

BICYCLE TOURISM?

Some people question why BRASS encourages bicycling on our rural roads. Bicyclists are a bother and a safety concern when our roads are narrow and winding. So, what benefits do bicyclists bring?

Tourism already makes up a significant portion of employment and payroll in Essex County. But, many tourists drive through our area without stopping in order to get to their destination, the high peaks. *"Bicyclists travel for the sake of traveling - the trip rather than the destination is the important part,"* so says Mary Meletiou report titled "The Bicycle Program" (North Carolina Department of Transportation). The means of travel is slower and distances shorter, therefore bicyclists as tourists stay in our area longer.

Studies show *bicycling tourists (whose average household incomes are \$60 - \$70,000) spend an average of \$184 per day, the same as auto tourists.* Fifty percent is food and lodging, and 50% is spent on services and purchases. Bicyclists send home these purchases through pack-and-ship businesses. In 1992, Vermont bicycle tourists brought in an estimated \$13 million, not including what the state earned in rooms and meals tax.

Bicycling provides an ecologically sound alternative to more cars in our watershed. According to the Lake Champlain Committee, *motorists in the Lake Champlain Basin travel roughly six billion miles per year, resulting in 144,000 tons of toxic pollutants and 2.2 million tons of carbon dioxide (the main contributor to global warming) being pumped into the environment (Lake Champlain Committee Newsletter, Summer/Fall 1998).*

Many auto tourists expect chain motels, fast foods, service stations, and night entertainment. *What matters most to bicyclists is scenic beauty, cultural or historical uniqueness, roads with little traffic, and good maps or guides.* Watershed residents often express the desire of keeping our landscapes rural, and our hamlets small and distinct. Auto tourism growth could easily change these desired qualities; bicyclists want what we want.
