"Build it, they are already coming": Railfan Tourism in North America

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Abstract

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Across North America many rail enthusiasts are engaged in watching and photographing trains. Most often these aficionados go unnoticed, but increasingly small cities and towns are accommodating these "railfans". A review of the academic literature reveals that although there are many books, websites, and magazines dedicated to railfans, virtually no academic research has been conducted on who railfans are, what their economic impact is and how rural communities seek to exploit this niche market. The purpose of this research is to fill this void by examining the process and resulting economic impact of railfan tourism development.

This research is exploratory in nature and utilized a mixed methodology with Charmaz (2006) grounded theory approach as the methodological framework. A mixed methodology was used to allow for the generation of both generalizable and specific information. The generalizable portion (phase one) consisted of a quantitative online survey of *Trains Magazines* (2001) railfan hot spot locations; of the identified 100 hot spot locations, 79 were places that could be contacted. The economic development officer/ tourism development director associated with each of the 79 communities were emailed directly to ask for their participation in the online survey; 49 communities participated. The survey focused on determining whether communities were aware of railfan tourism, how they catered to this niche market and ascertained an estimation of the economic impact that railfans have on their communities.

Results from the 49 responses to the survey were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS and determined that railfan tourism has been undertaken in various forms, funded in various ways and as a result, have resulted in varying economic impact. A further examination revealed that those communities who had developed railfan parks received the greatest economic benefit; these communities also advertise to railfans, create signage, create railway maps of locations to view trains and put together railfan packages. Railfan tourism was found to be an economic diversification strategy for most communities (beyond those with railfan parks) as it generates business for hotels/motels and food establishments, which in turn increases tax revenues generated in the area.

In Phase two of the project, structured, face to face interviews in three case study communities were conducted. The communities included Rochelle, Illinois which is the first community to build a park specifically for railfans, Fostoria, Ohio which is currently in the process of developing a railfan park, and Deshler, Ohio which has an existing railfan park. The purpose of these interviews was to determine the process and outcomes associated with their railfan park development. A total of 12 interviews were conducted across the 3 case study communities.

The results from the interviews were analyzed by thematically coding like responses to the structured interview questions to create a detailed story of each community in terms of how they created the railfan park and the economic impact they received as a result. Through examining the process and outcomes of all 3 communities it was determined that although the development of railfan tourism has occurred in various ways, there are common themes that emerge. First, the pattern of development differs between communities which want to develop a railfan park for tourism and economic purposes and one in which the land was donated to accommodate railfans. Second, although the ways parks are developed for tourism and economic purpose vary in terms of how they got the idea, development costs, funding and the economic impact, they both follow the same fundamental process of a) they noticed railfans and discussed catering to them, b) purchased land where the most trains could be seen to develop a park c) received funding to support the development and d) receive an economic impact in the form of increased tax dollars being spent and local business getting new customers.

The results from both phases of this research were combined to identify common themes and unique aspects regarding railfan tourism development. Through comparing unique aspects and commonalities to relevant literature a conceptual understanding of railfan tourism was developed, followed by the creation of an ideal railfan tourism development model that follows the Reid et al. (1993) community tourism development planning model.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Across North America (and other parts of the world), many rail enthusiasts are engaged in watching and photographing trains. Most often these aficionados go unnoticed, but increasingly small cities and towns are accommodating these "railfans" by developing and building railfan parks. As a railfan, I have witnessed this phenomenon and wondered if there were any studies regarding this development. A review of the academic literature revealed that although there are many books, websites, and magazines dedicated to railfans, virtually no academic research has been conducted on this phenomenon. The purpose of this exploratory research, therefore, is to fill part of this void by examining the process through which railfan parks are created and the economic impact that their creation has on communities.

Given the lack of academic investigation in this area, this research is exploratory in nature and follows a mixed methods (Doyle, Brady & Burn, 2009; Creswell, 2009) and grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). As such, the thesis is not organized in a traditional manner; instead, it begins by providing the research context, a summary of the available research (academic and gray), and includes a definition of a 'railfan'. Chapter Two outlines the mixed methodology that guided the research, followed by two chapters which provide the results of the two-phased investigation. A discussion of the findings with reference to relevant literature, resulting in the development of a conceptual framework and ideal railfan tourism development process is identified in Chapter Five. In the sixth and final chapter, an overall summary of the research is provided.

1.1 Who is a railfan?

Setting the context of this research requires beginning with a working definition of a railfan. There are different terms used throughout the developed world to describe a railfan, such as a trainspotter, foamer, railnut, and train enthusiast. Although the terms are understood by those "in the know" (i.e. other railfans), academics have not ventured into the definition game. My previous work (Stefanovic, 2009) examining the characteristics of railfans focused on defining and investigating railfans. The term "railfan" is subjective and therefore difficult to define because of the varied activities railfans engage in. For example, there are those who photograph, videograph, or simply watch trains, others who build model trains, some study rail history, and others collect train related memorabilia. Each of these types can be further subdivided; for example, rail photographers can be broken down into sub-groups that consist of those who photograph one of scenic (i.e scenic locations), roster (i.e photos of each locomotive on the roster), unique or special paint schemes. Clearly, the term "railfan" involves many different variations and responses collected previously illustrated that railfans themselves cannot agree on a single definition (Stefanovic, 2009). This issue is further complicated by the fact that interest in trains is a world wide phenomenon and the way in which this interest is expressed varies from country to region. Despite these differences and challenges, and based on my previous research, I have developed a working definition of a railfan that will be used for the purposes of this research: "A railfan is someone who has an overall interest in trains and who enjoys watching the

day-to-day activities of the railway either during their leisure time or while on vacation" (Stefanovic, 2009, pg 12).

1.2 Situating the Research

To better understand the rationale behind this project and the chosen methodology, I will first situate myself within the research. I am a railfan and have been since childhood. My father was a railfan and, as a child, I accompanied him whenever he went to watch and photograph trains. As a result, I became interested in trains and played with *Thomas the Tank Engine* toys¹. As I grew, so did my interest in trains, and "railfanning" became a father and son tradition. Many of my family vacation destinations were chosen to see trains or involved them in some way. At the time, I did not realize it, but those family trips set the foundation for this research.

I knew from our travels that there were other railfans besides my Dad and I in Canada and the United States. I also noticed from our travels that cities and towns were developing railfan parks to cater to railfans. This awareness led me to wonder why this choice was made, what process for development was undertaken and what the economic impact was for the community. When I tried to investigate these questions, I found that although there are many books, websites and magazines dedicated to railfans, virtually no academic research has been conducted that examines this phenomenon. As a result, for my honours thesis I undertook an initial study of railfans that sought to establish a

¹ Thomas the Tank Engine was a fictional book and T.V show written by Wilbert Awdry about Thomas, a steam engine and his locomotive friends, working on a fictional railway.

demographic profile of railfans, including who they are, what they do, where they go and why, how much money they spend and what level of dedication they have (Stefanovic, 2009), as summarized in the next section.

1.3 Railfan Demographic Profile

During 2008 I conducted a research project to determine the demographic and behavioural characteristics of railfans. I created an online survey that was made available to railfans for 3 months. During this period, links to the survey were posted in online railfan groups as well as in *Railfan* and *Railroad Magazine*, two publications dedicated to the topic. In total 1,475 railfans completed the survey. The results provided a general picture of railfans, though it was evident that I captured the specialized end of the railfan spectrum.

This research illustrated that although there are a number of motivations for becoming a railfan, most do so because of a general interest in trains, which they pursue in a variety of forms (mostly watching and photographing trains). Railfans tend to commit to this hobby for most of their adult life (averaging 35 years). They also give it a lot of time, on average taking pictures or watching trains approximately 22 times per month. Railfanning was also found to be very important to respondents (Figure 1.1), with the majority stating that a lot of their life is organized around it, they enjoy discussing it with their friends, they can really be themselves when they engage in it, and lastly they feel railfanning says a lot about who they are.

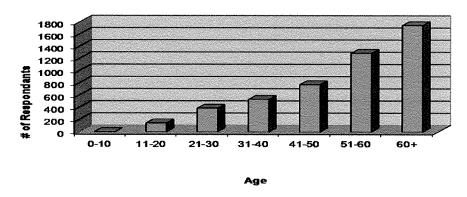
900 800 700 600 ■ Disagree & Agree 500 □ Neutral 400 Agree & Somewhat agree 300 200 100 Railfanning l enjoy When I I identify my life is is verv discussing participate in with people says a lot important to organized trains with railfanning I and the about w ho I me around my friends can really images am railfanning be myself associated w ith railfanning

Figure 1.1- Railfanning importance

Stefanovic (2009)- Railfanning Importance

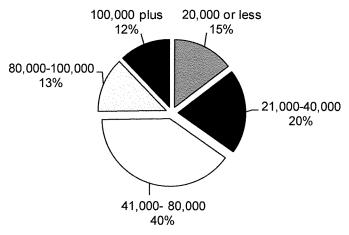
In terms of demographics, railfans were found to be predominately male (97.88%), mostly (47%) over 50 years of age (Figure 1.2) and with an average income between \$41,000 and \$80,000 (Figure 1.3). Importantly, the research determined that railfans are distributed throughout the world but are predominantly from western nations, illustrating the magnitude of this niche group.

Figure 1.2- Railfan Age



Stefanovic (2009)- Railfan Age

Figure 1.3- Railfan Income



Stefanovic (2009) - Railfan Income

When engaging in the activity of railfanning, 47% of respondents indicated that they prefer to railfan by themselves, while 32% railfanned with other railfans, and 21% railfanned with their family, illustrating that more than 50% of railfans undertake the activity with someone else. If railfans indicated that they railfan with their family, they where then asked what their family members did while they were railfanning. The results indicated that family members visited local attractions and went shopping.

In terms of destinations visited, railfans stated they travel to hundreds of locations all over North America for three reasons:

- 1) the number of trains that can be seen in one 24 hour period;
- 2) for a unique view from which to photograph and watch; and
- 3) for the variety railroads in one location.

To get to these railfan destinations, the vast majority (over 93 %) of respondents were willing to travel at least 3 hours, with 54% of these willing to

travel 6 or more hours. When travelling, railfans stated that they incorporated railfanning as part of their vacation plans regardless of the primary purpose of their vacation. While at railfan destinations, respondents stated they almost exclusively engaged in railfanning, but when they are not railfanning they reported that they go out for dinner, visit local attractions and occasionally go shopping. Details of railfan vacations included:

- the average distance traveled (in miles) was 1200 with the maximum being 25,000;
- there was an average of 5 people involved per trip;
- the average amount of days spent on vacation was 6.84, with the maximum being 125 days, and;
- the average amount spent was \$,1447 with a maximum of \$40,000.

