The Loop means business

the loop

2015-2017 Report

Stay in the loop on The Loop!

Pima County has a number of options for Loop users to stay on top of news, events and closures on The Loop. You can:

- Like The Loop Facebook page: **https://www.facebook.com/ridetheloop/**
- Bookmark The Loop website: **pima.gov/theloop.** Click on the "Maps" tab for links to a PDF map and a handy interactive map that allows you to search for everything from parks to restrooms to artwork along The Loop.
- Show your love for The Loop and order one of the Endangered Species jerseys, featuring jaguars, roadrunners and Chiricahua leopard frogs, with more designs to come! Details on The Loop website.

PIMA COUNTY

2764-030817-RTP HT

Businesses love The Loop

If you're an avid Loop user like me, you probably spend as much free time as possible out on our 110-plus miles of pathways. Most weekends, you'll find me out pedaling the paths, sometimes decked out in one of our endangered species jerseys.

I'm not alone out there. The Loop is truly a community amenity, with multiple groups and users taking advantage of its car-free paths for everything from morning walks with the dog to a means of commuting to work. In fact, our Department of Environmental Quality is working with 62 major employers within a half mile of The Loop to help employees use The Loop for their commutes. (See more on this effort, Page 12.)

We're finding, though, that The Loop isn't just good for your health. It's good for business.

In 2013, we commissioned a study of The Loop's impact on our economy, environment, community and health. Its results still ring true today.

The study indicated that The Loop provides a significant return on investment for county residents. For every dollar invested in The Loop, Pima County realizes $9.40 in economic benefit. This includes immediate returns such as jobs created and outdoor recreation spending by residents and visitors, as well as long-term benefits such as healthcare cost savings.

County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry sports on endangered species jersey. See ordering information, opposite page.

Our Loop is paying dividends in other ways as well. Arizona has long been a draw for tourists. For those keen on outdoor recreation, The Loop provides yet another reason to come visit Pima County and frequent our shops, restaurants and hotels.

We also are finding The Loop plays a role in our economic development efforts. For example, when we were assisting Caterpillar in relocating their mining division here, The Loop was a big recruitment tool. Similarly, Raytheon – the region's largest private employer who happens to be located just south of the Julian Wash – urges their employees to use The Loop to commute to work.

It's not surprising that more and more people are using The Loop, given that almost half of the Tucson urbanized area lives within one mile of its pathways. If you're not a Loop user, start today. You'll wonder why you waited so long to discover this Tucson treasure.

Sincerely,

Chuck Huckelberry
County Administrator

The Rillito Farmers Market averages about 100,000 visitors a year, thanks in part to steady traffic along The Loop.

Farmers Market thrives, thanks to Loop traffic

Business is booming at the Heirloom Farmers Markets, thanks in no small part to the success of The Loop.

Manish Shah, owner of Maya Tea Company, started off managing a small farmers market with fewer than 20 vendors at St. Philips Plaza along the Rillito River Park back in 2002. Today, Shah oversees three farmers markets — at Trail Dust Town on Tucson's eastside, at Rillito Park and at Steam Pump Ranch along the CDO section of The Loop. But it's the location at Rillito with its draw of horseracing and well-booked soccer fields along the busiest section of The Loop that has the market thriving.

When the Rillito Farmers Market opened in July 2014 in the parking lot outside of the Rillito Grandstands, it boasted about 60 vendors. With the move to the permanent pavilions along The Loop in 2015 the market saw an immediate increase in vendor count with an average of 70-80 vendors on any given weekend selling fresh fruits and vegetables, soaps, breads and more.

"We love it. I could not have asked for a better place to put a farmers market."

Manish Shah, owner of Maya Tea Company

Indeed, a SEED (Sticky Economy Evaluation Device) survey conducted in October 2016 at the Sunday Rillito Marketplace indicated visitors were spending anywhere from $2 to $450 at the market. Eight in 10 said it was their primary reason for visiting the neighborhood.

Shah said The Loop plays a big part in those numbers. While the majority of market shoppers still arrive by car, The Loop is providing safe passage for those who wish to bike there. In addition, many visitors to the market stop for unplanned visits because they spotted the market while biking or walking along The Loop.

