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Economic Impact of the 2023 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 25, 50, 70 and 100 mile ride options and each travels through some of the most beautiful scenery in North Carolina.

Following the 2023 ride an online survey was administered to participants using Qualtrics© online survey software. Email invitations were sent to 439 riders who had registered for the BRB on August 19th, 2023. After the initial email, a reminder was sent to those who had not responded. Two-hundred and seven riders completed the survey. The completed response rate is 47%.

Of the 97% of the respondents who participated in the 2023 ride, 6% participated in the 25 mile ride, 37% participated in the 50 mile, 27% participated in the 70, and 30% participated in the 100 mile ride. Eighty-seven percent were very satisfied with the BRB.

Fifty-five percent of the respondents traveled to the West Jefferson area and stayed overnight. Of these, 33% stayed one night, 47% stayed two nights and 20% stayed more than two nights. Thirty-two percent of overnight stays were in a hotel (or B&B), 41% were in a rental house, 10% were at a campsite and 16% stayed with friends and/or family.

Considering those respondents who participated in the 2023 ride and traveled from their homes to the area, average total spending was \$536 during their stay. The top two categories for expenditures were lodging and restaurant meals. For those who spent more than \$0 in these categories, average lodging expenditures were \$310 and average restaurant mean expenditures were \$101.

Summing expenditures in these and other categories over the total number of non-local participants in 2023 yields total direct spending of \$173,940 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 \$255,781.

This is a project of the App State Student Chapter of the NABE and the CERPA Undergraduate Research Program. NABE members who contributed to the 2023 BRB Economic Impact Report are Sitara Brent, Ethan Grant and Lianna Palko-DiStefano. Contact: John Whitehead, Professor of Economics, (828)262-6121 or whiteheadjc@appstate.edu.