Because some destinations have developed railfan parks (a plot of land located by railway tracks which may include a covered area, scanner (which allows railfans to listen to railroad frequencies), washrooms, vending machines, and parking), respondents were asked how often they visit the parks and what attributes they are looking for. Results suggested that the majority of railfans go to railfan parks "sometimes". While at these railfan parks food and drinks, a covered area, and a scanner were indicated as vital elements.

Through examining the results of my honours thesis research it became apparent that railfans could be seen as a tourism niche market as railfans are comprised of a small group of people, who share a specific interest in trains and are highly specialized with a significant understanding of and commitment to

trains. The level of specialization is a critical and defining element of railfans. Recreation specialization is defined as, "a continuum of behavior from the general to the particular, reflected by equipment and skills used in the sport and in the activity setting preferences" (Bryan, 1977, p 175). This continuum is reflected in railfan specialization (Stefanovic, 2009) as these individuals have evolved from having an interest in trains, and over time, have gained knowledge and experience that leads to increased specialization, in terms of their equipment and involvement. The level of specialization also helps to define railfans as "special interest tourism" (Scott & Shafer, 2001) (or a niche market) as they are a specific group with customized leisure experiences driven by the needs and interests associated with trains. The literature also states that people may progress to higher stages of involvement the longer they participate in the activity (Scott & Shafer, 2001) and as the results show, railfans have been railfanning for 35 years on average (Stefanovic, 2009).

Railfanning can also be seen as a form of serious leisure. Serious leisure is defined as "the steady pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or career volunteer activity that captivates its participants with its complexity and many challenges" (Stebbins, 2001 p. 54). My honors thesis research revealed that railfanning was a central part of railfans lives, with railfans incorporating railfanning as part of their daily lives, leisure time and while on vacation. Hunt (2008) argues serious leisure activities, such as railfanning, provide venues for meeting otherwise unmet social psychological needs, serving as an escape from more constraining social contexts and roles. Tomlinson (1993) states that serious leisure creates

"cultures of commitment", and forms the basis for identity creation and affirmation (Haggard and Williams, 1992). As a result Stebbins (1992) states that the serious leisurests typically becomes involved in a vast social world and receives social rewards though meeting people with same interests. Arai & Pedlar (1997) state that a community may benefit from attracting serious leisurests, due to their level of involvement and interest; through my own involvement as a railfan, I thought this would be the case.

This previous research set the foundation for my master's study, in that it was useful in creating a demographic profile of railfans and identifying railfans as a tourism niche market, but it did not answer the question why and how railfan parks are developed and what type of impact they have. Hence, this research will examine railfanning from a development and economic standpoint.

1.4 The Evolution of Railfanning

Railroads and trains have a long history of development, expansion and change, all of which create an opportunity for technologic interest and a nostalgic connection to the railway. Some highlights of this history include:

- Beaumount's 1630 revamped wagon roads that used heavy planks on which horses pulled carts and wagons for English coal mines (Houk, 2008);
- the establishment of the first railway in 1758, the Middleton Railway in Leeds, England (Houk, 2008);
- the completion of the first North American transcontinental rail line,
 marked by the Golden Spike being laid on May 10th, 1869;

• the creation of steam powered locomotives in the early 18th century and in the mid-19th century, and the subsequent development of diesel powered locomotives (Houk, 2008).

The general interest in trains may be due in part to the central role the railroads played in commerce and transportation, and its role in the communities where the train depot was the center of town. The associated nostalgia may be a result of the public's interest in such earlier times and may also stem from a general fascination with steam locomotives and the technological prowess associated with these engines. Whatever the reason, there has been interest in trains and railroading since its beginnings.

In July of 1897 the first "railway magazine" aimed at the train enthusiast, or a train spotter as they are called in Europe, was produced in London, England (Sekon, 1947). Magazines such *The Railroads Man Magazine*(1906), *British Railways Illustrated*(1992), *Steam Days*(1986), *Traction*(1995), *Locomotives Illustrated*(1979), *Trains*(1940), *Railfan* and *Railroad*(1992), *CTC Board*(1983), *Extra 2200 South*(1961), *and Railpace*(1982) were subsequently created to support this interest in trains. With the invention of the 35mm film camera in 1913 interest in photographing trains began to grow (Haslego, 2005) and continued as camera technology advanced and became more accessible to railway enthusiasts.

Then, in the 1950's the greatest advance in the hobby occurred when North American railroads replaced thousands of steam locomotives with diesel ones, prompting "... a flurry of railfans wanting to photograph the last of the

smoke-belching behemoths" (Wurst, 2004, pg 1). Since then the interest in trains has grown astronomically evidenced by the various products and services that have been made available to railfans. These products and services help to define the railfan industry and include:

- Train Videos/DVDs produced by Pentrex, Greenfrog, Rail Innovations etc;
- magazines such as Trains (established in 1940) and Railroad Fan
 Magazine (established in 1974), are sold in Wal-Mart, Chapters, hobby
 shops, and book stores, across North America;
- Railfan guides such as the Bytown Railway Societies Canadian Trackside
 Guide, as well as Locomotive and Train Car Inventory Guides;
- Advanced Train Control System (ATCS), a computer program used to see
 the signals along a train line in order to recognize if a train is coming. This
 is a relatively new railfanning tool that requires a laptop, a scanner and
 special software to be able to view the signals;
- Train Simulator and Trainz, computer games that allow railfans to "virtually" take the controls of a train.
- Model trains, a major industry with many recognized suppliers (e.g., Athern, Atlas, Proto, Kato) that allow participants to create miniature lifelike models of trains;
- Digital Camera's that allow railfans to take thousands of pictures without purchasing film
- Railfan Websites that allow railfans to post these digital pictures with ease

 Video Camera's that allow railfans to relive the sound of a heavy freight train passing

- · Scanners that allow railfans to listen to railroad frequencies
- Railfan Festivals in cities such as Rochelle, Illinois, Deshler, Ohio and Fostoria Ohio, which are weekend long festivals that are exclusively train related;
- Train museums located across North America. According to railmuseums.com, there are 263 rail museums in North America; and
- Railfan societies that host conventions. For example, the C&O Railway
 Society convention happens once per year at various locations across
 North America. Its membership comes together at a hotel for a week-long conference with various railfan-related actives, including guided tours of railway yards and engine shops. These conventions are family-oriented.

Clearly, there are many products and services available to railfans. The fact that these products exist helps to create a picture of a "railfan" and also speaks to the number of train enthusiasts that currently exist. *Trains Magazine* estimates there are approximately 175,000 railfans in the U.S alone (Chen, 2009). Another indicator of the large number of train enthusiasts is that a simple Google search for the keyword 'railfan' results in over 1 million hits. Yet despite the evidence of an existing specialty group, "railfans" have somehow been overlooked as a potentially significant tourism niche market.

1.5 Railfan Park Development

The development of railfan parks speaks to the tourism potential of this niche market. As Wurst (2004) states: "...railfanning has become so popular that some local leaders have created parks just for railfanning" (pg 1), with city and town planners realizing the economic potential of catering to railfans (Hemphill, 2004, cited in Wurst, 2004). In 1998, Rochelle, Illinois was the first North American community to build a site specifically for train watching (R.Freier, personal communication, 2011). Rochelle had been a popular railfan destination for years prior to the park's establishment (R.Freier, personal communication, 2011), but in 1998 Rochelle's Economic Development Officer (EDO), Ken Wise, noticed there were many people loitering around the town's train tracks and realized that these people "...weren't bums or anything, they had fancy cameras, cars, and scanners" (K.Wise, personal communication, 2011). Mr. Wise felt that the City of Rochelle had an obligation to create a place for these railfans to watch trains safely, rather than having them sprawl all over the community (K.Wise, personal communication, 2011). As per his request, the city of Rochelle built a railfan platform, with a covered area and gift shop, at a main intersection in town where approximately 100 trains can be seen daily. Currently the park hosts between 30, 000 to 40,000 people per year (R.Freier, personal communication, 2011).

Other cities have since followed in the footsteps of Rochelle and have created "railfan" parks/platforms of their own. From my experience as a railfan

and through a Google search, I have compiled a list of communities that have built or are building railfan parks/platforms as of May, 2011 (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: List of Railfan Parks in North America

State	Community	
Arizona	Winslow	
California	Fullerton	
	Tehachapi	
Georgia	Austell	
	Folkstown	
	Jesup	
III:	Manchester	
Illinois	Galesburg	
	Homewood	
	Rochelle	
Indiana	Elkhart	
Massachusetts	Palmer	
Michigan	Durand	
Missouri	St. Louis	
Nebraska	North Platte (Golden Spike	
	Tower)	
North Carolina	Hamlet	
Ohio	Cincinnati	
	Deshler	
	Fostoria	
	Marion	
Pennsylvania	Altoona(Horseshoe Curve)	
	Cassandra	
	Cresson	
	Gillitizin	
Taxaa	Macungie	
Texas	Flatonia	

One of these, Folkston, Georgia, has attracted 20,000 plus railfans per year to its railfan park (Longhurst, 2008). Claudia Burkhart from the Folkston Chamber of Commerce states that, "the railfan park has been a real economic

boom to our little community and it has really put us on the map" (Longhurst, 2008, pg 2). Folkston's City Mayor said that although, "A lot of people thought building a railfan park was the biggest waste of money", he feels the citizens are seeing its creation as more beneficial now (Longhurst, 2008). Rochelle's economic development director agrees, indicating that "even the state turned to me, they said, 'nobody's going to come watch trains' but the reality was, they were already coming" (Shuster, 2000).

1.6 Purpose of the Research

As has been illustrated, some communities have recognized the potential of this niche market and have built facilities to support the railfans that are visiting their communities. The purpose of this research is therefore to determine why and how particular communities cater to railfans and examine the resultant economic impact of railfan tourism on rural communities. To achieve this purpose this research has several related objectives:

- to asses various communities' knowledge of railfan tourism,
- to examine the various levels of development undertaken to cater to railfans and,
- to determine the economic impact created when this niche market is explicitly serviced.

Through such an examination, this research may provide communities that have the potential for railfan tourism or have developed railfan tourism, with the tools and information needed to understand this niche market and its potential economic impact. Such information does not currently exist for communities.

Ultimately, this research will also shed light on this unstudied tourism niche market and will bring it into the realm of academic investigation as one of the many tourism niche markets that exist worldwide. The methodologies that this research employed to answer the stated enquiry are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter Two: Research Methods

This research is exploratory in nature and has utilized sequential mixed methods with grounded theory as the methodological framework. As there is currently limited academic research examining railfan tourism, I chose a grounded theory approach, as comparisons to related research are necessary at the completion of my own investigation. Following Charmaz's (2006) grounded theory approach with influences from Glaser (1978, 1992, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2003), Glaser and Strauss (1965,1967, 1968, 1971) Strauss (1987, 1995) Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994, 1998), Corbin and Strauss (1990), Clarke (2003, 2005) and Bryant (2002), the literature review portion of this master's thesis occurs after the results of the research have been presented. Glaser & Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978) advocate delaying the literature review until after completing analysis so that you do not see your data through the lens of earlier ideas and research. Charmaz (2006) states that, "the intended purpose of delaying the literature review is to avoid importing preconceived ideas and imposing them on your work" (pg. 165). As a result of this modified thesis format, the methods section first identifies and discusses current grounded theory literature to provide some context as to why and how this approach was used. Following that, the specific methods used for each part of this two phase mixed method study are discussed.

