

# Trail Use in Itasca County

## *2016 Report*

Get Fit Itasca was founded in 2008 with the goal of engaging community members in making healthy choices and participating in activities that improve their quality of life. Since 2010, Get Fit Itasca began collecting survey data annually at the Itasca County Fair to better understand how residents were using the trail system in Itasca County and to identify barriers to physical activity and healthy eating. The following is a summary of the 2016 survey results.

### Methods

Get Fit Itasca has administered the Trail Use Survey annually in August at the Itasca County Fair since 2010. The survey is offered to fair attendees who walk or stop by the Get Fit Itasca booth. Individuals who completed the survey received a choice of either a nectarine or sweet corn as an incentive in 2016. This report summarizes the responses from 291 residents who completed the survey in 2016.

### Survey respondents

From a total of 291 respondents, 170 were Grand Rapids residents, an additional 85 respondents lived in Itasca County (but not in Grand Rapids), and 36 lived outside of Itasca County or did not provide a zip code (Figure 1). The majority of respondents (74%) were female and 25 percent were male (Figure 2). The survey was completed by respondents of all ages. About three out of ten respondents were between age 36 and 55 (35%) or age 56 and older (32%; Figure 3). Fewer were adults age 19 through 35 (21%) or youth age 18 or younger (12%). This report represents the collective findings from all respondents.

#### 1. Zip code of respondents

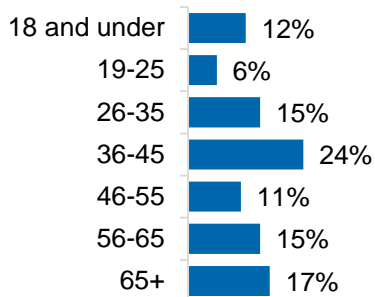
Location (N=291)	N	%
Grand Rapids	170	58%
Itasca County (not Grand Rapids)	85	12%
All others	36	29%

Note. Percentages may be less than 100% due to rounding.

## 2. Gender of respondents

Gender (N=281)	N	%
Female	209	74%
Male	71	25%
Transgender (M→F)	1	<1%
Transgender (F→M)	0	0%

## 3. Age of respondents (N=283)



## Frequency of trail use

Respondents were more likely to regularly use trails in Grand Rapids during the summer months than trails in Coleraine or La Prairie. In the summer months, 78 percent of residents used Grand Rapids trails at least once during the summer, with 35 percent of respondents using the trails at least once a week or more. In contrast, 23 percent of residents reported using trails in Coleraine at least once in the summer. Twelve percent of respondents reported using LaPrairie trails at least once during the summer. (Figure 4).

## 4. Frequency of trail use during the summer months

In the summer months, how often on average do you use the trails or paths?	Grand Rapids (N=290)		Coleraine (N=289)		La Prairie (N=289)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Daily	24	8%	5	2%	7	2%
3-6 times/week	28	10%	7	2%	6	2%
1-2 times/week	49	17%	12	4%	6	2%
At least once/month	51	18%	28	10%	13	5%
At least once/summer	73	25%	67	23%	34	12%
Never	65	22%	170	59%	223	77%

While most residents don't use trails or paths during the winter, Grand Rapids trails were used more often than trails in Coleraine and LaPrairie during these months. Most residents responded not using trails during winter months (57%; Figure 5). Thirty-eight percent of residents reported using trails or paths in Grand Rapids, compared to 7 percent who used trails in Coleraine and 5 percent who used the trails in LaPrairie.

## 5. Frequency of trail use during the winter months

Which of the following trails or paths do you use during the winter months? (N=285)	N	%
Grand Rapids	108	38%
Coleraine	21	7%
LaPrairie	14	5%
I don't usually use trails or paths during the winter months.	162	57%

Note. Respondents were asked to select all that apply.

## Trails in the northeast quadrant of Grand Rapids were used most often by residents in 2016.

Respondents were asked to select the trail or trails they used most often in 2016. Nearly half (48%) of respondents used the Grand Rapids trails in the northeast quadrant most often (Figure 6). About one-quarter of respondents were most likely to use Grand Rapids trails in the southwest (27%), northwest (27%), and southeast quadrants (22%). The Coleraine and La Prairie trails were used by 18 percent and 7 percent of respondents, respectively.

