must go from End-to-End.
My group of friends does a long trip every year. We saw a brief article on the Erie Canal about a year ago and thought it would be fun. Two of our group live within a few miles of the trail.
Last year we rode the GAP and the C&O. We loved that, but wanted to try something different. Also, we had never been to upstate New York.
It was a wonderful trip, esp. enjoyed the trails and their variety. The on-road sections were sometimes challenging, but still doable. The hardest, most frustrating part was Buffalo (which I would NEVER do again) as the "trails" are incomplete and hard to find without a group, and there were no pink icons there. The area around Cohoes/Green Island/Albany was also confusing as we were dumped off a trail, and could not (without lots of asking) find a workable route. Your trail book should provide a larger map of the route in that area....PLUS it should not rec starting in Buffalo, unless one is a denizen of that area.
It was a great experience, had a lot of fun. The trails need a lot of TLC though.
I'm very interested in infrastructure, history, cultural heritage, and wanted to know more about upstate NY through this physically challenging endeavor.
I was doing genealogical research on families who spent a couple of centuries in upstate New York (on-going research). One cold, dark winter day I was thinking about how I'd like to do something in the region to get to know it better. I did some google searching and pretty soon found out about the Canalway trail. After reading about this, I was pretty convinced I wanted to do it. I really enjoy biking and I needed something to work toward. At the time I first learned about it (winter 2014) a few things had happened that led to me being out of shape and depressed in the cold, hard winter. So I made it a goal to bike the trail the next summer (2015). Spent the next year getting in shape, recruiting family (to ride and to be our supply drivers), and preparing. And then I biked it!
I wanted the physical challenge of biking the entire trail continuously. I also liked the fact that most of the trail was off ride, away from the cars!
I love to bike and this was a 'bucket list' item. My interest in history and the Erie Canal led to this as well.
I love epic rides which take you into small town America with varied scenery, rural, urban.
I love biking. I love all of New York State and its history. Bike trails are much more enjoyable than roads. I was able to get a week off work. Planning for the trip gave me motivation to get in better and better shape. It all came together and made sense. I rented a car and drove to Buffalo then. Followed the trail. It's been awesome.
I live in NYS and I wanted the challenge as well as to see the state I live in via cycling. Cultural and historical.
I like the challenge of a tough, but scenic ride. I loved the history leading up to the ride and study Clinton's movement that ultimately made NYC what it is today, as well as 1700s. Thought this would be a great way to meet the locals, experience the culture, get a good ride in and hang with friends.

I just graduated from college and did not have a job for the summer. I wanted to complete something fulfilling and check it off the bucket list; this was the best option! With all the resources provided and the fact that it's my home state and the summer before my very first move out-of-state, this was the perfect time for me to see the state I grew up in! The Erie Canal was perfect for our first big cycling adventure. We met up with friends and family on the way. Had breakfasts in local diners almost every morning, and relaxed by the canal during the hottest parts of the day. We had incredible weather, met lots of great people, and had many laughs.
I have wanted to do this trip for many years. And finally I was able to convince a friend to do it with me! This was a dream come true for me to accomplish this
I had a team of runners that had done 200 mile relays in various parts of the country. The year 2000 was the 175th anniversary of the canal. I organized a relay run for my team from east to west across the canal. We took 86 nonstop hours to complete the run. We had bike riders supporting each runner during his time on the trail/road. We raised \$35,000 for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Rochester in the process.
I grew up in Syracuse, later lived in Buffalo, worked in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany was educated at SUNY Brockport, Have spent most of my life in Rochester and have always wanted to complete a tour of the canal by bike.
I grew up in Buffalo and had previously cycled the GAP trail, Pittsburgh to Washington. I decided to try toe canal tour as a challenge. I rode from Buffalo to Albany, continued by bike to Poughkeepsie, took a train into NYC, and then returned to DC with my bike o n a Bolt bus.
I first heard about a bike tour from Pittsburgh to Washington D.C. and thought it was a great thing to do, especially since the riders where raising awareness and fundraising for orphans. It became a greater purpose than for ourselves. I decided before my 30th birthday to quit my full-time job and spend this summer doing some amazing things. This Canalway trip was on the list and it was my first tour. I hope to do more trails, if not this one, again someday.
I am new to cycling and last year completed the Great allegheny Passage. This was a great challenge for me to complete. I 'm very proud of this accomplishment.
I am an outdoor writer and wanted to get a trail guidebook out of it.
Have interest in bike touring, liked the option of being off road on a flat for most of the tour
Had been looking for a first foray into bike touring, the canal was perfect for spending time with my 13-year-old son and reconnecting with an old college friend. Great venue for a trip with good scenery, fascinating history, safe routes, and lots of amenities and support. Availability of return rail service on Amtrak also a deciding factor. Started from Buffalo, our friend met us in Rochester. Lodging as a fifty-fifty mix between B&Bs and camping at locks or State Parks
Completed the Katy trail earlier this year and heard about the ride from other riders and thought I would like to try
Challenge
Challege
Being the bicycling enthusiast that I am, and having bicycled in many different, and special locations all over the world, it only seemed logical to me to include the historic Erie Canal trail amidst my already amassed two-wheeled travels.
After researching the Erie Canal Guidebook, we believed it was doable in the six days we had to complete the ride. We generally try to go 50-70 miles per day depending on topography and surface type. We knew it would be slower going at places where the towpath was not as groomed and where it is crushed limestone instead of asphalt.
A group of friends has completed other trails. So we did the Bitterroot in Idaho which includes the Coeur 'd Alene and Hiawatha Trails, the Natchez Trace, the GAP/C& O, and now the Erie Canal. We've enjoyed seeing parts of the country we wouldn't otherwise see, visiting the small towns, seeing the history and culture, etc.
I'm an eighth grade history teacher and I wanted to gather knowledge on the history of Erie Canal to teach my students in class.

