

Economic Impact of the 2015 Blue Ridge Relay

Boone, NC – The Blue Ridge Relay (BRR) is a long distance relay road race. Teams of 4-12 runners cover 209 miles with a start at Grayson Highlands State Park in Virginia and a finish in downtown Asheville, North Carolina. The 2015 race began on Friday, September 11th and ended on Saturday, September 12th. One hundred and eighty four teams competed.

Following the 2015 race an online survey was administered to participants using Survey Monkey®. Email invitations were sent to 1849 registered runners. After the initial email two reminders were sent. Seven hundred ninety-two runners completed the survey. The response rate was 43%.

Fifty-nine percent of the respondents traveled to the race on Thursday, one day before the start of the race. Of these, 34% stayed in a West Jefferson hotel, 29% rented a cabin, 8% stayed in a Boone hotel, 21% stayed with friends or family, and 5% stayed in a Jefferson hotel. Fifty-three percent ate at a restaurant on Thursday night. Fifty-one percent ate at a restaurant on Friday or Saturday. Eight percent slept in a hotel or other rental on Friday night. Eighty-two percent ate at a restaurant in Asheville on Saturday. Forty-two percent stayed in Asheville overnight.

Fifty percent of the survey respondents provided expenditure estimates. Eleven percent of these respondents (and their friends and family) spent an average of \$13 on entertainment, 92% spent \$77 on food and supplies, 55% spent \$106 on lodging, 61% spent \$47 on travel from home, 63% spent \$101 on car rentals, 84% spent \$66 on restaurant meals, 4% spent \$2 on tourist attractions and 7% spent \$10 on other things.

Assuming that all other participants spent zero on these items, the average total spending is \$423 for each of the 792 survey respondents. Summing this over the total number of participants, 1849, yields total direct spending of \$782,127 associated with the BRR. Direct spending circulates through the regional economy and generates additional spending through the “multiplier effect.” Applying an averaged RIMS II multiplier for the various sectors yields a total economic impact of \$1 million. The 95% confidence interval of this estimate is \$860 thousand to \$1.3 million. If each runner had one more member in their travel party and stayed one additional night, the estimated economic impact would increase to \$1.7 million.

This is a project of the App State Student Chapter of the National Association for Business Economics. Ben Sullivan was the lead analyst for this report. Contact: John Whitehead, Professor of Economics, (828)262-6121 or whiteheadjc@appstate.edu.