2.1 Grounded Theory

Charmaz (2006) provides a valuable summary of the evolution of grounded theory, through the works of Glaser and Strauss. As she indicates Glaser and Strauss (1967) together developed grounded theory methods through their studies of dying in hospitals. "They advocated developing theories from research grounded in data rather than deducing testable hypotheses from existing theories" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 4). To accomplish this "they proposed that systematic qualitative analysis had its own logic and could generate theory" (Charmz, 2006, p.5). Since Glaser and Strauss' original work, they have taken grounded theory in different directions (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994). Glaser defined grounded theory "as a method of discovery, treated categories as emergent from the data, relied on direct and, often, narrow empiricism and analyzed a basic social process" (Charmaz, 2006, p.8). In contrast, Strauss "moved grounded theory methods toward verification (as seen with the works of Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998)" (Charmaz, 2006, p.8). In exploring different ways of doing grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967) invited researchers to consider the flexibilities of the methodology, while not compromising its rigor.

The research design for this study adheres most closely to the application of the grounded theory methods as outlined by Charmaz (2006). Charmaz states that grounded theory serves as a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them. In her view, as researchers we are part of the world we study and the data we collect, and as such, we

construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives and research practices. As a result, Charmaz's approach to grounded theory assumes, "that any theoretical development offers an interpretive view of the studied world, not an exact picture of it"(p.10). She suggests that grounded theory methods foster seeing data in fresh ways, as the theory is constructed within the data themselves. For her, grounded theory method begins by separating and sorting collected data through coding, meaning that labels are attached to segments of data to depict what each segment is about, allowing for comparison between other segments of data. After making and coding numerous comparisons, memos are written to describe the codes themselves as well as the comparisons between codes. The defining components of grounded theory according to Glaser and Strauss as found in Charmaz (2006, p.5) include:

- simultaneous involvement in data collection, meaning collecting and analyzing data at the same time to be able to identify and fill gaps in your research
- constructing analytical codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically produced hypotheses
- using the constant comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of analysis
- advancing theory development during each step of the data collection and analysis
- memo writing to elaborate categories
- sampling aimed toward theory construction, not for population representativeness
- conducting the literature review after developing an independent analysis.

But as Charmaz (2006) suggests grounded theory methods should be used "as a set of principals and practices not as prescriptions or packages" and as a result

she emphasizes being flexible in the analysis, not hampered by methodological rules.

Because of the varying ways grounded theory has been utilized, researchers have critiqued each other's approaches. For example, Burawoy (1991) argues that grounded theory produces empirical generalizations that lead to generic explanations. Thomas and James (2006) state that critiques of grounded theory have focused on a) its status as theory, more specifically whether what is produced is really 'theory', b) the notion of 'ground', more specifically why 'grounding' one's findings is important in qualitative inquiry, c) what theories are 'grounded' *in* and d) the claim to use and develop inductive knowledge.

The criticism of whether grounded theory research produces theory begs the question of what is theory? According to Charmaz (2006) the definition "remains slippery in grounded theory discourse as many grounded theorists talk about theory but few actually define it" (p. 123). As a result disagreements about how to do grounded theory and what a completed theory should look like often arise. Charmaz(2006) states that the critics who question what a grounded "theory" should look like often miss four critical elements: 1) that theorizing is an activity, 2) that grounded theory methods provide constructive ways to proceed with this activity, 3) the research problem and the researchers unfolding interests can shape the content of this activity and not the methods and 4) the products of theorizing reflect how researchers acted on these points (p 134-135).

Furthermore Charmaz(2006) states that "in research practice, theorizing means

being eclectic, drawing on what works and defining what fits as theories serve different purposes and differ in their inclusiveness, precision, level, scope, generality and applicability"(p. 148-9). Following the sentiments of Charmaz(2006) the "theory" that is developed as a result this research is based on what worked and what fit in the context of what this research found.

Aside from these criticisms, grounded theory research allows the researcher to concentrate on analysis rather than on arguments about it, to delay the literature review and to construct an original theory that interprets the data, which departs from the traditional requirements for reporting research.

2.2 Mixed Methods

According to Creswell (2009) the origins of mixed methods research can be traced back to the early 20th century and since that time, has evolved to become a stand-alone methodology. Mixed methods research involves combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to generate deeper insights than either method alone would yield (Moffatt, White, Mackintosh and Howel, 2006). Doyle, Brady & Burn (2009) have summarized the main rationale or benefits of mixed methods as:

- 1. Triangulation: this allows for greater validity in a study by seeking corroboration between quantitative and qualitative data.
- 2. Completeness: using a combination of research approaches provides a more complete and comprehensive picture of the study phenomenon.
- 3. Offsetting weaknesses and providing stronger inferences: many authors (Bryman, 2006; Creswell, et. al., 2003) argue that utilizing a mixed methods approach can allow for the limitations of each approach to be neutralized while strengths are built upon thereby providing stronger and more accurate inferences.
- Answering different research questions: Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007) argue that mixed methods research helps answer the research questions

- that cannot be answered by quantitative or qualitative methods alone and provides a greater repertoire of tools to meet the aims and objectives of a study.
- 5. Explanation of findings: mixed methods studies can use one research approach (i.e., quantitative or qualitative) to explain the data generated from a study using the other research approaches. This is particularly useful when unanticipated or unusual findings emerge. For example, findings from a quantitative survey can be followed up and explained by conducting interviews with a sample of those surveyed to gain an understanding of the findings obtained.
- 6. Illustration of data: using a qualitative research approach to illustrate quantitative findings can help create a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.
- 7. Hypotheses development and testing: a qualitative phase of a study may be undertaken to develop hypotheses to be tested in a follow-up quantitative phase.
- 8. Instrument development and testing: a qualitative study may generate items for inclusion in a questionnaire to be used in a quantitative phase of a study

Although it is clear that a mixed methods approach has much to offer a researcher, there have been criticisms of its use. Specifically, there are inconsistencies in the way that scholars define and conceptualize mixed methods (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007), which results in a wide array of applications in the social sciences (Denscombe, 2008). According to Doyle, Brady & Burn (2009) much criticism is focused on the incompatibility of combining quantitative and qualitative research methods as they have such different ontological and epistemological origins.

For the purpose of this research, a sequential mixed methods approach was used to allow for the generation of both general information about railfan tourism and more specific case study information. The former comprised a quantitative online survey (Phase One) and the latter a series of semi-structured face-to-face interviews (Phase Two). The data from each phase of this sequential

mixed methods research was collected and analyzed separately and then combined to identify themes between each phase.

2.3 Phase One: Online Quantitative Survey

The purpose of the quantitative research phase was twofold: 1) to be able to understand in a broader sense the process by which communities cater to railfans, and, 2) to understand the economic impact railfans have on communities.

To address part one of this twofold purpose, an online quantitative survey was used. Hwang and Fesenmaier (2004) have defined *Internet survey* as survey methods for designing the instrument, drawing a sample, and/or disseminating the results using Internet technology. Grennberg, Kit, & Mahoney (2005) state that online survey instruments such as "Zoomerang" and "Survey Monkey" enable researchers to design surveys and collect data with ease. The Internet has provided researchers with the ability to collect responses from groups that may have been previously hard to reach (Wright, 2005). Online surveys can cross international borders and continents, thereby creating a better and more reliable sample of an entire population of respondents (Coomber, 1997). Wright (2005) concurred stating that online surveys allow researchers to reach thousands of people with common characteristics in a short amount of time, over wide geographic distances.

Despite the many benefits, researchers are wary of adopting online surveys due to limitations related to low response rates, representativeness of samples, technological uncertainty, and the effects of survey media on the

research results (Pan, 2010). Schaefer and Dillman (1998) emphasize access to the Internet as a limitation of online surveys. Furthermore Pan (2010) states that studies have shown that online surveys capture a slightly different population compared with other survey methodologies, as online survey populations are dependent on having access to the internet and a computer.

Quantitative research involves the collection of responses from a representative sample of a larger population (Black, 1999). To achieve a representative sample, quantitative research requires a large sample size (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1991). A larger sample size enables researchers to be able to better describe group tendencies (Black, 1999) as well as to make inferences about the overall population (Yu & Copper, 1983). For Phase One of this study the 100 identified *Trains Magazines* hot spots were selected from a larger population of railfan sites. Conveniently for the purposes of this research the guide provided location selection standardization, much like one would use a telephone director to sample residents in a city. It was hoped with this captive audience that all 100 communities identified would respond, resulting in high confidence levels.

2.3.1 Study Area- Phase One

Trains Magazine's Hot Spots Destinations (2001) were selected as my target sample, as my previous research (Stefanovic, 2009) found that the main reason railfans travelled to a particular destination was because of the number of trains that can be seen in one day. Conveniently, for the purposes of this research, *Trains Magazine's* Hot Spot guide identifies 100 locations in North

America where the highest number of trains can be seen in one day. The guide itself provides:

- the name of each location as well as its popular or railfan name,
- · directions on how to get there,
- a description of the overall area,
- a description of the type of railway operations that are present,
- identification of the typical locomotives that can be seen.
- the location's peak operating hours (in terms of when the most trains can be seen),
- identification of the number of trains that can be seen in one 24hr period,
- a list of the radio frequencies needed in the area,
- a list of nearby points of interest,
- · overall remarks about photographing the area and
- safety considerations to keep in mind while in the area.

Using this comprehensive guide provides standardization of location selection; essentially, it provides an explanation as to why certain locations were picked over others, instead of just randomly selecting particular locations, other wise known as criterion-based sampling. Of the 100 locations identified in the guide:

- 79 were identified as a discrete location and were therefore deemed to be "contactable" due to the fact that a community was associated by proximity to the railfan location;
- 11 were identified as a railfan route (for example the Thompson River Valley, British Colombia), which involved numerous communities along the route and as a result were not contacted, and;
- 10 were identified as a railfan location not located close to or within a community and as a result could not be contacted.

As a result, a total of 79 communities were deemed as appropriate sites for the research and were contacted. The economic development officer or tourism director associated with each community was first emailed directly, informed of the research and requested to participate in the research project (Appendix A). The email included a direct link to the survey.

