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Economic Impact of the 2021 Blue Ridge Brutal

The Blue Ridge Brutal (BRB) is a long distance road bike ride. The start and finish point is the Ashe Civic Center in West Jefferson, North Carolina. There are 100, 75 and 57 mile ride options and each travels through some of the most beautiful scenery in North Carolina. All riders spend at least 20 miles on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Following the 2021 ride an online survey was administered to participants using Qualtrics©. Email invitations were sent to 399 riders who had registered for the BRB on August 23rd, 2021. After the initial email, a reminder was sent to those who had not responded on August 30th. 11 emails bounced due to bad email addresses. 216 responses were received and 211 riders completed the survey. The response rate was 54%.

Of the eighty-four percent of the respondents who participated in the 2021 ride, 93% were extremely satisfied with the BRB. Fifty-five percent of the respondents traveled to the West Jefferson area and stayed overnight. Of these, 46% stayed one night, 40% stayed two nights and 14% stayed more than two nights. Forty-six percent of overnight stays were in a hotel (or B&B), 35% were in a rental house, 7% were at a campsite and 10% stayed with friends and/or family.

Considering those respondents who participated in the 2021 ride and traveled from their homes to the area, average total spending was \$441 during their stay. The top two categories for expenditures were lodging and food/supplies. Average lodging expenditures were \$263 and average food expenditures were \$91.

Summing this over the total number of non-local participants in 2021 yields total direct spending of \$129,298 associated with the BRB event. Direct spending circulates through the regional economy and generates additional spending through the “multiplier effect.” Applying a RIMS II multiplier of 1.45 for the tourism sector yields a total economic impact of \$189,580.

This is a project of the App State Student Chapter of the NABE and the CERPA Undergraduate Research Program. Chapter members who contributed to the 2021 BRB Economic Impact Report are Roxy Day, Agustin Orozco, Jonathan Buckley, Phoebe Eaton, Nhkosinathi Moyo, and Connery Martin. Contact: John Whitehead, Professor of Economics, (828)262-6121 or whiteheadjc@appstate.edu.