What did you enjoy most about your journey? This can be a specific activity, such as visiting a particular community or attraction, or more general.

What a sense of accomplishment!
weather
We loved bicycling the canal - the designated paths off the major roads were a welcome relief following our bicycle travels across the states of michigan and Ontario. Watching the fall colors unfold and learning about the history of the canal along the way were additional highlights. The designated camping grounds at the locks were wonderful!
We enjoyed the various small towns we stopped in along the way. We hit some nice little diners for lunch most days which was fun. Invariably a local would inquire as to what we were doing and were fascinated to learn we were endeavoring to ride the trail from the beginning point at Buffalo to the pedestrian bridge at Albany.
We enjoyed our days in Utica and Little Falls most! We took a tour of the Saranac Brewery on the hottest day and hung out at a great bar and grill called Nail Creek while we waited for the heat of the day to go down. When we were in Little Falls the forecast was saying rain and decided to wait out the rain the the Little Falls Harbor house. Everyone there was so welcoming and kind to us, we enjoyed every part.
Visiting many great small towns and learning of new places to come back and see more of along the way. Learning about the history along the canal ways. \
Variety of trails....Little Falls...Pittsford/Fairport....Tonawanda! Physical challenge and the people who were all Great!
Upstate New York is really beautiful. I enjoyed riding through the farmland and the Rockwellian towns of yesteryear. Also the canal itself is just amazing. It is an incredible example of human determination, hardwork and engineering genius. I really liked watching the boats navigate the locks.
Time spent with family and meeting other riders.
Time alone, an 'easy' flat course, historical sites right on the trail
The work out
The Trail!
The small towns and the history of the region and canal. We also enjoyed having the trail all to ourselves for an entire day at a time.
The scenery was excellent. The trail conditions were excellent. It couldn't have been a better trip. (Thank you Weather Gods!)
The scenery was beautiful, the small towns were wonderful had many a leisurely lunch along the route. People were very friendly!
The satisfaction of completing a 400 mile bike tour
The quiet trails alongside the working canal. We particularly enjoyed Lockport to Lyons. We also loved Little Falls.
The people and the community were the best. Lots of great eateries and watering holes. Fort Stanwix was impressive.
The parts I enjoyed the most were on the long canal trails where sometimes I did not see anyone for hours. The weather was good and was a joy to watch nature in front of me, have the sounds of freight trains for company and cruise along on the bike.
The most enjoyable part was riding with family and friends.
The Locks.
The little towns and the people we meet.
The friendliness of the people I met.
The extended view of New York state (e.g. changing landscape, city vs. rural areas, flowers, agriculture etc.)
The Erie Canal Museums were particularly nice. We had a lay over day in Syracuse.
the entire ride
The entire experience! Being with my best friend, my brother. The challenge of the weather and staying on track. The history and scenery of an iconic canal in my home state. And of course telling our story along the way and living from our bikes!