Questions in the survey focused on determining whether or not the community was aware of railfan tourism, identifying how they cater to this niche market and ascertained an estimation of the economic impact that railfans have on their community/business (Appendix B). The survey was implemented using *Survey Monkey*, an online survey tool.

Table 2.1- Method of Contact Responses

Method of Contact	Number of Communities Contacted	Responses
Email	79	27
Mail	52	7
Phone	45	15

As illustrated in table 2.1 emails were sent out to each community on October 28th 2010, followed by five rounds of email reminders (November 28th 2010, December 28th 2010, January 28th 2011 and March 28th 2011). As of January 1st 2011, only 27 of the 79 communities had completed the online survey via email link; as a result, the remaining 52 communities were mailed a hard copy of the survey on January 2nd. Of the 52 mail requests sent, 7 were returned bringing the total number of responses to 34. Finally to help increase the response rate a phone call was made to the remaining 45 communities; this resulted in an additional 15 completed surveys, bringing the total responses to 49, with a resultant response rate of 62 % (49 completed of 79 communities).

Through making the phone calls to various communities it was discovered that many did not feel comfortable completing the survey because:

- 1. they had never heard of the term railfan before;
- 2. they were not aware that they had railfan tourism or that they were named one of the 100 best places to railfan in North America and;

3. they did not track railfan tourism and could not give accurate numbers regarding how many railfans where coming or what type of economic impact they had.

This information was indicative of how difficult it is to research a relatively unknown tourism market as well as helping to shed further light on the reasons for non-response.

The results from the survey were analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

Descriptive statistics were compiled to describe the basic features of the railfan communities and to provide summaries of the data. The details of this analysis and the methods used are discussed in Chapter Three.

2.4 Phase Two: Case Study

The second phase of this mixed methods research used structured interviews in three communities that had or are currently developing railfan tourism. These interviews were conducted in Rochelle, Illinois (where a railroad park exists), Fostoria, Ohio (where they are currently developing a railfan park) and Deshler, Ohio (where a railroad park exists). A railfan park is a plot of land that is located near a busy railway location, and which may include a covered area, scanner, parking and vending machines. Some also have webcams and gift shops.

The purpose of Phase Two was to determine the process and outcomes associated with railfan park development. As such the intent of these interviews was to explore how and why the decision was made to develop a railfan park and to explore what economic impacts the community has experienced as a result of this development.

Before arriving at each destination, interviews were set up with those involved in the railfan park development or operation as identified on their website or through contacting each community directly. All participants in phase two of this research, except one, waived their right to anonymity; as a result participant's actual names and positions are used except for the one person who wished to remain anonymous. Those participants who did waive their right to anonymity signed an interview consent form (Appendix C) on the date of the interview and were also emailed to show how their name would be used, and to verify the content of their interview within the context of the analysis. The release forms as well as the conformation emails have been stored in a secure cabinet as per university policy.

Table 2.2 identifies the persons interviewed in each community as well as their title as a reference for understanding who was interviewed in each community.

Table 2.2- List of Interviewees

City	Person	Position		
Rochelle	Ken Wise	Past EDO		
	Jason Anderson	Current EDO		
	Ross Freier	Current Tourism Manager		
Fostoria	Ellen Gatrell, Teresa Lee, Herman Vandekerkhoff, Rodger Radcliff, Jim Roberts, Eddie Durnwald and Aaron Gonya	Eight members of the FRPS		
	Joan Reinhard	Current EDO		
	Daniel R. Thornton	City Engineer		
	John Doe	a representative from a local hotel		
	Leonard Skonecki	local history buff and member of original train tourism group		
	Dennis Fligor	City Service Director		
	Mayor John Davoli	Mayor of Fostoria		
	Malinda Ruble	Seneca Country CVB and original member of train tourism group		
Deshler	Joel Mahlman	involved in the operation of the park		

A greater number of individuals have been involved in the process of development in Fostoria then Rochelle and as a result more participants were

interviewed in Fostoria than Rochelle. In both communities contact was first made with the organization involved with developing the Railfan Park to determine who might be interviewed. Through contacting the city of Rochelle it was suggested that the best people to talk to would be Ken Wise, Jason Anderson and Ross Freier, as such each individual was contacted separately and each agreed to participate in this research. For Fostoria, through contacting the Fostoria Rail Preservation Society I was put in contact with Ellen Gatrel who then set up interview times and dates with those individuals involved with or who had knowledge of the railfan park development. Each one of the individuals she requested to participate in the research agreed and as a result was interviewed.

Only a single interview was conducted in Deshler, Ohio on February 9th 2011 with Joel Mahlman who is involved with operating the Railfan Park in Deshler. Although only one person agreed to be interviewed, this information was useful as it provided a broader understanding of railfan park development, as will be discussed in Chapter Four. A total of 12 interviews were conducted across the three communities.

The structured interview questions that were used as an interview guide in each of the three identified locations can be found in Appendix D. Each participants' area of expertise and in turn responses to these questions were used to create a detailed story of each community in terms of their history, how and why they decided to cater to railfans, the benefits they receive and any drawbacks associated with this development.

According to Rossman & Rallis (1998, as found in Creswell, 2009) coding is the process of organizing material into chunks of text before bringing meaning to the information (p 171). Coding is the transitional process between data collection and more extensive data analysis (Patton, 1990), and involves taking data (words, pictures etc) gathered during interviews and segmenting them into categories and then labelling those categories with a term. The codes and themes emerged from analysis through looking at patterns, similarities, differences and frequencies in responses, (Patton, 1990) to the structured interview questions (Appendix D). To accomplish this, Charmaz's (2006) grounded theory coding process was used with influences from Creswell's (2009) and Patton's (1990) coding processes.

Charmaz's (2006) grounded theory coding process consists of: a) creating open codes (i.e. coding the data for its major categories of information), b) creating axial codes in which one open coding category was focused on (i.e. the "core phenomenon"), and c) creating selective codes to develop a story line which connects each singular code. In conjunction with the coding process Charmaz (2006) also stresses the use of memo writing to elaborate each of the categories/codes to extend meaning being the code itself.

I transcribed the interviews myself so that I could become more immersed in the work, and so I could begin to sense themes (Patton's First Stage of Coding) that were emerging before actually getting to the coding process. I then coded the interviews as noted above using the structured interview guide as a framework, (i.e. like responses to each of the structured interviews questions

where lumped together to create a common "code"). Memos for each of these codes where then developed to expand the meaning of that code. This process resulted in creating detailed stories about each community and how it developed railfan tourism, the results of which are provided in Chapter Four.

2.4.1 Study Area for Phase Two

The three railfan parks I visited allowed for a comparison in terms of the process of development and economic impact between how North America's first railfan park (Rochelle) was developed to one that is currently being developed (Fostoria) and to one that has been developed by railfans for railfans on private property (Deshler) (Figure 2.1).

WISCONSIN Rochester Toronto Du Lac Hamilton Mason City Madison **Grand Rapids** Lansing Ø Rockford Ann Arbor Chicago South Bend INDIANA Kokomo O Lima Lafayette Danville • Wheeling

Figure 2.1- Map of three case study communities (Mapquest, 2011)

#1- Rochelle Illinois, #2- Fostoria, Ohio, #3- Deshler, Ohio

As indicated in Chapter One, there are 26 railfan parks/ platforms located in North America; the three chosen for case study examination were selected for several reasons:

Rochelle was the first place to create such a park

- Fostoria is currently building a park
- Pragmatically, the communities are located within driving distance of my home, and as such, made them affordable locations to visit, especially given that there was little funding.

A full discussion of each community in terms of its demographics and economic history, railfan tourism development and associated economic impact is presented in Chapter Four of this research.

2.5 Combining Methods

The results from each phase of this sequential mixed methods research were collected and analyzed separately and then combined to identify themes between each phase. The same basic questions regarding development and economic impact where asked in each phase of this research. Phase one the quantitative survey provides descriptive statistics, while phase two provides meaning behind those descriptions, giving deeper meaning to the data. By asking similar questions in each phase the themes that emerged in phase two can be extrapolated to the quantitative findings in phase one of this research.

The common themes relate only to those communities who stated they did cater to railfans in phase one of this research, as they were asked the same types of questions as the community members interviewed in phase two. Table 2.3 illustrates how the themes that will be discussed in Chapter Five emerged as a result of asking similar questions in regards to the process and economic impact of catering to railfans

Table 2.3- Research Themes

Survey Questions	Interview Questions	Coded Responses	Sub Themes	Themes	
Development Process	Development Process	idea funding support	lack of research and planning	Planning Frameworks	
		research design	noticed railfans before catering	Build it, they are already coming	
		location space	safety	Creating Space	
Economics Economics		length of stay Spending distance travelled	not tracked best guess estimates	Economic impact	
		Impact jobs	Recession jobs loss diversification strategy	Economic Diversification	

Phase two of this research asked additional questions regarding community support for railfan tourism developments as well as educating local residence about railfan tourism and tourism in general. The results from these questions form the unique elements between phases as they could not be extrapolated to the findings from the quantitative survey. These common and unique themes are discussed in Chapter Five.

2.6 Conclusion

The data for this research was collected through a sequential mixed methods approach, combining online surveys and interviews, to understand: a) the process by which communities cater to railfans and b) the economic impact railfans have on communities. The analyses of these data sets are presented in the following two chapters (3 and 4). Little information is known either about the process by which communities develop railfan tourism or about how railfan tourism impacts rural areas economically. Such information would be useful for cities with developed railfan sites, as it could help them understand the ways in which railfan tourism development is undertaken throughout North America. It also provides a greater understanding of the economic impact of this niche market. This data would also be useful for cities that are not aware of this market, and therefore can take what is learned from this research to capitalize on this existing, though unrecognized, growth area.

Chapter Three: Results Phase One - Survey Results

This study utilized a mixed methods approach, with the results of phase one of this research, the online survey, presented in this chapter. As indicated in Chapter Two, a survey was made available online using *Survey Monkey. Trains Magazines Guide to North American Railroad* Hot Spots (2001) was used to standardized location selection. Of the 100 locations identified in the guide, 79 communities were identified as communities of interest, resulting in 4p participating in the research. The analysis of the responses is presented below in four sections:

- Section 3.2 assesses the knowledge about and development of railfan tourism
- Section 3.3 examines communities that have catered to railfans in terms of what they have done, how it was done and the resultant economic impact.
- Section 3.4 analyzes the communities who have not catered to railfans and their reasons for this choice.

3.1 Data Collection and Analysis

During the data collection phase, responses were collected and automatically tabled in an MS Excel file by the survey administration tool, www.surveymonkey.com . This MS Excel file was exported from the survey administration website once the survey was officially closed (at 11:59:59 p.m. March 16th, 2011). The MS Excel file was then cleaned to eliminate duplicate responses, partial responses and to eliminate surveys where no questions were answered.