Shah said some visitors also will drive to the market, shop for a while, then take a walk along The Loop before heading back home. "It's a real symbiotic relationship between what we bring to the table and what The Loop offers," Shah said.

The numbers back him up. The Rillito Farmers Market averages 1,200 to 1,400 shoppers a week in the summer months, but nearly twice that – about 2,500 a week – in the winter.

"That's about 100,000 visits a year," Shah said. "I think two years ago it was about half that."

17 BUSINESSES USING THE LOOP FOR COMMUTING

Afni Riverside Crossing • Amphitheater School District Office • Banner University Medical Center – Business Office / Cancer Center • Cenpatico Integrated Care • Comcast Oracle • Dillard's – Tucson Mall • Holmes Tuttle Ford – Auto Mall • JC Penney – Tucson Mall • Jim Click Automotive – Auto Mall • M3 Engineering and Technology Corp. • Mintec • Precision Toyota of Tucson • Royal Automotive Group • Sam's Club – Stone Ave. • Tucson Jewish Community Center • Wal-Mart – Wetmore Rd. • Watson Chevrolet

Donation of ramada makes repair easier

Some people value The Loop so much that they're putting private money into it.

An example of that can be found with a new Bike Ramada, located along the Rillito River Park's north bank between La Cholla and Shannon. The covered structure provides a bench and a bike holder, where riders can make minor bike repairs. A private donor funded construction of the Bike Ramada. A second one is in the works along the Santa Cruz River Park and will be funded by the Russell D. Garrett Foundation, Rusty and Mary Garrett.

A cyclist makes her bike repair under a new bike ramada along the Rillito River Park. A private donor funded its construction.

FACTS...

States with the highest levels of bicycling and walking have the lowest levels of obesity, hypertension and diabetes.

More and more groups like Marana's Rotary Club are finding The Loop a great fit for their community events.

Loop proves perfect spot for events and more

On any given day, you can find some pretty amazing things on The Loop: bikers, walkers, horses, oatmeal, chocolate chip, peanut butter.

Yep, we're talking cookies, which was the focus of the Marana Rotary Club's "Tour de Cookie" event last spring, where participants biked or walked from site to site along the Santa Cruz River Park for exercise, sweet treats and a good cause. Participants' $40 registration fee allows them to bike along a 31-mile stretch of the Santa Cruz where 12 community organizations and businesses each had a station to hand out cookies.

More and more community groups are finding The Loop a fun, safe spot to promote their events.

In fact, the County Parks Department issued 40 permits for special events on The Loop in 2016, an 18 percent increase from 2015.

Last fall, for example, The Loop was the site for the first-ever "Loop the Loop" event, in which the County partnered with Perimeter Cycling to raise awareness of the annual El Tour de Tucson ride. The event brought together numerous nonprofit partners such as the Easter Seals Blake Foundation, Susan G. Komen Arizona and Gabriel's Angels, which provides therapy dogs, who set up stations along The Loop.

On other sections of The Loop, nonprofit groups are taking advantage of the river park's car-free paths to stage walk-a-thons, rides and other outings.

The Loop also serves as a training grounds for young people taking part in El Tour. Pima County Bicycle Ambassadors work with students – many of whom get little to no exercise – to get them riding regularly so that they're able to take part in El Tour.

Upgrades add parking, connections

In 2016, the County filled a missing piece of The Loop by adding a segment along the west bank of the Santa Cruz River from Valencia Road north to Drexel Road. Prior to this improvement, The Loop path ended at Drexel Road, which meant there was no connection for users coming from Valencia Road. This upgrade now connects The Loop's northernmost segments all the way down to Valencia Road.

In addition, an off-street paved parking area was added along the path, providing access for Loop users and minimizing parking in residential areas. It also provides a staging area for special events along The Loop, such as Tour de Cookie.

The "Loop the Loop" event featured a dozen nonprofits set up along all sections of the river park.

FACTS...

A study analyzing employment that results from the design and construction of infrastructure projects found that bicycle-related projects created the most jobs. Loop Construction has created 9.6 jobs for every $1 million in construction spending.