The enthusiasm and good nature of all the people we met along the way, both on the trail, in towns, and at local brew pubs and taverns. Of particular note, Fort Stanwix was excellent.
The cyclists on the tour, the communities along the way, and the people that organized and managed the tour. Nice job!
The comraderie, the challenge of a non stop relay, all combined with the history and beauty of the canal made for a fantastic trip. Our event was well covered by the news media in rochester. In fact, wham radio had a radio personality join us for the run into pittsford which coincided with the 6 pm local news.
The challenge. Also the history, the interesting people we met on the trail and a fun time.
The challenge. After the first day I didn't think I could do it!
The challenge, the scenery, the history.
The bicycling is a passion and seeing new sights is fun. We saw "small town" America, working locks (very cool) and beautiful campgrounds and starry nights.
The ability to ride mile after mile without motor vehicles buzzing past me. The quiet and solitude.
Talking with people along the way, learning from them, seeing the countryside.
such a sense of accomplishment, I'm ready to do a cross country bike ride, haha.
Staying at the CAMILLUS ERIE CANAL PARK complements of Liz Bebee. What a unique and special experience!!
Simply riding along such a noted historical trail, meant a lot to me personally. In the annals of American bicycling history pre 1900's, several well known bicyclists themselves, wheeled atop this same exact pathway on their own travels, and now I too can count myself as one of those fortunate enough as well in having done the same likewise.
Seeing the diverse new york countryside from a bicycle. I also enjoyed stopping in canal towns along the way.
Seeing the different communities along the canal.
Seeing / experiencing the various locks (retired and active).
Scenery and the campgrounds were fun. Met a lot of great and interesting people.
Riding and enjoying the peace and quiet and scenery
Rest stops and history talks.
Really enjoyed meeting all our fellow riders as well as the representatives from the local communities who came out to support the tour. We also found Fort Klock to be a unique historic site well worth re-visiting.
Not dealing with car traffic and not having to constantly look at turn by turn directions, also the camping at locks is a really great service and cool history.
Mixture of roads, trails, and gravel.
Meeting two people on the first day, then riding together all 8 days. We bonded as though we had known each other for a long time. After the ride we continue to get together to ride and will probably be life long friends. The bike tour was an amazing journey made exceptional by meeting Dennis and Sara. We call ourselves BBFs - Biking Buddies Forever! The stars certainly aligned that first day when we all met and began riding together from the Lockport boat ride stop! What an awesome experience!!!
Meeting the people along the way!
Meeting people, seeing NY state, experiencing the canal, learning about the history, (we did go to the Erie Canal Museum) , exercise, just being on a bicycle trip too !
Meeting and talking with people, a few of whom i had a connection with thru a 3rd party. Camping overnight was very enjoyable in the better campsites
Loved the canal history and all the towns and especially the people we encountered along the way. Seneca Falls and the Oneida Community were particularly fascinating.
Loved exploring each little town we stayed in along the say, and meeting some wonderful people as well. The B&B owners are wonderful, and gave great recommendations for things to do and places to eat. Beautiful countryside and views.
Learning the history of the canal and area.

Learning about the history of the canal.
Learning about the history of the canal and the impact on the state.
Just the wonderful experience of a fine road along a smooth trail with amazing scenery and excellent weather.
It was very pretty in the rural areas and wish we had left some time to explore the small villages and towns.
it was fun to stop at various small towns and see how many communities are beginning to value historic preservation in their buildings. Also it was nice to support local eateries.
I thought the trip and accommodations were excellent. Very well planned out. I rode in 2013. I received a canal sticker but I did not receive a certificate.
I really liked camping under the stars each night and waking up every morning ready to continue on the trail. If I had more time, I would have explored more parks, lakes, and towns that were along the way. The Mohican Valley Park was my favorite and the town of Herkimer was cool.
I really enjoyed the villages along the way. Seeing how the locks worked was awesome.
I met many wonderful people along the 400 miles we biked....Jonathan at Buffalo Niagra Hostel, Liz and David at the Camillus Erie Canal Park, David, a trail ambassador, Chris at Chittenango Canal Boat Landing, and Lori and Bill, RVers headed to Maine, who shared their coffee and good conversations. We also met Barb our first night camping. Our paths crossed several times throughout the 10 days we were on the trail. She is an inspiring woman and I'm happy I was able to meet her.
I loved exploring the small towns and villages along the way. Riding the Erie Canal, meeting lots of wonderful people restored my faith in people and the country.
I loved being on the trail practically alone; learning the history of the state and the canalway; visiting every lock and historic and cultural site.
I loved being able to see the New York scenery, the historic towns, and seeing and learning how the locks operate. The local people were very friendly and helpful, often giving us advice and directions.
I give the overall experience an A+, 10+, 2 thumbs up. From the breakfasts, dinners, rest stop snacks, it was all healthy and plentiful from the wine from day one to the last day end of tour celebration. This was my husband's and I first ride but definitely not our last. I would highly recommend this ride to anyone looking for not only an adventurous vacation but one where you support a great cause and feel "accomplished" at the end of the ride. Kudos to all the young riders as they inspire me, especially when I felt tired..... Make this ride part of your vacation in 2016!!
I enjoyed learning about the history and engineering of the various stages of the canal. I also enjoyed the Canalside towns and how they greeted us so warmly!
I enjoyed cycling all day, in those areas where we there wasn't traffic.
I did this trip to visit all the little museums and towns along the way. It was really neat discovering places that you are constantly driving past on the thruway but never get to see. There are so many amazing places to see in our own backyard. I loved all the great museums along the way, some highlights were Historic Palmyra, Fort Klock, Fort Hunter, The Erie Canal Museum, and Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum. I also gained an appreciation for my own hometown of Spencerport and all we have to offer along the canal.
Hudson Valley was particularly beautiful and the area I was least familiar with.
Enjoyed the people we met on the trail. A woman walking for Lockport Cares, a German man who was touring the US on bike, the inn keepers and the people who were astonished that two 60+ year women were doing this. Enjoyed the Little Falls --> Canajoharie history. Will go back to that area.
Enjoyed meeting the variety of people on the trip.
Can't think of just one, however, biking 50 miles on a cool sunny autumn day is an unbeatable way to spend a day!
Biking in gorgeous countryside!! It was so beautiful--in many different ways. New wonders all along, from start to finish. Spending time with my family who came with. Feeling a great connection to the communities and the people who built and used the canal, including my own ancestors. The kiosks along the way were awesome. We loved them