## 6. Portions of the trails used

Throughout the year, what portion(s) of the trails do you use most often? (Quadrants based on Hwy 169 and Hwy 2 locations) (N=214)	N	%
Grand Rapids Southwest quadrant – Area around Southwest Elementary School and Grand Itasca area	57	27%
Grand Rapids Northwest quadrant – Crystal Lake Loop or High School/Legion Park	57	27%
Grand Rapids Southeast quadrant – Area around the YMCA and behind Target	46	22%
Grand Rapids Northeast quadrant – Area around Itasca County Fairgrounds and Sports Complex	102	48%
Coleraine Trails	38	18%
La Prairie Trails	14	7%
Other	17	8%

Note. Respondents were asked to select all that apply. Other responses included Bovey, Gunn Park, Cohasset, Hibbing, Marble, Calumet, Mesabi, and Nashwauk trails.

## How the trails are used

**Most respondents used the trails for recreation and exercise.** Residents used the trails for a variety of purposes. Most residents used the trails for recreation and exercise (76%) rather than to get to a specific destination (8%), while 17 percent used the trails equally for recreation and getting to a specific destination (Figure 7).

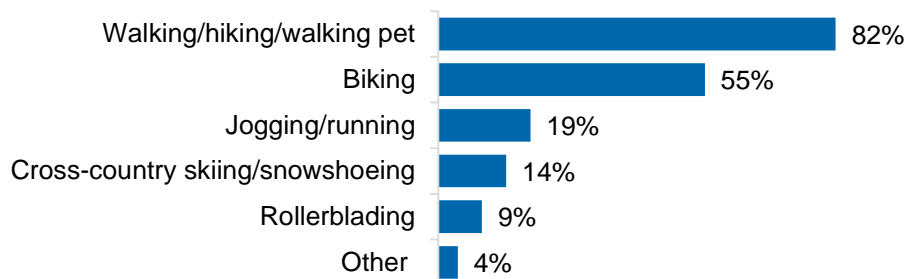
### 7. Purpose of trail use

Throughout the year, do you use the trails and paths in Itasca County more often for recreation or to get to a specific destination? (N=218)	N	%
Recreation/exercise	165	76%
To get to a specific destination	17	8%
Use the trails and paths about the same amount for recreation and to get to a specific destination	36	17%

Note. Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

In 2016, approximately four out of five residents (82%) used the trails for walking, hiking, or walking a pet (Figure 8). Fifty-five percent of residents used the trails for biking. Fewer used the trails for jogging or running (19%) or cross-country skiing or snowshoeing (14%). Respondents also used the trails for rollerblading (9%) and other purposes (4%).

### 8. Throughout the year, what activities do you do on the trails? (N=222)



Note. Respondents were asked to select all that apply. Examples of "other" responses included: snowmobiling, four-wheeling, or geo-caching.

When using the trails to get to a specific destination, respondents were most likely to use the trails to get to city parks, community centers, and libraries. About one-quarter of residents (27%) used the trails to travel to city parks, community centers, and libraries (Figure 9). Respondents also used the trails for a variety of other types of walking or biking trips. Fifteen percent of respondents used the trails to shop downtown. Fewer respondents used the trails to commute to and from work (7%), grocery shopping (8%), and school drop-offs and pick-ups (4%). Overall, however, residents were most likely to use the trails for recreation and/or exercise (84%).

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## 9. Walking and biking trips

Throughout the year, which of the following walking or biking trips do you use the trail system for? (N=214)	N	%
Travel to city parks, community centers, and libraries	57	27%
Downtown shopping	33	15%
Grocery shopping	16	8%
Commute to and from work	15	7%
School drop-offs and pick-ups	9	4%
For recreation/exercise	179	84%
Other	1	1%

Note. Respondents were asked to select all that apply. The "other" response included geocaching.

## Eating healthy foods

**The cost of food makes it difficult for residents to eat healthy.** Survey respondents were asked about what makes it difficult to eat healthy foods on a regular basis. Half of the residents (49%) said that cost made it difficult to eat healthy foods. Twenty-three percent of residents said that they lacked time to prepare healthy foods and 21 percent responded that they lacked motivation to eat healthy foods regularly. One in ten residents (9%) stated that they lacked availability or access to grocery stores and 5 percent of residents responded that they lacked knowledge about nutrition or how to prepare healthy foods. Overall, one out of four Itasca County residents (25%) said that they already ate healthy foods on a regular basis.

