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**Use and impact of the Greenville Health System Swamp Rabbit Trail continues to grow.**

**Year 2 of Impact Study reveals significant user growth and new business development.**

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Greenville County, SC – Year 2 results of a comprehensive study conducted on the impact of the GHS Swamp Rabbit Trail reveals that trail usage has increased to an estimated 403,000 users per year, up from 359,000 users recorded in Year 1, and the resulting economic impact was the catalyst for new business development and retail revenue increases.

This second year of the Impact Study was funded through a collaborative effort that included an EPA grant, local planning grants, the Bikes Belong Foundation, and Furman University. Greenville Rec and Upstate Forever worked together to secure funding for Year 2 of the Impact Study.

Dr. Julian Reed, Associate Professor of Health Sciences at Furman University, conducted the study and finds that the results exceed already high expectations.

“We anticipated increased user growth from Year 1 to Year 2, but this type of increase is a significant statement as to how changes in the built environment can drastically influence physical activity” said Dr. Reed.

Results from the study were discussed at a press conference on June 18<sup>th</sup> at Greenville Fitness and Rehabilitation, a new business that opened in 2012 to serve the needs of trail users.

“The purpose of the study continues to be to obtain objective, scientifically accurate data on the trail’s economic, health, and environmental impacts,” said Lisa Hallo, Upstate Forever’s Sustainable Communities Program Director. “It is obvious to most trail users just how significant an impact the trail has had on the local area, and the data backs that up. Continued study allows us to identify trends and track the impact of changes.”

Data collected over the first 2 years shows that around 50% of people riding bicycles are not wearing a helmet. Greenville Rec, the Greenville Health System and the Greenville Spinners are working on programs to improve that number. “Continuing the Impact Study will give us scientifically sound results of our effort to encourage increased helmet usage” said Rebecca Cooper of the Greenville Health System.

Ty Houck, Director of Greenways, Natural, and Historic Resources for Greenville Rec, notes that the robust economic data in the report is already being used as a market study for businesses trying to determine where to locate.

“The Impact Study proves that the GHS Swamp Rabbit Trail is a good investment. The data shows that not only are residents enjoying the trail but that tourists were also coming to Greenville County because of the Swamp Rabbit.” said Houck, who adds that other communities around the country have visited and are using this information to demonstrate the level of impact a greenway system will have in their community.

“Increased usage validates and supports the need for greenway expansion. The ‘Wow Factor’ of the total number of users has sparked conversations around the county in places like Taylors and Mauldin on how to develop greenways in those communities” said Ty Houck.

Some other data collected in Year 2 included:

- 3% increase in usage by children and teens, up from 11% in Year 1 to 14% in Year 2.
- Also 3% increase in usage by seniors.
- Greatest number of users shifted from summer in Year 1 to spring in Year 2.
- The Random Digit Dialing Survey in Year 1 found that non-users cited lack of awareness of the GHS Swamp Rabbit trail as the main reason why they

did not use the trail. In Year 2, non-users cited "just too busy" or physical limitations as reasons for not using the trail.

- Businesses that relocated near the Swamp Rabbit reported a 30% to 50% increase in sales.
- Annual revenue from trail users ranged from \$50,000 to \$400,000 in Year 2 according to managers/owners surveyed.

The full Impact Study is available at: [GreenvilleRec.com/studies-surveys](http://GreenvilleRec.com/studies-surveys).

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*Upstate Forever is a nonprofit, membership-based organization promoting sensible growth and the protection of special places in the Upstate region of South Carolina. Our three program areas are Land Trust, Sustainable Communities, and Clean Air and Water. Founded in 1998, Upstate Forever now has over 1,800 members, two offices, and a staff of 17. For more information, visit [www.upstateforever.org](http://www.upstateforever.org).*

*Greenville Rec (Greenville County Recreation District) is a special tax district that operates over 55 park sites in Greenville County. The Greenville Health System Swamp Rabbit Trail is operated by Greenville Rec in the unincorporated areas of the County and in the city of Travelers Rest. The GHS Swamp Rabbit Trail is currently 17.5 miles long and includes sections in the City of Greenville and the City of Fountain Inn in addition to the sections managed by Greenville Rec. For more information, visit [www.greenvillerec.com](http://www.greenvillerec.com).*

*The Greenville Health System Swamp Rabbit Trail opened in 2009 through the efforts of Greenville County Council, Upstate Forever, and other partners who secured the rail line. The Impact Study is only conducted on the northernmost section of the trail from the northern city limits of Greenville through Travelers Rest. Greenville Rec is currently working to secure funding for Year 4 of the Impact Study.*