and stopped for every one. We liked the maps, we liked the history--including the fun pictures, and we liked knowing what town we were in! The sense of accomplishment. Each day we biked felt GOOD! And rolling into the boardwalk in Buffalo was awesome.
Best was meeting other bicyclists and talking about their adventures.
All the wonderful people we met and the historic information. The coffee shops.
All the communities that hosted us, for a night or for a snack!
All of it !!
all good
1) The beautiful (sometimes struggling) small towns along the trail, including their historic building stock. 2) The B&Bs along the trail, and the people who run them - - although I'm generally not a fan of B&Bs.
(Exclusive) Time with my dad...
I enjoyed the multi-day trip on my bike and the navigation long way.

What suggestions do you have for improving the trail experience (trail conditions, signage, services, etc.)
we were disappointed there was a sign indicating the west end of the Erie Canal but we didn't see a sign indicating the East End probably because there is no lock anymore at what would be the end.
We missed the section where you are under the canal.
Way more signs on the eastern side of the the trail.
Trail markings and signage could be improved. The paved were great but the areas of unfinished trails were in poor condition.
There were few (rare!) parts of the trail when the gravel became really lose. I remember trying to pedal through some of the bigger gravel pits and some lose sandy patches. Also the paved path through Rochester and the paved path into Albany had some rough spots where tree roots were breaking through. We love pavement but it's even better when it's smooth.
There are numerous gaps in sinage where finding the trail was a challange, thry the cities especially. Make water available from drinking fountians that will allow a water bottle refill. In preparation suggestions the issue of insects along portions of the trail should be addressed. They were really bad this past week
Their should be some time of monument/memorial/or marker to denote the beginning and end of the trail in Buffalo and Albany. This was a real disappointment. One, it is a great photo op, and will bring publicity to the trail, and also, it is confusing as to where the trail actually starts and finishes. Signage has to be seriously improved upon! If it wasn't for the spray painted symbols on the street, and the interactive map (which drains cell phone, sucks up data plan, and we didn't always have cell coverage), we would have been off trail a lot! Please put up permanent signage indicating turns, etc....
the trailsystem needs vollenterrrs
The trail needs better signage that indicates mileage to and from places including towns, cultural and historic sites, the locks, etc. Places to hydrate would be appreciated. We followed the Bike Tour cue sheets, the Parks and Trails interactive map, and google maps, but if it hadn't been for the pink/white signs along the trail we never would have been able to do the entire trail - it was just too hard to find the trail in many places. It would be much better if the cue sheets were annotated with maps and mentioned sites like town names, historic and cultural sites, etc. It was often confusing to find the trail.
The trail is great and I have upmost respect for parks and trails New York and everyone who works to make the trail nice. My suggestions would be more signage, especially signs pointing to public bathrooms, water fountains or outlets. Many parks have outlets on buildings or fixtures but I am always unsure if recharging my phone is frowned upon. If parks had signs telling visitors where outlets are and that they are free to you them it would be welcomed and appreciated. . Better maintenance of certain problem sections of the trails. Off course extending more trails to cover the