16 BUSINESSES USING THE LOOP FOR COMMUTING

Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind • C3 / Customer Contact Channels • Carondelet Health Network – Forbes • Carondelet St. Mary's Hospital • City of Tucson Downtown • Comcast Cable Communications • Convergys • El Rio Health Center

Pima Community College Community Campus • Pima Community College Desert Vista Campus • Pima County Downtown • Sam Levitz – Prince Rd. • State of Arizona Main Complex • Target – Irvington Rd. • U.S. Census Bureau • Wal-Mart – Marana and Valencia

Commuting taking off

The County's Loop commuting effort has taken hold at iQor, a customer-support center for a variety of cable providers and media companies located along the Pantano south of Broadway. A number of their employees commute to work on The Loop and arrive energized and ready to start their workday, said Jeffrey Ryan, iQor's director of operations.

Since Pima County's Department of Environmental Quality launched the commuting program (see details. Page 12), iQor has been an enthusiastic supporter, said Skye Siegel, program coordinator.

"They're setting a great example for other major employees near The Loop to follow," Siegel said.

It's just one of many healthy options the company offers employees, who spend a good portion of their day in front of a computer screen. From weight-loss challenges and hikes to fitness offerings at local gyms, the company signed on to The Loop commuting effort to offer alternatives to conventional modes of transportation, said Ryan.

"So many of us have sedentary jobs," Ryan said. "Offering these kinds of health-conscious programs helps our employees and helps our bottom line."

Pantano projects will complete Loop

Several projects along the Pantano River Park have brought The Loop even closer to the finish line:

The first project completed the section of the Pantano River Park between Kenyon Drive and Broadway Boulevard. This segment connects to a half-mile section north of Broadway and a three-mile segment south of Kenyon Drive, linking the Harrison Greenway and the Fantasy Island mountain bike trails.

Recent bridge construction has also added pedestrian and bicycle connections to Udall Park from the Pantano.

Construction between Speedway Boulevard and 5th Street connected existing segments of the Pantano River Park with a pedestrian bridge that closed a critical gap along the Pantano Wash.

The Pantano Wash Bank Protection Project between Fort Lowell Park and Tanque Verde Road will include 1.5 miles of new soil cement bank protection and 1.9 miles of paved pathways, among other amenities. The Tanque Verde area of The Loop, east of Craycroft, is the last section that remains undeveloped. Construction there could start sooner than later, though, pending an agreement with the developer for the property along the north bank of the Tanque Verde Creek.

10 BUSINESSES USING THE LOOP FOR COMMUTING

Agero • BE Aerospace • Expert Global Solutions • Fry's – Speedway Blvd. • GEICO Direct • Home Depot – Broadway • iQor • Lowe's Home Improvement - Speedway • Scripps TV Station Group • Wal-Mart – Kolb Rd.

The Loop means home

Buyers drawn by healthy living

If anyone can testify to The Loop's impact on the economic well-being of Pima County, it's Damion Alexander.

For Alexander, The Loop – quite literally – means business.

A real estate agent with Long Realty, Alexander touts The Loop as a key marketing tool when he's selling homes. An avid cyclist himself, Alexander uses The Loop to commute to work and often assists clients who only want to see homes close to The Loop or with easy access to it. He's even shown properties to clients on bikes.

"I am seeing more and more people moving to Tucson, and they're saying The Loop is a deciding factor," Alexander said. Last year, for example, he sold a half-million-dollar home to a woman from outside the Tucson area who came to the area specifically for cycling.

Real estate agent Damion Alexander says The Loop is a huge draw for home buyers wanting to live near the shared-use path.

FACTS...

Running errands by bicycling or walking would save residents approximately 500 gallons of fuel and 10,000 pounds of CO_2 emissions each year.

Doug Dylla and his spouse, Marcia Nedland, are management consultants in Ithaca, N.Y., who seven years ago decided they wanted to spend the month of March living and working from a warm location.

"We researched a number of cities and chose Tucson for its sunny climate and its reputation as a good cycling city," Dylla said.

