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Economic Impact of the 2025 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 2025 ride an online survey was administered to participants using Qualtrics® online survey software. Email invitations were sent to 434 riders who had registered for the BRB after the ride. After the initial email, a reminder was sent to those who had not responded. One hundred forty-three riders completed the survey. The completed response rate is 33%.

Nine percent of the riders participated in the 25 mile ride, 34% participated in the 50 mile ride, 26% participated in the 70 mile ride, and 31% participated in the 100 mile ride. Ninety percent of respondents were very satisfied with the BRB. Sixty-five percent of respondents attended BrutalFest.

Eighty percent of the respondents traveled to Ashe County for the Blue Ridge Brutal. Sixty-nine percent of these travellers stayed overnight. Of these, 41% stayed one night, 41% stayed two nights and 18% stayed more than two nights. Thirty-four percent of overnight stays were in a hotel/motel (or B&B), 49% were in a rental house, and 14% stayed with friends and/or family.

Considering those participants who traveled from their homes to the Ashe County area and stayed overnight, average total spending was \$486 during their stay. The top two categories for expenditures were lodging and restaurant meals. Average lodging expenditures were \$308 and average restaurant mean expenditures were \$100.

Summing expenditures in these and other categories over the total number of non-local participants in 2025 yields total direct spending of \$109,000 associated with the BRB event. Direct spending circulates through the regional economy and generates additional spending through the “multiplier effect.” Using a county specific input-output model the total economic impact is \$151,000.

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 2025 BRB Economic Impact Report are Jeffrey Blackham, Carah Elkins, Ethan Grant, and Alex Pecoraro. Contact: John Whitehead, Professor of Economics, (828)262-6121 or whiteheadjc@appstate.edu.