gaps. If local businesses especially stores and restaurants could put signs along the trail directing you to their locations, it would be helpful. More signs showing how far away the next town or place of interest is. Also Amtrak empire route does not allow passengers to walk on with bikes, they do on other routes. If they did have this service I would have taken a train instead of having to rent a car.
The signage in downtown Buffalo was somewhat lacking which made it challenging at times to stay on the path. Also, there were three different areas where the towpath was limited crushed limestone and tall grass which made cycling challenges especially when it rained on us around Fultonville. Two of our cyclists were on trikes which meant the back center wheel was in one limestone groove and the two front tires in grass several inches high. When it rained, the water laid in the groove and made the ground not only wet but softer making it hard to pedal.
The signage for the trail, particularly through some of the cities can be improved. Luckily, we had the pink markers from the recent Cycling the Erie Canal Bicycle Tour to follow, otherwise we would have gotten lost more frequently.
The route is good to start (I began in Buffalo) where the trails are nicely surfaced and the countryside/towns/route are picturesque. Later on some of the road parts are a little confusing with the 'Cycling the Erie Canal' guide I had and I did get lost a few times (Syracuse and Utica and others). Maybe additional more detailed maps of these parts would have been useful. Also some parts of the road routes were not that enjoyable. Bleecker Street in Utica springs to mind readily!
The pink spray paint on the road was outstanding. That was reassuring. I know you don't control it, but the stretches on roads would keep me from riding it again. Especially the stretch leaving Utica. Yes, there is a wide shoulder, but those semi-trucks buzzing by make the experience harrowing. If it is not possible to have off-road trails, even simple things like cones to separate the bike lane from the highway would greatly improve the experience.
The gravel is a little slow going and there could be more signage thru some of the city's where the trail gets broken up
Syracuse signage was MOST DIFFICULT. Annoying for me and as a result, I lost three hours trying to find the trail.
Syracuse needs better signage! There are other places a long the way where signs could have been placed better. I will send along all of my suggestions at a later date
Some of the sections went thru some scary parts of towns.
Some of the locks where camping was available didn't have restrooms or water which made it a bit challenging.
Some areas of the trail were marked very well, where others required us to depend heavily on our gps to find our way. I also dislike a lot when there is heavy amounts of crushed gravel on the path, it becomes very slippery for the bikes and makes it hard to stay in control. It would also be amazing to see the little towns along the way embracing their canal fronts and working to provide services to bikers. More water fountains along the way would be great, providing showers at some of the camping locks would encourage more camping.
Signed pretty well, even on the sections of road that we needed to travel. Our smart phones came in very handy and the mobile app seemed to work well.
Signage. I understand the trail is ever evolving however, the east end of Syracuse is one example of a poorly marked trail that could leave someone off in the wrong direction. An on line app would be great. As far as the guidebook, when the trail just continues for several miles that is not critical to have the detail. What be really helpful is too provide greater detail through the urban areas and when navigating through the smaller towns. The other thing that might be helpful is to provide sample trips and itineraries. I would be willing to work on these. It would provide users with suggestions for point to point trips or a continuous end to end rides with different time durations.
Signage, signage, signage (and signage).
Signage was poor or lacking. The guide book does not include nearly enough detail scale maps for the bigger towns. When crossing roads while on the dedicated portion of the trail, it would be very helpful to have signs at the gates to indicate the name of the crossroads. Needed are more places along the trail for water, restroom facilities, etc. Example: In Middleport along the canal there was a shelter with a water spigot and electrical outlets!! Detour signs are needed as well when the trail is washed out or closed due to weather conditions, etc. We ran into that a couple of places.