They found a furnished apartment along the Rillito River Park, cycled along The Loop every day and enjoyed

Continued on Page 10

John McDowell is helping get a 'Loop' built in Wisconsin.

The Loop means imitation

Loop lessons exported

They say imitation is the most-sincere form of flattery. If so, look no further than Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

That's where Wisconsinites soon hope to bike, run, snowshoe and cross-country ski on their own version of The Loop, thanks to the perseverance of a resident who splits his time between the Sonoran Desert and the lakeside Wisconsin town.

John McDowell, 66, has been biking along the Rillito River Park for the last six years after hearing from a friend about the bicycle-friendly region. A retired schoolteacher and avid cyclist, McDowell and his spouse are winter visitors who fell in love with The Loop. McDowell became convinced Fond du Lac could do something similar.

He's making progress with government officials, private businesses and nonprofits toward construction of their own Loop. They even borrowed the name.

"We owe Pima County a debt of gratitude for their leadership in showing us how to become a dynamic Loop city," McDowell said.

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The Loop also is getting a second look from Down Under.

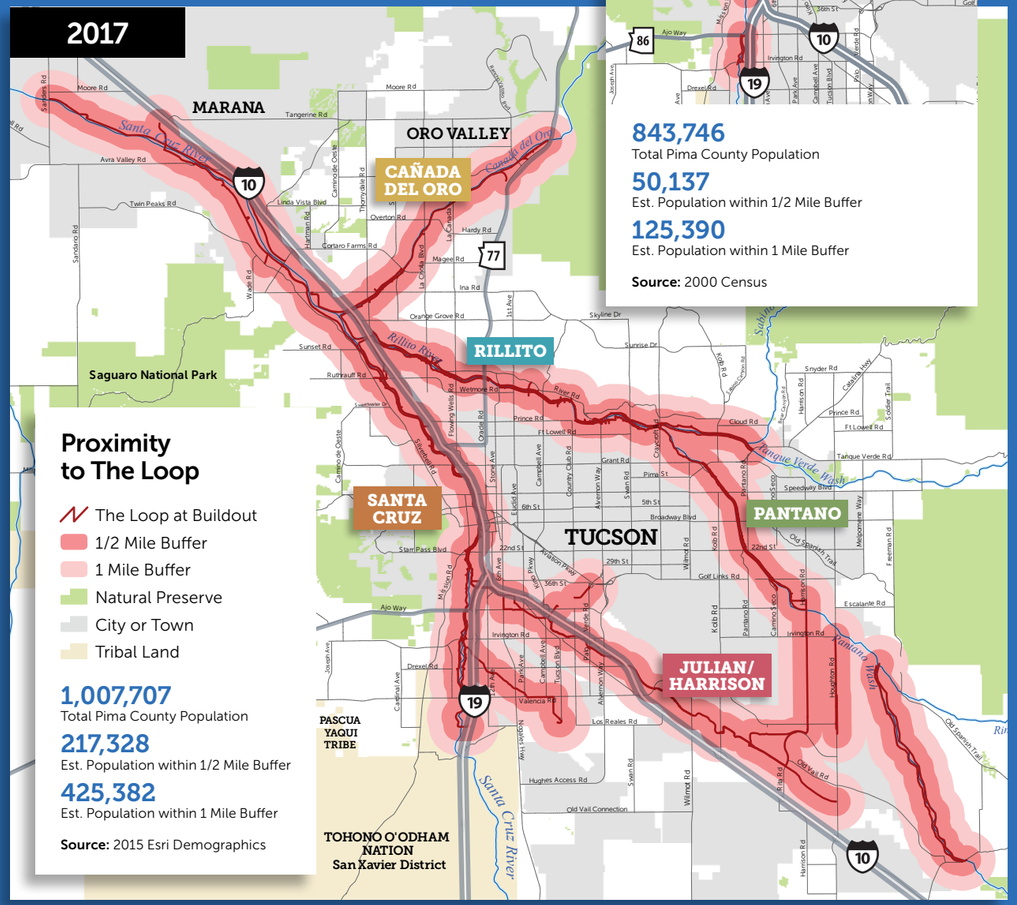
A delegation of Australians visited Pima County for a look at bike and pedestrian programs and transportation safety initiatives.