An important step, prior to data coding, is data cleaning. The presence of anomalies or outliers in a data set can greatly increase the amount of error rates and subsequently distort the parameters by which the data is being measured (Osborne & Overbay, 2004). In order to eliminate biasing the calculation of mean responses on the Likert scale questions, I examined each of the 49 returned survey responses to determine whether data was missing. A common procedure to solving the problem of missing data is to perform a 'list-wise' deletion of all responses with missing data on the variables of interest (Leeuw, Hox & Dillman, 2008).

The cleaned MS Excel file was then used for statistical analysis. The number of responses that this questionnaire received determined the statistical analysis used for the purpose of this research, as having a larger sample size allows researchers to conduct observation and analysis of more than one statistical variable at a time. Gorsuch (1983) recommends a minimum sample size of 100 subjects to conduct analysis such as this. Guilford (1954) argues a sample size of at least 200 is needed, while Cattell (1978) recommends a minimum sample size of 250 responses. As it has been illustrated there is no consensus regarding the appropriate sample size needed to conduct multivariate analysis. To address this issue Comrey and Lee (1992) have provided some guidance in determining the adequacy of sample size, that being a sample size of 100 is seen as poor, 200 as fair, 300 as good, 500 as very good, and 1,000 or more as excellent.

The online questionnaire that was conducted for the purpose of this research only garnered 49 usable responses, a sample size well below what has been recommended. Although having sample sizes smaller than what has been recommended limits the extent to which the data is representative of the larger population (Costello & Osborne, 2005), uni-variate and bi-variate analysis was conducted using SPSS on certain variables to determine differences between what was developed and its associated economic impact.

According to Neuman (1997) descriptive statistics describe numerical data and can be categorized by the number of variables involved: univariate (1 variable), bi-variate (2 variables), multivariate (3 or more independent variables). Univariate statistics describe one variable using frequency distribution and can be used with nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio level data. For the purpose of this research descriptive analysis was used, specifically the mean, median, mode and standard deviation of the population as a whole and for each unit of analysis. These units of analysis were used, as there was not enough of sample size to break the data set down into further categories. Furthermore the data which I collected was at a nominal level which restricted the possibilities of analysis. The construction of the survey also makes univariate and bivarite analysis difficult as I asked different questions of those who have and have not catered to railfans.

3.2 Knowledge and Development of Railfan Tourism

The first question on the survey asked respondents if they had heard of the term railfan before and they were then subsequently asked to provide a

definition as to what it meant to assess their level of knowledge of this niche market. At this juncture it is important to remember that the 79 communities contacted have, or are located adjacent to, one of the top 100 sites identified as excellent railfan locations. Because of the rail qualities associated with each location, it is quite likely that each site will have been visited by railfans. This reminder is important when considered within the context of the survey results, which indicated that only 28 of the 49 communities (57%) had heard of the term railfan before. Multiple definitions as to what the term railfan meant were provided by respondents through an open ended question, which I then analyzed, using thematic coding. The following themes emerged as a result this coding process:

- <u>Watch and Photograph Trains</u>. Definitions in this theme included elements associated with people watching and photographing trains. An example of such definitions provided by respondents is "a person who sits at a rail yard or rail line to watch and photograph trains that go by"
- <u>Travel to Watch Trains</u>. Definitions in this theme included elements associated with people traveling to watch trains in various locations. An example of such a definition is, "a person who is interested in anything involving railroads or trains and travels to great lengths to pursue their hobby"
- <u>Travel by Train</u>. Definitions in this category included various elements associated with people actually riding trains, as a form of transportation or as a form of tourism. An example of such a definition is, "a person who likes to travel/commute by train".

After providing a definition as to what the term railfan meant, participants were then asked if they had seen people in their community taking pictures of trains. Unlike their knowledge of railfan definitions, over 81 per cent (40 of 49) respondents indicated that they had in fact witnessed this activity. Participants

were then asked if their community had done anything specific to cater to railfans, with 24 of the 49 communities (49 %) stating that they had.

3.3 Communities that Cater to Railfans

The 24 communities that stated they had catered to this niche market were then asked to specify what they had done. Figure 3.0 summarizes their responses. Participants provided multiple answers to this question, so for example, a community could have developed signage, built a railfan park and advertised to this niche market.

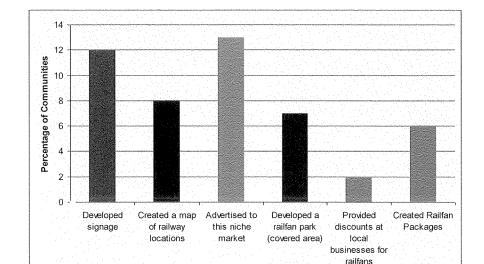


Figure 3.0- Railfan Tourism Development

As illustrated in Figure 3.0, 12 of the 24 communities (50%) stated that they have developed signage to show railfans where to go in their community, 8 communities (33.3%) created and distribute a map of railway locations in their town, 13 communities (54.1%) advertise to this niche market via railfan related magazines and websites and by attending railfan festivals. Two communities

Railfan Tourism Development Initiatives

(8.3%) stated that local businesses provide discounts for railfans while they are in town and 6 communities (25%) stated that they have created railfan packages (i.e., put together and distribute packages or "packets" about their community, its railway history and its other attractions). Of the 24 communities, 7 (29%) stated that they had created a railfan park or covered area for railfans. An additional community stated in the "other" category that they have cleared an area for future railfan park development. Outside of the options provided, communities also stated in the "other" category that they host rail related events/gatherings (5 communities), created a railway museum (2 communities) and created a website with live webcam to advertise their attractions (2 communities).

Further examination of what has been done for railfan tourism development revealed that many communities catered to railfans in a combination of ways with 17 of the 24 communities reporting they accommodated railfans in a combination of ways (Table 3.0).

Table 3.0- Railfan Tourism Development.

Respondents	Signage	Мар	Advertised	Park	Discounts	Packages
1	✓	✓	✓			√
2	✓					
3	✓	✓				****
4	✓		√			
5	✓		V			
6	✓	✓	√	✓	√	√
7	✓	√	√			
8				✓		
9	✓	✓	√	✓		
10		✓	/	√		
11		√	√		√	√
12			√			
13	√		√			√
14	√	✓	√			√
15	✓		√	√		
16	√		/	✓		
17				✓		√

One community reported only creating signage, a park and advertising.

The other 14 communities catered to railfans in a combination of ways, the most popular combination being advertising and developing signage with 10 of the 17 communities reporting this combination. The next most frequent combination was creating signage and a map with 6 communities reporting this combination.

Another frequent combination was creating a map, advertising and creating signage with 4 communities reporting this combination.

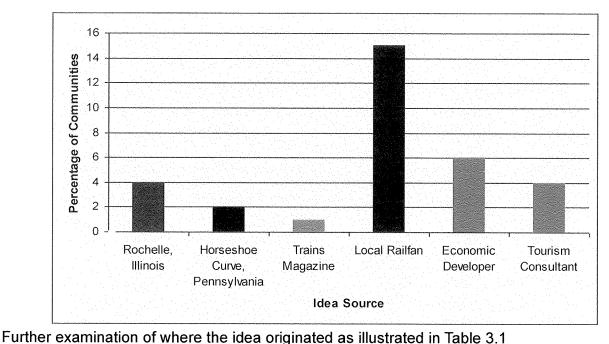
Analysis of the seven communities that stated they had created a railfan parks as illustrated in Table 3.0 revealed that only one community had just developed a park and did not cater to railfans in a combination of ways. Of the remaining 6 communities:

- 1 stated they developed a railfan park in combination with creating a map of the area and advertising the park
- 2 communities reported creating signage and advertising with developing a railfan park,
- 1 community catered to railfans in all 6 identified ways being the only community with a railfan park to report they provided discounts for railfans.
- 1 community created a park in combination with putting up signage, creating a map and advertising and
- 1 community created a park in conjunction with developing packages.

This illustrates that 7 communities, who have developed railfan parks have supplemented this initiative with a variety of other marketing devices.

Participants were then asked where they got the idea to cater to this niche market from (Figure 3.1). Responses to this close ended list of responses revealed that the idea did not originate from a single source, but from a combination of sources. For example, a community could have got the idea to cater to railfans from a local railfan (9), a tourism consultant (5) or from other communities (Rochelle, Illinois - 4; Horseshoe Curve, Pennsylvania - 2). In addition, four communities got the idea from a tourism consultant and one from Trains Magazine.





reveals that 15 of 24 communities got the idea to cater from a single source, 11 of those 15 communities reported getting the idea to cater from only a local railfan,3 of the 15 reported getting the idea from and EDO and 1 community reported getting the idea from only the City of Rochelle. Eight communities reported that a combination of sources contributed to bringing the idea forward, with 7 of the 8 being different combinations of ideas. Also of note from Table 3.1 is that no community reported more than two idea sources. This illustrates that the idea to cater to railfans to date has come from one strong single source - local railfans who have recognize the potential for their community to develop something.

Table 3.1- Railfan Development Idea

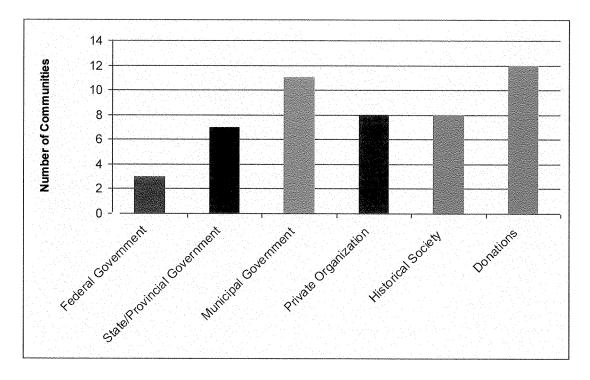
Respondents	Rochelle	Horseshoe	Trains Magazine	Local Railfan	EDO	Tourism Consultant
1				✓		Jonatant
2						√
3				/		
4				/		
5				/		
6				✓		***************************************
7	✓				✓	
8	✓	✓	· ·			
9					✓	
10				✓		Mark Control of the C
11			✓	✓		
12				✓		✓
13				√		
14				✓	✓	
15				✓		
16				✓		
17				✓		
18				√		
19	✓				✓	
20		✓				✓
21					√	
22	✓					√
23					✓	

To be able to create services to accommodate railfans, participants stated that they need various levels of approval. As an overview, 58.3% of the communities stated they need municipal approval, 33.3% stated they need community approval, 12.5% stated they need state/provincial approval and 4.2% stated they need federal approval. In the other category of this question, 3 communities stated that they needed railway approval to be able to cater to this niche market – these last were the only communities to build railfan parks.

