

Trail use increased last year

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More than 25,000 people passed by Fredericton's trail visitor centre at 180 Station Rd. in Devon last June, which was 3,800 more than recorded in 2010.

Overall use of the city's trail system is up nine per cent in 2011 over 2010, said visitor centre manager Cathy Calhoun.

Those numbers are derived from counts taken between May 5 and Oct. 10 when the visitor centre is staffed.

Calhoun provided statistics to the city's community services committee on Thursday.

Calhoun said 53 per cent of the users counted were pedestrians, 45 per cent cyclists and about two per cent use skateboards or roller blades.

Calhoun said since the trails near the visitor centre were paved, there's also been an increase in group outings by special needs individuals and persons with disabilities.

The trail visitor centre is used as a rest stop and visitor information centre by both local residents and tourists. Calhoun said water is available for walkers and their pets and complimentary tea and coffee. In 2011, the centre hosted an exhibit of historical photographs and staff maintain a log of where visitors come from and their overall impressions of the city.

Calhoun said the centre is used as a gathering spot for the Nordic Walking Group, Moms on the Move, Wednesday Walk with Mayor Woodside and for events hosted by the Fredericton Trail Coalition. The trails system also hosts a number of yearly events such as the Fredericton Marathon, the Duncan Hadley Relay, Folks on Spokes, the Terry Fox Run, International Trails Day and Trail Mix.

"The city's trail network has proved itself as a key transportation link during seasonal road work and has become a significant recreation resource," said Coun. Steven Hicks, chairman of the city's community services committee. "It's great to see residents and tourists taking advantage and enjoying this important asset."

"The trail building is a gem," said Coun. Eric Megarity, adding the city's walking paths are the backbone of the community.

Fredericton has in excess of 80 kilometres of non-motorized multi use trails, which are accessible to pedestrians and non-emission mobility assisted devices such as motorized wheelchairs.

During the winter months, the majority of the paved section is kept clear of snow while other trails are groomed for skiers, snowshoers and walkers.

<http://www.telegraphjournal.com/tjonline/thedailygleaner/8823707-266/trail-centre-pugh-visitor.html.csp>