Signage was adequate but confusing at time going through the larger cities, with Buffalo being difficult. Late in the first day we learned of the pavement markers, the pink painted ones and this made the journey easier. The trails were in nice shape. At times when they narrowed to one track or mostly grass it made it difficult for two riders who had trikes.
Signage in downtown Buffalo could be better. Also we got lost at the end of the trip and ended up in Halfmoon before using Google maps to find our way.
Signage in big cities isn't good. Put in the trail book that cyclist can stay at the marinas. As you know some off road sections of the trail are in bad shape.
See above....Yes, more signage! And additional maps of city areas. Also it would be nice if there were a sign documenting the end of the trail. All we saw was a pink painted (on the ground) FINISH. I mean, come on! Let's have something at the end of the trail, guys!
Please close those gaps! It would have been nice for the cue sheets from the big ride to include towns and lock numbers. We tried to visit every lock. Some were not indicated through signage.
Number one:complete the trail so it is entirely off road. So many more would enjoy the experience, and spend their money to do so. Crossing the roads is not that big a deal, but seriously, riding thru Syracuse, Albany and other state roads can be risky business, especially for the inexperienced biker. The addition of paved trail from Tonawanda to Lockport is huge...now my wife will gladly join me on that awesome addition to the trail. Let's finish the job from Newark to Albany!!! Second: Definitely improve the signs and trail markings. It should be effortless to navigate long distance canal travel by yourself and with little need for maps.
NUMBER ONE ... better signage at the trailheads in Buffalo and Albany. It will help you with the marketing of the canal. Also, without it, it is anti-climatic. #2) use the app to get merchants to advertise there. It is sometimes difficult to find places and their websites while on the ride. Shouldn't just be for historic sites ... you can use the interactive map/app for raising funds, 3) more of the trail should be connected. I do appreciate that you guided us on lower traffic roads, but unlike the GAP/C&O canal path, your path had us all over the place, especially in the cities.
None; I hope the trail building continues.
No loose gravel
Navigation is the biggest challenge at the trail gaps and especially through cities. In these areas, we often relied on the directional 'lollipops' painted on pavement and left over from last months organized PTNY ride. These were an invaluable help, but occasionally frustrating when they detoured to a rest stop, overnight camp, or tour site that was off-trail. Even just a month later, many were faded or paved over. Would be great to see pavement markings or more frequent signage indicating the main canal route in these areas. The PTNY guidebook is an invaluable resource, with only a few drawbacks: -Maps in cities and dense areas don't always provide enough detail at that scale for accurate wayfinding. -Turn-by-turn directions in the guidebook would help in these locations. -Directories for lodging, bike shops, etc. list the street address but not the town or city, so when there are several cities on the same page one can't easily tell which is where.
More paved trail and less on-road.
More needs to be done about the signage in Rochester near Genesee Valley Park. It was confusing and frustrating and I have talked to others about it and they say the same thing. I would a,so specifically tell riders on the websites and Facebook that they can legally camp at the locks. For campers it's hard to find decent places to camp right on the canal and it would be more helpful if you could camp at any and all locks.
More mileage signs--the ones toward the beginning were so nice. One every 20 or 50 miles would be great. More pavement, where possible. (That gravel could be brutal after hours of it.) A couple of spots where better signage would have helped: The big strip of off-trail/on-road leading into Durhamville (going from east to west). Wasn't getting phone service (ie. no map) and this long detour worried us--a better sign/map would help. Also, coming into Rotterdam Junction (from east to west), there's no sign to go onto the road--and with everything else so well marked up to this point, we were certain it couldn't be right to go on the road yet (definitely took the mile-long path that we then needed

to backtrack). And finally, where there are hints and instructions, make sure they include directions from east to west, as well as west to east. (Or at least clearly label them, each time, as being from west to east.)
More milage signs. Also how about bird houses along the way to encourage more birds and perhaps bird watchers.
More infomration regarding detours. The area from Depew Buffalo, Amtrak until you leave Buffalo needs more signage or marking.
improve signs within the cities...too easy to get lost.
IMPROVE AND INCREASE SIGNAGE!!!! Also provide a printed map for FREE!! It is not reasonable that it should be purchased. Especially since the system is so fractured on the east side of the state. Also, the percentage of trail system complete is nowhere near the advertised 75/25%.
I look forward to the canal path being continuous across the state.
I enjoyed my experience so much bicycling over the Erie Canal trail, that I can offer none at this time.
I biked from Albany to Buffalo. The signs in the Buffalo area are confusing due to the number of trails. It was not clear to me from the signs that I was supposed to go on Squaw Island. I ended up on an access ramp to 190. it was dangerous
First, let me say how much I loved using your Interactive Map with GPS! Whenever I was in doubt, I pulled out my phone. I told other cyclists we chatted with on the trail about the map app. Now what would be great is to mark trail closures and detours. Our first five miles out of Buffalo presented some surprises. It would have been nice to have them noted on the map or at least a web link with trail construction/closures.
First, change the location of the Microtel Hotel on your Seneca Falls map. Picked that hotel because it was closest to the trail but it was mislabeled. Signage is so faded on some trails that they are impossible to read.
Finish the trail... Some on road is to be expected but some stretches (eg through Syracuse) were outright dangerous.
finish the trail.
Finish the trail so as to avoid on-road cycling. Even with the road riding, the entire trek is excellent. Trail conditions and back-up materials are excellent. Thanks!
Continue closing the gaps and getting the trail off roads.
Consistent updated signage and especially in the Cities Buffalo and Syracuse. Mile age markers on the trail map would also be helpful for planning a trip. None of the towns with canal museums sold canal souvenirs, tee shirts, or pins. The canal museum in Syracuse is under promoted as is the Chittenango museum. The Cambridge Inn motel in Camillus is now called the Camillus motel so the next guidebook should be updated by making sure all overnight accommodations are checked.
Coming from a planner's perspective, continuity of the route is paramount; providing as much consistency of experience as possible. The routes through the urban environments of Syracuse and Rome are notably problematic.
Closing the gap will create a portion of a national treasure. My trip was really, really hard but if the 3200 miles were like the Erie Canal trail, many more people could do it or at least portions of our beautiful country.
Close the trail gaps. The road riding was not fun.
clean it up and pave more of the trail. Capitalize on the history and make the trail easily accessible. Provide more tax dollars to be designated for restoration.
Better trail markings through towns
Better signs in the cities...too easy to get lost. Interactive map saved us!
better signs in the cities
better signs in the cities
Better signage from Buffalo to Lockport and when ever on roads and streets
Although hard! Trying to connect the existing route which I am sure some group is doing!
A couple of spots where better signage would have helped: The big strip of off-trail/on-road leading into Durhamville (going from east to west). Wasn't getting phone service (ie. no map) and this long detour worried us--a better sign/map