Further examination reveals that 9 of the 24 communities needed approval from a single source, most often from the municipal government (5 communities) followed by community (2), state/provincial (1) and federal (1) levels. Municipal and community approval was the most often indicated combination of approvals with 4 of the 24 communities reporting needing both.

Figure 3.2 illustrates how these railfan development projects were funded. Three communities reported receiving money from the Federal Government, 7 communities received money from their state/provincial government, 11 communities received monies from their municipal government, 8 communities received money from private organizations, 8 communities received money from a historical society, and 12 communities received money through donations.





A variety of funding sources came together to fund these projects as illustrated in Table 3.2, with 14 of 24 communities (58.3%) reporting the need for two or more funding sources to complete their railfan tourism projects, and 5 projects being funded by a single source, 2 from private organizations, 1 from state/provincial, 1 from federal and one from donations. Of those projects that required two or more funding sources, 7 communities (29%) reported needing 2 funding sources, 5 communities (20.8%) reported needing 3 funding sources and 2 communities (8.3%) reported needing 4 funding sources.

Table 3.2- Railfan Development Funding

Respondents	Federal	State/ Provincial	Municipal	Private	Historic Society	Donations
1				~		
2			✓		✓	✓
3		✓				
4				✓		✓
5	✓	√		701.0		✓
6				✓		√
7				✓		
8			√	✓		
9			✓	✓	✓	
10		√	√	✓	✓	
11	✓					
12		√	√			/
13			√			✓
14					✓	✓
15		√	√		✓	✓
16			√		✓	✓
17						✓
18	., ., .	√	√			
19			√		✓	✓

Of the 24 participants that had stated they cater to railfans, 21(90%) stated that railfan attractions were not their main tourism product, but part of suite of

tourism products available. Only 3 of the 24 communities stated that railfan tourism was their main tourism sector.

Participants were asked to estimate the economic impact that railfan tourism has on their community using a series of indicators including the general economic impact, number of railfans visiting, length of railfan stays, railfan spending, jobs supported by railfan tourism and tax revenue generated by railfan tourism. Economic impact was measured based upon an estimation of how much railfan tourism comprised of a community's overall economic structure. Figure 3.3 illustrates that 9 communities (37.5%) reported an overall economic impact between 0-10%, 7 communities (29.2%) reported between 21-30%, 5 communities reported between 11-20%, and only single communities identified the impact in the higher percentages. This illustrates that 88% of participating communities reported that railfan tourism made up less than 30% of their total economic structure.

Figure 3.3- Economic Impact of Railfan Tourism

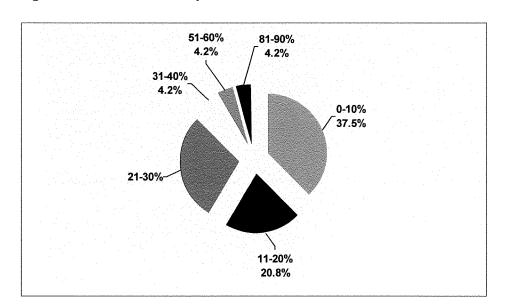
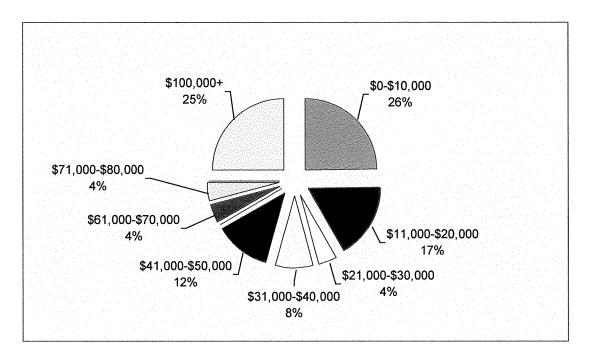


Figure 3.4 illustrates the estimated expenditure of railfan tourists in a community per year, with six communities (25%) reporting railfans spending over \$100,000. On the opposite end of the spectrum, 6 communities reported railfans spending between \$0-10, 0000 per year.

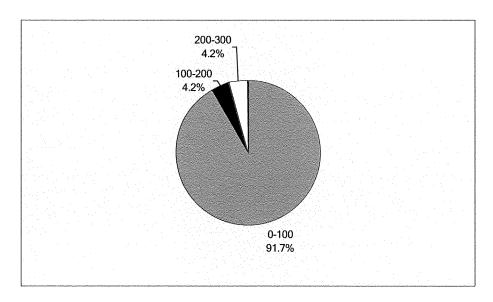
Figure 3.4- Railfan Tourism Spending



The amount of jobs generated by railfan tourism is illustrated in Figure 3.5.

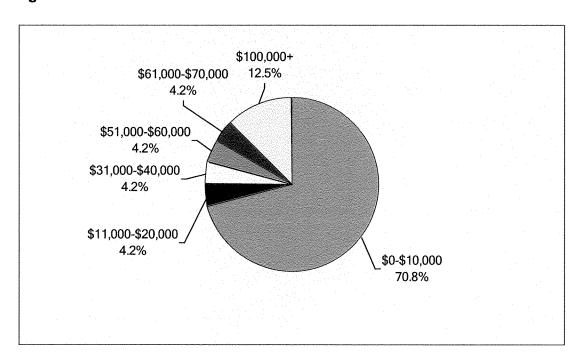
Twenty-two communities (91.7%) stated that railfan tourism generated between
0-100 jobs. Only single community responses were found for the remaining ranges.

Figure 3.5 Jobs Created by Railfan Tourism



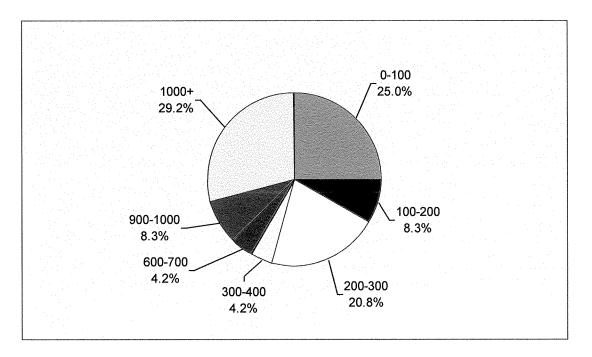
The amount of tax revenue generated by railfan tourism per year is illustrated in Figure 3.6, with 17 of the 24 communities reporting a tax influx of between \$0-10,000 and 3 communities reporting tax revenues of approximately \$100,000 per year.

Figure 3.6- Tax Revenue Generated from Railfan Tourism



The number of railfans per year that are reported to be visiting these communities is illustrated in Figure 3.7. Nine of the 24 communities reported receiving 900+ railfans per year, with 7 of those 9 communities reporting 1000+ railfans per year. On the other end of the spectrum, 14 of the 24 communities reported receiving between 0-400 railfans per year. It is important to note here that many of the communities stated that they had no way of being able to track how many railfans were coming to their community each year, and as a result they provided best-guess estimates.

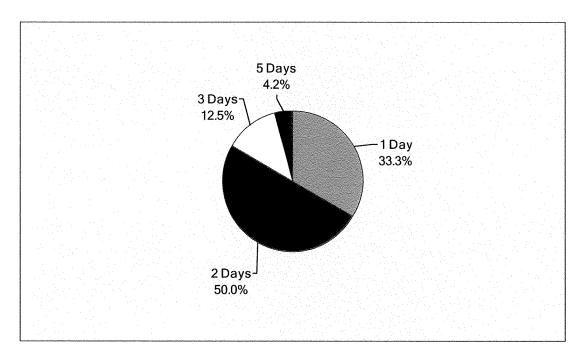
Figure 3.7 Number of Railfan Tourists Per Year



Respondents were then asked to indicate how long these railfans were staying in the community (Figure 3.8). Twelve of the 24 communities (50%) reported that railfans spent two days in their community; 8 communities (33.3%) stated that they spent one day and three communities (12.5%) for 3 days. A

closer look at the data reveals that 62.5% of communities are reporting that railfans are staying more than one day which is significant in terms of the amount of dollars that can be generated in a community during that time period.

Figure 3.8- Railfans Length of Stay



Comparing what a community had done (building a railfan park, creating a map, creating signage etc.) with economic impact (tax revenue generated, railfan spending, number railfans, railfan length of stay and economic percentage) revealed some interesting results. Those communities that had created a railfan park, advertised and created signage on average saw higher number of railfans visiting their community, that stayed for longer periods and in turn have a greater economic impact in terms of spending, tax revenue generation and overall economic percentage than communities who created maps, put together packages, or provided discounts.

Overall communities that had created railfan parks as opposed to other forms of catering reported the highest percentage of economic impact, these communities also advertised and created signage illustrating why these identified categories had the greatest economic impact, as one might expect.

Funding sources also had direct influences on economic impact. Those communities reporting the greatest economic impact received federal, state/provincial and or municipal funding for their projects. This correlates with the communities who have created railfan parks, as creating a railfan park requires substantial funding from such organizations to complete the project.

These results indicate that some communities have recognized this niche market and in turn catered to them in various ways, through varying funding sources and with varying economic "success". Those communities that have created railfan parks have seen the greatest economic impact as opposed to communities that have created a map or provided discounts.

While the data illustrate that railfan tourism has had varying economic impacts on the participating communities, through coding like responses to an open ended question, 23 of the 24 communities (95.8%) stated that they felt railfan tourism was a viable economic diversification strategy because:

- Railfan tourism brings money into the community that would not be there otherwise
- A substantial amount of tax revenues are collected as a direct result of the railfans that visit the community
- Railfan tourism "puts heads in beds"
- It adds to the overall community's quality of life

- It spurs economic growth and
- As a niche market it captures a tourism percentage not captured by other communities.

The one community that stated they felt railfan tourism was not a viable economic diversification strategy argued this position on the grounds that the railroad infrastructure available to the public in their community was insufficient to capture significant expenditures from tourists, in other words they had no safe access to busy railfan locations from which they could view trains.

Lastly respondents were asked to indicate whether lodging, restaurants, and attractions in their community catered to railfans, and if so, what they did. In terms of lodgings, 11 communities stated that accommodation businesses in their community specifically catered to railfans, 6 of which provided a discounted rate for accommodation, 5 provided a railway map of the city, and 2 had a railroad theme/décor. Three communities reported their accommodations provided a railfan rate or discount as well as provided a map for railfans. It is important to note here that two communities who stated their lodging establishments provided discounts also stated their lodging had a railway theme/décor as respondents could choose multiple options per category.

Examining restaurants, 9 communities stated that restaurants in their community provided a discount for railfans and 4 communities reported that some restaurants had a railfan theme/décor. Two of those 4 communities provided a discount in addition to having a railway theme/decor.