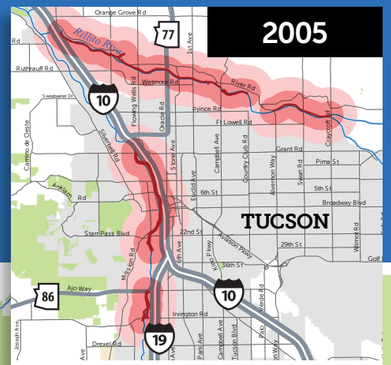
Matthew Zoll, who heads the Transportation Department's Bicycle and Pedestrian Program, took the visitors out on The Loop for a morning ride.

"The Australians greatly enjoyed their outing on The Loop and spoke highly of the Loop system and the County's education efforts," Zoll said.

12 years later

Now that The Loop is almost complete, it's more accessible than ever to a growing segment of the population. Indeed, 42 percent of the metro population today lives within one mile of The Loop, compared with just 15 percent in 2005.





The Loop means business

Business is hopping at local brew house

Folks cycling or walking along the Rillito River Park who have a hankering for a sudsy beverage or just want to be inspired by some really cool art are taking a short detour off The Loop to Metal Arts Village.

The mix of craftspeople and brewers at the village, located less than half a mile south of The Loop, have seen an uptick in business, thanks to their proximity to the path.

Jessie Mance Zugerman, who owns the Tucson Hop Shop with her spouse, David, estimates that at least 15 percent of their business is Loop-related.

"Local cyclists come in to our business from The Loop, as well as people that live nearby that walk or ride into the shop," she said.

Continued on Page 11

The Loop also factored into the Zugermans' home-buying decision.

John Pineiro trains for running events on The Loop.

FACTS...

For the price of a single mile of a four-lane urban highway – approximately $50 million– dozens of miles of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure can be built.

NUMBERS HELP TELL THE STORY

The Loop's effect on the region was shared when the county released "The Loop – Economic, Environmental, Community, and Health Impact Study." Among the findings:

- The National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Home Builders found that residential properties increase 10 to 20 percent in value the closer they are to green space.
- Homeowners are willing to pay a premium of $9,000 on houses that are within 10,000 feet of bike paths.
- Home in Indiana sold for at least 10 percent more when located near a trail, while ones near a scenic trail in Ohio sold for $7 more for every foot closer the property was located to the trail. In Pima County that would create an additional $300 million for homes adjacent to The Loop, which in turn creates in excess of $3 million in property tax revenue.

Continued from Page 7

it so much that one month became two, then three.

In 2015, the couple bought a condo just off the path and plan to live in Tucson four to six months a year, operating their respective consulting businesses out of their home. The Loop helped seal the deal, Dylla said.

"While we really enjoy Tucson overall, I suspect we would not have come back to Tucson every year if not for the Loop."

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John Pineiro moved to Tucson from southeastern New Mexico and – like Dylla and his spouse — chose his home for its proximity to The Loop.

As a runner, Pineiro uses The Loop to train for events. He's close enough that he can get in a quick run before work, but says he also uses the pathway when he travels to restaurants, grocery stores, or "any local event that would be hard to find parking or would be difficult to bring a car," Pineiro said.

He and his spouse also use The Loop to commute to work and to take leisurely walks and rides on weekends.

"We take out-of-town visitors on it as an area attraction. They are always impressed and wish they had something similar in their town," Pineiro said.

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Community is the word that comes up time and again when Annie Todd talks about The Loop.

She and her spouse also made proximity to The Loop a priority when they bought their home along the Pantano River Park in October 2013. He's an avid cyclist and she's a walker and aerobic exerciser, so a good public walking path was at the top of her list.

"I wanted to be able to walk someplace where I could feel safe, come to know familiar faces on my daily walks, and eventually build a social community. We both decided The Loop was the answer," Todd said.

She loves The Loop's proximity to parks and businesses as well as its ability to serve as a focal point for fundraising events.