would help. Also, coming into Rotterdam Junction (from east to west), there's no sign to go onto the road--and with everything else so well marked up to this point, we were certain it couldn't be right to go on the road yet (definitely took the mile-long path that we then needed to backtrack). And finally, where there are hints and instructions, make sure they include directions from east to west, as well as west to east. (Or at least clearly label them, each time, as being from west to east.)

Do you have any other comments?

wonderful connection with a people and era we will never know personally but with which we now feel a better understanding of

While unhappy with signage and ability to always follow the guide, the trip was a wonderful experience. I would do it again.

While I was a bit negative on the suggestions, my experiences were very positive. Your communities were a gem ... a surprise, due in fact to minimal visibility of the merchants and establishments.

We will spread the word far and wide about the joys of the Erie Canal system. It is every bit as enjoyable as the C&O and the GAP. I'm eager to ride other NY bike routes, especially around the lakes and also the route down to Manhattan. Good job on the maps and guidebook! Also, we used the interactive maps on our cell phone app frequently. Thanks. . . You'll see us again!

We talked with a lot of people and I understand the economic challenges in this corridor. I believe this trail can spearhead development.

We had completed the trail in Albany at the Capital.

We had an interesting experience with the police. We had notified the waterford, ny police that we'd be starting this event at 2 in the morning in a small park there. We started at that time to hit our necessary time marks along the way. The police decided to meet us there and then gave us a red light escort through the town as we began our journey. They then contacted the local county sheriff who decided to escort us through the rest of the county. Somehow this turned into a state police escort as we were handed off along the route on the first night/day. In utica, i was asked to get into the police car and was connected to the governor's office. I spoke to the governor's secretary who asked me who i had spoken with to arrange the escort. Of course, i had no good answer. I was told that the escort would have to be ended as it was a costly endeavor. I was relieved to learn that they wouldn't try to have us pay for what we had received to this point. In the meantime, we had enjoyed having the officers along for the ride,

We enjoyed meeting several people riding on the trail. Several were seeking to ride the whole trail end to end. It was fun comparing stories with them.

There were painted markers on the ground all the way across the route. These were very helpful at times. They must be from the annual bike ride I assume. An absolutely great trip! I want to come back!

There should be a map as you enter each community indicating services (restaurants, motels or B&B's, bike shop, etc). This would be a win win for the bikers and the business owners. The GAP trail has a lot of this, and brochures so you can figure out stops before hand - look at what they've done and use their successes to improve the Erie Canal trail experience. Would like to see more of the trail actually follow the active waterways - those sections were the most enjoyable. Long hauls on roadways with no relationship to the water was not what I had envisioned.

The weather was delightful. This trail is a gem!

The trail was great - thanks for the experience of a lifetime!

The staff in the Little Falls rotory park were amazing, The Holly canal site was wonderful. The non stop train whistles near the Macedon campground were awful, as were the ammenities of that canal side campground. If Palmyra were willing their canal park would be a fantastic stopover.

The guide book was very helpful and well done. Again mile markers on the trail map would be helpful. Also you should review the Katy Trail and GAP-C&O websites for ideas to improve the Erie Canal website.