In terms of attractions (museums, golf courses, theme parks, shopping malls, water parks, ski hills, beaches, casinos, theatres and historic sites), 10

communities stated that attractions in their community catered to railfans, 5 of which provided discounts on their attraction for railfans and 5 of which provided railway maps. Three of the 10 communities stated that attractions provided maps in combination with providing discounts. Again it is important to note here that respondents could choose more than one choice per attraction, (i.e., an attraction could have provided a discount for railfans and created a map).

3.4 Communities That Did Not Cater to Railfans

Of the 49 participants in this research, 22 indicated that their community did not do anything to accommodate railfans. Through selecting one of five predetermined responses communities stated they did not cater to railfans because:

- They had never heard of them before (36.4%);
- They did not think they were a viable tourism niche market to cater to (31.8%);
- It was hard to convince those who are not aware of railfans to spend money to attract them (27.3%); and
- They could not get government funding for projects (4.5%)

As the Trains Magazine Hot Spot Guide (2001) was used to determine the location of participating communities, the respondents were asked if they were aware of this publication and that they were identified as one of the 100 best places to railfan in North America. Of these 22 communities, 81.8% of them were not aware they were identified as a hot spot. In contrast, only 55% of those who did cater to railfans, were not aware they were identified as a hot spot.

While these communities stated they did not cater to railfans, 72.7% stated they may be interested in catering to this niche market, 27.3% stated they

would definitely be interested and 0.0% stated they would not be interested. Though examining themes that emerged from open ended responses, it was determined that communities were interested in catering to railfans because they believe that by embracing their community's assets and learning more about railfans as a niche market, then perhaps they could realize the economic impact potential of this tourism group. Some participants indicated that although they were interested, they felt their community would have to do more research regarding the viability of attracting railfans to the area and explore what type of funding could be available.

3.5 Conclusion

As the data illustrates, railfan tourism has been undertaken in various forms, funded in various ways and as a result, had varying economic impact results. The results from phase one of this research revealed that while a majority of the participants were aware of people taking pictures of trains in their community, only 57% knew what the term railfan meant, and only 55% had catered to this niche market. For the 24 communities (49%) who stated they did provide services to railfans, the majority indicated that:

- they got the idea to cater from a local railfan,
- they accommodated railfans in varying ways.
- they needed varying funding and levels of approval, and
- they had varying economic "success".

A further examination of the economic impact revealed that those communities who had developed railfan parks received the greatest economic

impact; these communities also advertise to railfans, create signage, create a railway map of locations and put together railfan packages. Although those communities who had created railfan parks received the greatest economic "success", railfan tourism was found to be an economic diversification strategy for most communities as it generates business for hotels/motels and food establishments, which in turn increases tax revenues generated in the area.

My previous research (Stefanovic, 2009) found that railfans visit railfan parks "sometimes". Comparing those findings to these results reveals that the economic potential of railfan tourism may yet not be fully achieved. This may be due to the fact that railfan tourism is still an emerging tourism niche market with the first community Rochelle, having only developed services for railfans less than 15 years ago. As a result, those communities that are aware of railfans have created services to accommodate them, or plan to in the future. In contrast, those communities that are not aware of railfans have not catered to them, but indicated an interest if they were more educated about this niche market and its potential economic impact, which is the ultimate aim of this research.

Through examining the results from phase two of this research, a better understanding of how and why communities were able to cater to this niche market and why there are varying economic results will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Mixed Methods Phase Two - Case Study Results

Phase two of the research involved qualitative interviews in three case study communities that have specifically catered to railfans: Rochelle, Illinois, Fostoria and Deshler, Ohio. The detailed stories of how these three communities decided to cater to railfans, what they created and the economic impact they received as a result is presented in this chapter. Table 2.2 identified the persons interviewed in each community as well as their title as a reference for understanding who was interviewed in each community.

By asking the same structured questions (Appendix D) in each community, each participant's area of expertise and in turn responses to these questions were used to create a detailed story of the community. Because I asked the same interview questions with each individual, a wide variety of participants provided similar responses, and as such, the descriptions provided below are in aggregate form (i.e. I have not used direct quotes from participants). However, where responses were not shared among participants, individuals are identified as providing the information.

This chapter begins by providing a brief overview of each community followed by a presentation of the individual stories of the community in terms of their history, how and why they decided to cater to railfans, the economic impact they receive as a result and any drawbacks associated with this development. The chapter concludes by providing a critical analysis of common themes and unique aspects present across all three case study communities.

4.1 The Story of Rochelle, Illinois

Rochelle is nick named "The Hub City" as it has been the hub of rail and highway systems 45 minutes west of Chicago since the arrival of two western continental railroads in the late 1850's (Rochelle, 2010). Due to Rochelle's proximity to Chicago it has also been the shipment/ distribution hub for the area, being home to various canneries' (Delmonte, Stokely Van Camp), frozen food distribution warehouses, Union Pacific railway's largest intermodal facility (Global 3), a lumber distribution facility and an ethanol plant (Rochelle, 2010). All of these industries have made Rochelle "a hot bed of economic activity even in the midst of the recent economic recession" (J. Anderson, personal communication, 2011). The following paragraphs help illustrate the economic and demographic history of the area.

Rochelle's economy has been mainly industrial based, with no real tourism sector (K.Wise, personal communication, 2011). In 1998 Ken Wise decided to build a railfan park (Figure 4.1& 4.2) to host the various railfans that had been coming to Rochelle to watch the over 100 trains per day that come through.

Figure 4.1- Rochelle Railfan Park (Photo Copyright Kyle Stefanovic, 2011)



Figure 4.2- Rochelle Railfan Park (Photo Copyright Kyle Stefanovic, 2011)



This railfan park was the first of its kind to be built in North America (Longhurst, 2008). The free park offers a raised observation platform, a built-in scanner, picnic facilities, public restrooms and a gift shop with memorabilia for railfans and tourists to purchase.

The city of Rochelle is located 75 miles from downtown Chicago, and has a long history of economic development activities related to the railway.

According to Jason T. Anderson, Rochelle's economic development director, rail continues to drive the economic development of Rochelle, which, despite the current recession, continues to grow. In the last 6 years Rochelle has received nearly 1 billion dollars of new capital investment and 600- 700 jobs have been created as a result of new business coming to the Rochelle area, largely due to the access provided by the rail service.

Rochelle has two main class one railroads, the Burlington Northern Sante

Fe and the Union Pacific, which crisscross each other in the center of Rochelle.

Rochelle is the location for the largest Union Pacific Railway intermodal park in
the Union Pacific Railway system. In addition, the city of Rochelle built its own

industrial rail system and 3000 acre industrial park which connects the Union Pacific Railway to the Burlington Northern Sante Fe railroad. As a result, businesses in the 3000 acre industrial park can play one railroad against the other in terms of shipping costs. Instead of being charged a flat rate by one railroad company, the two railroad companies compete against each other for business which in turn drives down the shipping costs. Ken Wise (Rochelle's previous economic developer and man responsible for the railfan park's creation) indicated that the connection of the two class one railroads drove shipping rates down over 30 percent overnight. Consequently, Rochelle is becoming a major distribution center for a variety of products including frozen foods, lumber, building supplies, ethanol, and grain. Previous to the creation of their own railway system, Rochelle had various canners (such as Del Monte and Stokely Van Camp) for which produce was brought in from the west by the railway, canned and shipped to points eastward by rail.

4.1.0 Rochelle's Railfan Park Development

The town uses their rail assets for both industrial development purposes and for tourism. Mr. Wise, who was involved in creating Rochelle's industrial rail system and industrial park stated that Rochelle's rail assets were used for tourism purposes as he was looking for a way to help Rochelle's retail sector. At first Mr. Wise did not think Rochelle had any tourism possibilities until one day he was sitting in the office reading a newspaper article regarding local residents' complaints regarding railfans. There was so many railfans down at the diamond where the two railroads crisscrossed that the neighborhood people could not get

in and out of their driveways. Mr. Wise decided to investigate, and he found that the railfans had set up a picnic table, there was a burn barrel and a series of tents set up on what was railroad property, which made local people and the railways nervous. Mr. Wise started asking where they were from and he found there were visitors from all over the USA and from Canada. He also noted that the visitors had expensive cameras with them, along with their families; these "were not bums", but individuals of means, visiting to fulfill their rail interests.

From that day forward Mr. Wise would regularly visit the railfans, keeping a journal that recorded their place of origin. He soon realized that people came from various destinations across North America and even Europe to watch trains in Rochelle.

Through conducting this research Mr. Wise felt that if people were coming under the current conditions, the community of Rochelle had an obligation to provide some level of service, "at least washrooms". Mr. Wise called the Illinois Department of Railroads and indicated that, "I would like a list of all the places that had railroad parks, for railfans and all he got was a laugh on the other end". The Illinois State Department of Railroads said, "Look cities don't want railfans, the railroads don't want railfans, you are crazy". That did not discourage him as he felt that railfans had a right to be able to view trains in a safe and pleasant environment. He started traveling around the country looking at railfan spots to see what railfans where up against, and found that generally they were not treated well, and in some cases were even getting arrested by the railroads. Upon returning to Rochelle he told a railfan down by the diamond that he was

thinking of building a rail fan park at the diamond and the railfan just stared at him and said, "No community has ever done anything for railfans". This response indicated to Mr. Wise that he was "on the right track".

Mr. Wise then privately purchased the 4 lots and 2 houses located at the intersection of the two major rail lines. One of the houses was demolished and the other one was saved and is currently used as the visitor's center. The four lots were purchased without anyone knowing as a way to avoid the potential for increased prices, as Mr. Wise felt that if the local residents knew what his plans were then the price of land would have gone up astronomically. Due to the fact that these properties were located in between two major rail lines, this was not considered a desirable neighborhood, it was "one of these spots where the hobo's lived, it was a hobo jungle". Despite this, Mr. Wise knew it was an ideal location because of the proximity of the rail lines.

Mr. Wise also understood the importance of photography as he had previously worked in the newspapers business, so he wanted to build the park for photography as, "these people had cameras and they wanted to take pictures, take it home and view it and share it with their friends". As a result, Mr. Wise drew up and designed the blue prints taking into account the needs of photographers. The viewing platform was designed to be 18 feet high, which is the height of a locomotive, so that a railfan could stand on the platform and, "his eyes would be level with the train engineer's eyes". The park was also designed and built with many levels so that visitors can take pictures at various elevations.

After obtaining the land and developing the blue prints, Mr. Wise then called a meeting with the Parks and Recreation Department, the city of Rochelle and the Chamber of Commerce to explain his idea and ask who wanted to take it over and build and manage the park. Mr. Wise stated that during this meeting "nobody asked how the park was going to be paid for, he wasn't asking for money, he just wanted to know who wanted to own it". Mr. Wise further stated that "nobody wanted to own it except for the City and the City Manager picked up the prints and said we'll build it and walked out". Everybody was stunned because they all thought Mr. Wise's idea was "crazy". As a result, Mr. Wise was reimbursed by the city for purchasing the property and the city took ownership of the land.