"The Loop is used by so many people! Every day, all day long. The Loop literally brings Tucson together!!"

The Zugermans have seen a steady flow of business, thanks to The Loop.

Continued from Page 9

Establishing the Hop Shop at Metal Arts Village was no accident, Zugerman said.

"We knew that cyclists would be a huge target demographic for our business, and so proximity to this major cycling artery was cornerstone in finding a location for Tucson Hop Shop. We feel so lucky to have found a spot less than a mile from the Loop entrance at Dodge Boulevard," she said.

The location has been key to the success of the shop, which opened in October 2015. Zugerman said, "Business is great and continues to grow." December 2016 was their best month to date.

The Tucson Hop Shop regularly sponsors events like a drop-in film festival featuring bikes, brews and food trucks. Patrons also are encouraged to visit fellow tenants of Metal Arts Village, which includes metal workers, sculptors, a stained-glass artisan and a tattoo artist.

The Zugermans are such fans of The Loop that they purchased a home along the Rillito River Park west of First Avenue, which gives them an easy three-and-a-half-mile commute to work by bike along The Loop.

"We are a very active family, and love the urban, car-free network that The Loop connects us to. The appeal of being able to ride our bikes to grocery stores, parks, farmers markets, and local businesses SAFELY was a huge draw," in where to buy a home for her spouse and two young daughters, she said.

Zugerman is optimistic about The Loop's future.

"We strongly feel that The Loop has the potential to really become a nationally ranked alternative transportation route, alongside the Cape Cod Rail Trail, the San Antonio Riverwalk, and the Willamette River Bike Path, and we'd love to be around when that happens."

IBM employees Mike McIntosh (left) and Kevin Kartchner have commuted by bike for years.

Loop commuters extol benefits of bicycling

More than five dozen area businesses are partnering with Pima County's Department of Environmental Quality on a campaign to "Use The Loop for Your Commute." Cycling to work saves employees' money, helps the environment and means businesses have healthier employees.

DEQ partnered with the Pima County Department of Transportation, Pima Association of Governments (PAG) and the City of Tucson to promote the effort. To date, 62 major employers (those employing at least 100 people) at 76 separate locations within approximately half a mile of The Loop are promoting its use to their employees.

The companies are handing out The Loop pocket maps and regional maps, promotional fliers and "Healthy Air is in Our Hands" drive-less pledge cards.

Mike McIntosh has been commuting to work at IBM on his bike since 2008. For years, 90 percent of his riding was along Kolb Road, but when the Julian Wash opened, he was able to hop on The Loop for part of his commute. When the Harrison Greenway opened in 2016, he eliminated all Kolb riding and takes The Loop almost all the way from the University of Arizona Tech Park.

"The Harrison route added another mile to the total distance, but it's much safer and more scenic, so well worth it," McIntosh said.

Fellow IBMer Kevin Kartchner has been commuting by bike to work since 2001.

"The advantages (of The Loop) far outweigh the extra mileage and time," he said.

McIntosh encourages county residents to stop seeing bike commuting as either impractical or unsafe. With the proper clothing, equipment and mindset, anything is possible, he says.

"At some point you have to suspend your disbelief and just try it for a while. At least some who do will find the sheer pleasure of riding more than makes up for any extra time and effort. I sure did."

FACTS...

Nearly half of urban household trips in America are two miles or fewer – about a 20-minute bike ride. Communities with safe bicycling and walking options promote a richer and denser mix of residences and businesses.

17 BUSINESSES USING THE LOOP FOR COMMUTING

Julian Wash: Avalon Southwest Health and Rehabilitation • Banner University Medical Center South • Community Food Bank • Hensley Beverage Co. • Pueblo Magnet High School • R & R Products • Sears Holdings Corp. • SI Inc. • Southwest Gas Corp. • Southern Arizona VA Health Care System • Sun Van PTM Paratransit of Tucson. **Harrison Greenway:** Arizona Canning Co. • Citi • IBM • OptumRx • Raytheon Missile Systems • Target.com

Upgrade fills gap, aids Davis-Monthan

In May, County officials celebrated completion of yet another section of The Loop along the Pantano River Park and Harrison Greenway.