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## 10. Barriers to eating healthy foods

What makes it difficult to eat healthy foods on a regular basis? (N=275)	N	%
Cost	136	49%
Lack of time to prepare healthy foods	63	23%
Lack of motivation	58	21%
Lack of availability or access to grocery stores and farmers markets	26	9%
Lack of knowledge about nutrition or how to prepare healthy foods	23	8%
Lack of support from family and friends	14	5%
Other	8	3%
Not applicable/I already eat healthy foods on a regular basis	68	25%

Note. "Other" reasons included healthy foods not being promoted in the community, preference for non-healthy foods, fresh food shelf life, and not being home for meals.

## Areas for future development

### *Walking and biking*

**Residents would be more likely to use trails for recreation or exercise if there were safer and more convenient** facilities for walking and biking in their communities. Most respondents (69%) stated that they would be most likely to make trips for recreation or exercise if there was better walking and biking infrastructure (Figure 11). Over one-third of residents (39%) reported that they would be more likely to travel to city parks, community centers, and libraries. Twenty-six percent of residents said they would be more likely to shop downtown. Twenty percent would be more likely to use it for grocery shopping and 18 percent of residents would be more likely to commute to and from work. One in ten residents responded that they would be more likely to make school drop-offs and pick-ups using the trails (10%).

Nine percent of residents said that safer and more convenient facilities would not affect the likelihood that they would take trips by walking and biking locally.

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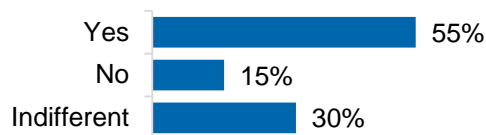
#### 11. Trips by bicycle and walking residents might take if there were safe and convenient facilities in 2016

Throughout the year, which of the following trips would you be more likely to make by biking or walking if there were safe and convenient facilities for you to use? (N=259)	N	%
For recreation/exercise	179	69%
Travel to city parks, communities and libraries	100	39%
Downtown shopping	67	26%
Grocery shopping	52	20%
Commute to and from work	46	18%
School drop-offs and pick-ups	25	10%
Not applicable/I wouldn't take more trips	24	9%

**More than half of all respondents were in support of more bike lanes in Grand Rapids.** A majority of residents who responded to the survey (55%) were in favor of more bike lanes in Grand Rapids (Figure 12). Fifteen percent of residents opposed additional bike lanes. About one-third of respondents (30%) were indifferent about whether more bike lanes should be built.

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#### 12. Would you like to see more bike lanes in Grand Rapids? (N=275)



Residents were asked to identify one or two locations in Itasca County where it is difficult to get around by walking or biking. Respondents noted a number of areas, including specific bridges, roads (e.g., Pokegama Avenue), and intersections (e.g., Highways 169 and 2). Some also described difficulty navigating around bicyclists or bike lanes. Others identified places where trails, bike lanes, or sidewalks were missing, disconnected, or of poor quality. The full list of responses can be found in Appendix A.

### *Healthy food access*

**Residents are interested in accessing healthy foods at farmers markets, mobile markets, and community gardens.** When asked about interest in future projects for increasing access to healthy foods, most residents reported they were interested in farmers markets (95%), mobile markets (81%), and community gardens (75%; Figure 13).

#### 13. Support for projects to increase access to healthy foods

<b>Please rate your level of interest in seeing more of the following projects in your community.</b>	<b>Very interested N (%)</b>	<b>Somewhat interested N (%)</b>	<b>Not very interested N (%)</b>	<b>Not at all interested N (%)</b>	<b>I'm not sure N (%)</b>
Community garden (N=264)	130 (49%)	68 (26%)	27 (10%)	21 (8%)	18 (7%)
A mobile market (N=254)	133 (52%)	73 (29%)	17 (7%)	12 (5%)	22 (9%)
Farmers market (N=271)	193 (71%)	64 (24%)	5 (2%)	1 (<1%)	8 (3%)

Respondents were also asked to provide any other changes they would like to see in their community to increase access to healthy foods. Responses included access to more affordable food, additional grocery stores (co-ops) and farmers markets, and healthy food education for the community and in elementary schools.

*Access to more affordable options like a co-op.*

*Larger farmers market - more local produce - farmers market open more days.*

*Indoor food stand for year round farmers market type vendors.*

*I would love to see curriculum in the elementary schools educating kids about fresh foods.*

*More public education and public health focus to increase demand for healthier eating.*

## *Recommendations*

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are intended to help guide Get Fit Itasca's future efforts to increase opportunities for active living and healthy eating.