The guide book should have better detail in the urban areas. I would not have been able to navigate using the book alone. I had to use google maps app a good deal. I was on a road bike so I did not do the gravel trails
Thanks for what you do.
Thank you, New York, for maintaining this trail!
Special thanks to all who contribute and work on the trail! We needed the services of one bicycle shop in Herkimer, they were very helpful! An absolutely unforgettable journey! The C&O trail from Pittsburgh to D.C. is next!!
Signage in the cities are desperately needed! It took us a few times around Buffalo to figure out the trail's pathway to get along the Niagara River. If it wasn't for a local, we would have been lost a lot longer due to bridge closings. Albany wasn't much better - we got lost after Dock 2. There were pathways for other trails and that lead us astray - not to mention more bridge closings!
Overall a great trail, a great trip, with fantastic resources. Would love to do this trip again sometime
Overall a great experience! Lots of fun and lots of laughs! Everyone was so kind and helpful and interested in our journey! Would definitely do it again!
not really. we did get a little lost in Syracuse but all in all it was good. Wish there were more places to stay along the canal. Like Pittsford!
Love the trail!
Keep up the good work at PTNY and get ready for the "gap-is-closed" celebration" on 7/4/17 - the 200 anniversary of the beginning of the dig in Rome.
It was overall a magical adventure. Loads of highs and some low points and a lot of new people along the way to interact with. It was definitely worth the trouble of transporting my bike from the UK by air to New York City and train to Buffalo.
It was an overall amazing experience that I look forward to presenting all my research to my five classes. Thank you for the help PTNY!
It was a spectacular trip and I loved doing it! We visited every lock that we could find and stopped at every historic site and museum. I'd love to see the towns along the canal take full advantage of it - like they've done in Pittsford and Little Falls. Other towns turn their backs to the canal and don't even offer a cold drink or good information about their own history, which is a shame. There's a huge opportunity for economic development through cultural heritage tourism along the entire trail! The piece between Utica and Canajoharie was the worst riding of the trip because of having to ride in the road most of the way - it seemed very dangerous and was extremely unpleasant.
It is some of the best riding that I experienced in riding 3200 miles across the country. I hope to return this year with a couple of friends to let them experience a small fraction of what I got to experience. I made a video that contains some of the joy that I experienced on your trail.
If I came again I would plan to take more time to read up on the history, visit the towns. It was worth the week to ride it.
I was happy that the on road sections had wide shoulders. I hope you will continue to improve the off road sections.
I plan to ride the trail again this August: Buffalo-Albany, train from Poughkeepsie to NYC, then by bike to Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.
I met really nice people all along the way.
I hope the trail continues to improve and fill in the gaps. I think it's a wonderful service and economic engine.
I did not fill out a form for my husband, Don Secrist (age 73), who also should get his certificate. The per day cost is a total for the two of us. I would upload a photo of the two of us but I don't know how to. camontheroad@comcast.net
hope to work with Parks & trails to promote my book when it comes out. you may even want to publish it. i'm open. have your rep contact me and we'll see what we can work out. would rather work WITH you, rather than go it alone. Thanks.
Great ride. Loved it with family. I rode with three kids, aged 9,8,and 6 at the time. Awesome opportunity

Great experience and a highlight of our cross country trip! Thank you for all of your hard work to make the canal what it is today !
Everything should be made to support and market riding it in EITHER direction. We chose to start in Albany and Finish in Niagara/Buffalo. Not one resource was available for taking trail in this direction, which should be the most popular...i mean who wants to finish in Albany when you can finish near Niagara Falls???
Awesome experience! We were very, very impressed and grateful with how well the trails are maintained, signs are available, etc. The communities and larger organizations have an amazing thing going. It was just incredible. The on-line map is also spectacular. Like the canal itself, the trail led us to a sense of wonder and gratitude for the thousands of unseen women and men who made this possible for us. We felt connected to people we didn't know, will never meet. It was a pretty incredible experience.
Advertise better the ability for people to camp along the canal, I found very few resources that described the facilities, only on the canal corp website and even then the description of amenities was not comprehensive (toilets and porta-potties are very different). I loved the gps feature on your interactive map. I wish I had discovered it earlier in our trip.
.The marks along the way (spray paint circle with turn left or turn right) were a god send. I considered them my "guardian angel" and really helped in some of the more remote locations.
. Many of the communities along the canal have been in economic trouble for decades.....and it shows. However there are some bright spots. Some villages really promote the canal and they benefit economically and possibly culturally. I think of Brockport, Spencerport, Tonawanda, Fairport, Pittsford, Newark that have done a really nice job of attracting and welcoming canal traffic and activity. I suspect more could be done to revitalize other communities to market this great resource and likely economic benefits will follow.