The project completed the Harrison Greenway portion by filling a 3.2-mile gap between Irvington Road and Mesquite Elementary. Project funding came from several sources, including Department of Transportation Highway User Revenue Funds, a Military Installation Fund Grant, and 2004 General Obligation bonds. The Harrison Greenway also provides a buffer to the adjacent Davis-Monthan Air Force Base (DMAFB), a key employer in southern Arizona and a critical component of the region's aerospace and defense industry. This path shifts future residential development from the DMAFB fence while also protecting the Base's only shooting range. Preserving this open space near DMAFB also benefits the community by reducing or eliminating long-term exposure to high noise levels and the risks associated with Base operations.

Pathway construction is preserving important open space near Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.

The manager of the Holiday Inn Express along the CDO says dozens of guests each week use The Loop.

Loop service, anyone? Hotel touts path's use

The Holiday Inn Express and Suites in Oro Valley sits near the northernmost reach of The Loop, along a stretch of the Cañada del Oro River Park about a mile south of the Oro Valley Marketplace. The pathway's proximity to the hotel makes it a very convenient and attractive amenity for guests.

"It's used quite often," said the hotel's General Manager, Frank Quijada. "Once they know they've got it handy, their first questions are: 'Where does it take you; how long is it?'"

Quijada and his staff let guests know there's a lot to see within just a few miles of the hotel. "And, obviously, (the path) goes quite a bit further."

Dozens of the hotel's guests use The Loop each week, according to Quijada. Most of them are on it for exercise — either walking or jogging — but many also follow the path to nearby restaurants or local attractions such as Historic Steam Pump Ranch, just a quarter-mile south along the east bank of the Cañada del Oro.

His guests' interest in The Loop has prompted Quijada to ask the County's Bicycle and Pedestrian Program to keep replenishing his supply of Loop maps.

Among the visitors who enjoy having The Loop is Dorothy Peters, who came to Pima County on vacation from the Kansas City area. She checked out The Loop in January, walking about a mile in either direction from the hotel.

"It's nice to have a place to walk. It nice that it's easy to get on and get off," she said, adding she especially enjoyed the scenic views offered by the CDO River Park and the large amount of wildlife - particularly the birds. She planned to recommend the experience to friends and family because they have nothing similar to The Loop back home.

A few hotel guests ride bicycles and go much farther afield. Most of them use their own but a few arrange rentals to be dropped off at the Holiday Inn. Enough have done that to prompt Quijada to explore the idea of buying a set of bikes for the hotel to offer them as a regular service.

"I've been considering the possibility of buying a couple of beach cruisers, just to have them out here," he said. "I've brought it up to hotel ownership to buy them, have them on-site."

It's not just hotel guests who use The Loop. Quijada said at least one staff member, an assistant GM who lives nearby, regularly uses the path to commute to work – either by foot or bicycle – depending on time and the weather.

Quijada would like to see the pathway become more accessible to his guests. Currently, the easiest access path is on the north end of the hotel property, at the opposite end from the main entrance. He hopes someday to see one more dedicated entry nearer to the lobby.

12 BUSINESSES USING THE LOOP FOR COMMUTING

Costco Wholesale - Northwest • Hilton Tucson El Conquistador Golf & Tennis • Home Depot - Marana • Home Depot – Oro Valley • Honeywell Aerospace Tucson – Oracle • Omni Tucson National Golf Resort and Spa • Oro Valley Hospital • Pima Community College Northwest Campus • Securaplane Technologies • Simpleview • Ventana Medical Systems • Wal-Mart – Oro Valley

Construction adds 1.6 miles to path

The 2016 construction completed 1.6 miles of river park pathway between La Cholla and La Cañada. It connects the existing 2.68 miles of river park on the east bank of the CDO from La Cañada to First Avenue in the Town of Oro Valley with 3.05 miles of the Loop river park on the east bank of the CDO from Thornydale to Hardy Road. The 1.6-mile link creates a continuous 10.9 miles of Loop path along the CDO.