- Continue to improve the quality of and access to existing amenities such as sidewalks, trails, and bike lanes, including ways to increase connectivity.
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- Broaden messaging to emphasize biking as an option for commuting and traveling to specific destinations.
- Continue to provide guidance to bikers and motorists about how to navigate bike lanes and share the road.
- Develop educational activities and public awareness campaigns related to healthy eating in schools and the broader community.
- Explore options for increasing the affordability of fresh produce throughout the year, especially through farmers markets, mobile markets, or food co-ops.

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### **For more information**

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# Appendix A: Areas of difficulty for getting around in Grand Rapids

**A1. Please use the space below to identify one or two locations in Itasca County where it is difficult to get around by walking or biking. (Please describe the problem area, being as specific as possible with street or trail names and intersections.)**

1. Getting across the river.
2. Getting to highway 63 trail from the northwest.
3. Along highway 2 and 169, 169 and golf course road.

4 way stop at highway 38 corner of Central School and Hoppertons.

5th street.

5th street to highway 63 S - no good way to cross highway 2 (no connection to trail system). There is a lack of signage identifying trails.

Across the bridges.

Across the bridges.

Across the main bridge.

Across town from south to north.

Airport road.

Around the mall shopping centers [and] Globe Drug.

Bovey to Coleraine.

Bridge across Mississippi on west side of Pokegama where trail connects.

To Blandin Park sidewalk.

By central square mall.

By Holiday and Ground Round.

By Nuch's corner.

By the big chair and by Glens.

By the mall.

By the police department and courthouse.

Central and West.

Central city/township.

Cohasset cut across to Tioga trail.

Construction areas.

Corner of 169 and Highway 2 is a very scary intersection.

County Road 63.

Crossing at 8th avenue and highway 2.

Crossing highway 2 downtown. Deer river.

Deer River, there are not enough safe areas to walk or bike.

**A1. Please use the space below to identify one or two locations in Itasca County where it is difficult to get around by walking or biking. (Please describe the problem area, being as specific as possible with street or trail names and intersections.) (continued)**

Downtown.

Effie no trails to use.

Either one of the bridges across the Mississippi.

From Zorbaz area to town.

Going down Pokegama have to take side roads now.

Going from one end of Rapids - Walmart down to the mall.

Golf course road from the intersection of 169 to airport road.

Highway 169 is a death trap, need a 4 lane.

Highway 2 and 169 by Central School.

Highway 2 and 169 intersection.

Highway 2 doesn't have sidewalks up to LaPrairie only part way.

I only hike once a month, okay as far as I know what I have been on.

In the country - Sunny Beach Road is where I live. I never bike or walk because it is not safe. A bike/walking trail is sooo needed. So many families live on that road.

Intersection on Highway 2 and 169.

It is confusing by the courthouse road with the bike lanes.

LaPrairie connected to Grand Rapids.

LaPrairie to Grand Rapids trails.

Mesabi trail uphill.

Most people in grand rapids don't understand the bike lanes/lines. Plus the town is really spread out.

Move bike lanes from 5th street to 6th street.

Need sidewalks in northwest Grand Rapids neighborhoods.

Northeast.

Northeast 5th street in Grand Rapids.

Northeast 6th to 10th Avenue S.

NW side of town around Murphy elementary there is either no sidewalk or terribly damaged sidewalks.

Only way to get to Rapids on bike is on trail - not always easy to access from Bovey.

Pokegama and Highway 169 and Highway 2 intersection.

Pokegama Avenue.

Pokegama Avenue area by Wells Fargo.

Put up signs to keep bikers off of 4th street.

RC's/ Toivos.

Round about by fairgrounds hard to cross from East sidewalk to lake.

Rural areas.

S Pokegama Avenue.

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**A1. Please use the space below to identify one or two locations in Itasca County where it is difficult to get around by walking or biking. (Please describe the problem area, being as specific as possible with street or trail names and intersections.) (continued)**

School parking.

South end past Zorbaz.

South of pokegama lake there isn't any access to bike trails, have to go on highway.

The back of Hail Lake to get to the high school trails.

The bike lanes that we have in town seem dangerous, traffic on one side and parking on the other.

The corner by Walgreens is bad.

The high school to fairgrounds.

There are few sidewalks near the high school.

There aren't any trails in Deer River area, which would be use by our family.

Through town across Highway 2.

Up Pokegama hill.

Uptown.

Would love to see a bike lane up Highway 38.

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