That construction has completed what many call the most beautiful sections of The Loop. The more ambitious riders now can pedal from downtown on the Santa Cruz River Park all the way to Catalina State Park.

Upgrades have created a continuous 10.9-mile path along the CDO, one of the most beautiful sections of The Loop.

FACTS...

Providing safe alternate transportation modes can reduce roadway congestion, which ultimately reduces future transportation costs.

For these siblings, Loop rides offer family bonding time.

Voices from The Loop: Walkers, riders share stories

Regina Suitt and her twin brother, Rod Navin, used to have trouble connecting for weekend bike rides. He lives near Orange Grove and Shannon Roads in northwest Tucson and she's at Magee Road and La Cañada Drive. Both had to drive with their cars to a central meeting spot to jump on The Loop.

But now that the section of the CDO River Park between La Cholla Boulevard and La Cañada has been completed, the two can more easily access The Loop. The rides, said Suitt, who works in the Adult Basic Education Program at Pima Community College, provide far more than exercise.

"We are twins and have always been close, but we could never seem to find more than a bit of phone or text time every week to connect," she explained. "We started riding four years ago as something fun to do, get a bit healthier perhaps, but what it's turned into is real quality therapy time for just the two of us.

"We have biked through health issues, career worries and both parents passing," she continued. "It is three dedicated hours that just the two of us have to ride and talk and laugh and cry."

Her brother had a knee replacement two years ago, which limited some of their riding, but the twins trained on The Loop for the 28-mile El Tour de Tucson ride held each November. Next year, Navin said they hope to up it to 38 miles.

Part of their training is exploring different parts of The Loop, he said. The siblings have ridden from the Pima County Jail, where Navin works as an intake support specialist, north along the Santa Cruz River to Marana, along the entire CDO River Park to Catalina State Park and along the Rillito river path from Orange Grove down to Craycroft.

"We also hope to ride the new path from the jail south towards Valencia," Navin said. "We both also love The Loop because you can ride many miles and not have to worry about vehicle traffic."

And that lack of traffic makes their bonding time safer, and more special.

"I really miss it," says Regina, "when something conflicts."

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At 73 years old and several years into retirement, Rick Metcalf has no plans to slow down and settle into a sedentary lifestyle.

"Every year I try to set some goal for myself in physical activity," Metcalf said.

Rick Metcalf spent 2016 walking every mile of The Loop.

Often times, Metcalf's goals focus on one of his favorite pastimes: Walking.

For instance, Metcalf set out to log 10,000 steps daily – covering nearly 4 and half miles each day for a year. Another year, he sought to locate and photograph 100 public art installments.

A longer-term goal was to trek the highest point in each of 50 states. To date, he's summited 16 high points.

"That's a long-term life goal," he said, adding that he hopes to reach at least half of the high points in his lifetime.

In 2016, Metcalf decided to add The Loop to his list of goals.

"I've spent a lot of time walking The Loop over the years," he said.

Despite having walked many stretches of Pima County's multi-use trail, Metcalf knew there were many portions of The Loop he hadn't reached.

In addition to his daily step count, Metcalf decided to walk every section of The Loop in 2016.

His spouse, Kris, walked many portions of The Loop with him. On others, Kris drove Metcalf to his starting point and met with him later at his destination.

In 53 trips, averaging a little more than 2 miles each, Metcalf completed his urban adventure.

Along the way, he kept a journal of the days, locations, distances and wildlife sightings. On a map of The Loop he highlighted each section he completed.

Metcalf's appreciation for The Loop as a public amenity grew with each new leg of his journey.

Portions of The Loop on the southeast side were particularly enjoyable, Metcalf said.

"I think it's a wonderful idea, and it's so well-maintained," he said. "It's just extraordinary."

the loop

The Loop is a key amenity that helps attract and retain high-wage employers, improves the value of adjacent lands, and enhances the quality of life and health for our community.
It generates revenues, promotes tourism, and improves the tax base, providing a growing source of income for the entire region. The Loop connects people and communities to the places where we live, work, shop, learn and play.

PIMA COUNTY

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Pima County Administrator
Chuck Huckelberry