Once the city had taken control of the park and decided to build it, Mr. Wise went to city council and asked to have a motel tax implemented and they approved it. Through the hotel/motel tax and grant money from the Illinois State government, the city received a total of \$250,000 dollars which covered the cost of building the park.

Even though the City had committed to building the park and had the financing to do so, Mr. Wise still had to sell this idea to the community and to achieve this, he used the rail history of Rochelle. He knew that Whitcomb locomotives had been built in Rochelle, so he searched and found one in Pennsylvania. Ken got the engine donated to the park, he "wanted kids to be able to get up on it so when the big trains rolled through the kids sitting on that little locomotive could feel the thundering train".

Mr. Wise also incorporated the Hobo history of the area. During the Depression, many people who were out of work came on the train looking for work in the Rochelle canneries. These people had a major impact on the local area, and as a result Mr. Wise had signs designed using the Hobo language, within the park. Despite his attempts to incorporate history to connect the community with the project, Mr. Wise stated it was still a tough sell as, "it wasn't a typical park, [it] did not have a playground for local kids to go play at, it wasn't a museum, it was an action park. It was created for the local merchants and the motels, its purpose was to generate tourism and get more money in the local tax base".

The railroads were also against the idea for safety reasons but because it was on city property, their permission was not required. Since the creation of the park, the railroads have changed their stance and now provide special locomotives for Rochelle's Railroad Days yearly event.

Before the park was opened, city council debated whether or not to charge an entry fee. Mr. Wise argued against that idea, asserting that "if we provide something for the people free of charge, come anytime you want, they are going to appreciate it and in turn buy gas, eat or stay overnight here and I think that's what's happened".

4.1.1 Economic Impact of Rochelle's Railfan Park

Since the park opened in August of 1998 local merchants stated that the Railfan Park has really helped as it has created business that did not previously exist and in turn has brought more money into the community. In addition, it has

created a new market. Some of the hotels provide a discount for railfans and one bed and breakfast in particular is located next to the railroad park with each of the rooms having a railroad theme (pictures, magazines, and scanner) as well as a caboose that is on display in the side yard. The railfans have clearly appreciated what the City of Rochelle has done, evidenced by the fact that they send receipts to Tourism Rochelle to illustrate the economic impact that they had on the city while in town.

A sign-in log book at the visitors center located at the railfan park and daily counts of railfans in the park are used to keep track of the railfans coming to the park. It is estimated that 30 to 40,000 railfans from all over the world come to Rochelle every year, a number that has stayed consistent even with the economic downturn in recent years. Ross Freier (Rochelle's Current Tourism Director) states that this is because, "railfanning is something people can do here 24hrs a day and it doesn't cost them anything if they don't want it to cost them anything".

Ross states that the highest percentage of railfans come from Illinois, followed by Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Iowa, Indiana and the Midwestern states. Outside of these major markets, Rochelle also gets railfans from other states, and internationally from England, Germany, France, Australia, Canada, Japan and China. Railfans originating from Illinois and Wisconsin mostly come down for the day, while railfans outside of Illinois and Wisconsin usually come for two to three days. Railfans from foreign countries come for a week or two, but when they come to Rochelle it is part of a larger railfan trip that includes various

railfan destinations in the area. The greater percentage of the people that come to the park spend the day and the majority come in the spring, summer and fall, and while people do come in the winter it is not as popular.

Rochelle also hosts an annual Railroads' Days event at the beginning of the summer; which has been running for 6 years. Mr. Freier stated that the first year a couple hundred railfans came to the event but last year approximately 3,000 railfans attended. At the Railfan Park, *Trains Magazine* in conjunction with Rochelle Tourism has put in a live webcam with sound on their website to allow railfans to watch the action online. As a result Mr. Freier states that Rochelle's railroad park website receives an average of 1,661 unique visits to their website per month and since May of 2006 when the website was created, the site has received 98,036 unique hits.

Mr. Freier states that it is really difficult to trace the specific economic impact of railfan tourism because not all businesses in town track the amount of railfan revenue and not all railfans let local business know that they are railfans. Despite the difficulty in tracking visitor expenditure, Mr. Freier knows that the economic impact is significant, given that the railfans are staying in the hotels, visiting local attractions and going shopping. He estimates the overall tax income generated from the railroad park would be close to 10% of the total economic revenue generated for the city of Rochelle. The hotel/motel tax, which is 5%, has generated between \$130,000 and \$140,000 dollars annually for Rochelle's tourism budget. Mr. Freier estimates that 25% of the \$130,000 to \$140,000

(approximately \$32,500 to \$35,000) goes to running the gift shop, advertising the railroad park and maintenance of the land.

Mr. Freier states that

"local residents thought that Mr. Wise was crazy for thinking that the railfan park was going to be something that was going to be economically viable. Now there's people in town that really love the railroad park, but there are still people in town who believe that their tax dollars are going to the railroad park and that's just not true. There is not one cent of tax payer money that went to the railroad park. All of the money that was used to build that railfan park either came from grants or from private donations. All of the money that goes to operate the park now, all comes from the hotel/motel tax which is not (personal) tax".

Mr. Freier stated that over time more people in town have come to understand the economic impact that the park has had as they are noticing all the railfans coming and spending money in the community. But Mr. Freier indicated that there are still are people who question it: "What did you see in that? Why would you go there and stand and watch trains? But until you actually come to the park and you're between the sets of tracks, it's a totally different experience".

Additionally, it is not uncommon to see local people at the railfan park, even those that were vehemently against its development.

Rochelle has hosted people from various other communities who are interested in accommodating railfans, as it is recognized as being the first community to cater to this niche market in the North America. They are interested

in seeing what Rochelle has done, how they were able to accomplish it, and what the economic impact has been for the community.

For Rochelle, railfan tourism was a way to diversify the economy and as Mr. Freier states, "it is hoped that someday through expanding what currently exists for railfans, that railfan tourism will become a major part of economic development in Rochelle, although what it is currently [here] is nothing to sneeze at". According to Mr. Freier the city plans to expand what currently exists for railfans by 1) increasing parking, as in the summer months parking becomes a challenge, 2) creating RV access and parking and 3) making the railfan park a year round destination by having enclosed places for railfans to visit in the winter months.

One point that was stressed amongst those interviewed was that creating the railfan park changed the image of the railroads in Rochelle. Mr. Wise states that local residents no longer "think of trains as an annoyance ... they see them as business and jobs, trains are the economy and it's important for people to understand that it's not just there for it to blow its horn and make us wait at the crossing, its moving merchandise, it is terribly important and I think anytime you create a park like this people's attitudes towards trains changes a little". In 2010, the City of Rochelle attracted the oldest railroad car manufacturing company in Japan and one of the things that was used as a way to entice this company was the railfan park. According to Mr. Anderson, this company ultimately choose Rochelle in part due to the fact that Rochelle has such friendly rail atmosphere and the railfan park is what helped sell that.

4.1.2 Challenges of Creating a Railfan Park

None of the participants identified any disadvantages of having developed the park. One issue that is of concern is safety, and though there have not been any incidents, the community has been proactive and set up signs to designate the safe boundaries of the park. Some people had suggested putting up a fence, but individuals involved in the creation and running of the railfan park believe that fencing will totally destroy the railfan experience, especially for photographers, as it eliminates the opportunity to be near operational trains. Mr. Freier contends that if Rochelle is going to put up a fence, "we might as well not even have a railfan park here".

4.2 The Story of Fostoria, Ohio

Fostoria, nicked named TrainCity USA, is located 2 hours from Columbus, Ohio, Cleveland Ohio and Detroit, Michigan (Fostoria, 2010). Fostoria was once known as the heart of the glass industry in the United States and more recently has been home to various automotive related industries. With the decline of the automotive industry in recent years, Fostoria's economy has been significantly affected (D.Fligor, personal communication, 2011).

Before deciding to create a railfan park, tourism was not a part of Fostoria's economy but with the decline of the automotive industry, city officials decided to capitalize on the railfans that had been coming to Fostoria. Within Fostoria, three major railways intersect one another in a triangular formation as seen in Figure 4.3.

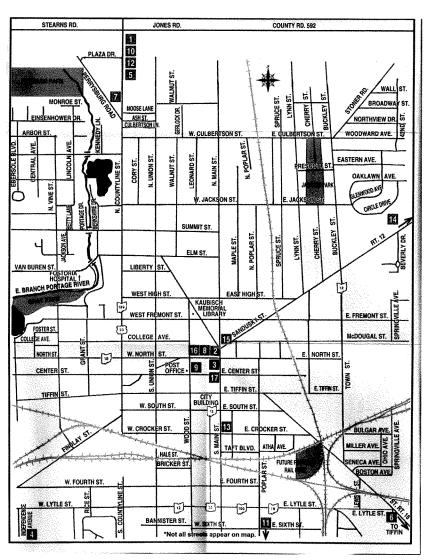


Figure 4.3- Map of Fostoria, Ohio (Fostoria, Ohio Visitors Guide Map)

As a result of this intersection, over 120 trains per day come thought the town, and consequently, railfans have been visiting this site for many years (Shuster, 2000). Currently there is no park to accommodate the railfans that frequent the area and therefore railfans view the mainline action from various railway crossings in town. City officials have recognized the large number of railfans visiting the area and has recently bought a piece of land to build a railfan park.

The city of Fostoria has a long and somewhat tumultuous history with the railroad. Fostoria used to be home to 5 major lines on which a combined 150 trains per day passed through town. Railway traffic still operates at high volumes in Fostoria, but now trains pass through the heart of the town on 3 major rail lines. With a long history of heavy freight traffic, residents of Fostoria have become accustomed to seeing trains on a regular basis, however, the multitude of railway crossings in town have become an annoyance for many residents. It is almost impossible to get through town without getting stopped by at least one train. According to Leonard Skonecki a local historian, due to the amount of railway crossings and the amount of railway traffic, Fostorians thought that the significant numbers of tracks in town would prevent the occurrence of a bank robbery because any potential robber would literally be stopped in their tracks before escaping town. Yet in May of 1934 the John Dillinger gang successfully robbed the first National Bank, escaping via the only route leaving town. While escaping they crossed only one railroad track. Regardless, this story illustrates the significance of heavy rail traffic to the history of Fostoria.

Due to the amount of freight traffic that can be seen within the confines of this small Ohio town, Fostoria has become popular amongst railfans. With the decline of the automotive industry in North America, a business that Fostoria heavily relied upon, many residents of Fostoria lost jobs and were recently hit hard by the economic recession. Fostoria was in dire need of economic stimulus, and many participants interviewed stated that railfan tourism provided the financial spark needed to ignite the town.

"with the loss of the industry in town you're not going to see the manufacturing flock to or return to the town so you have to go to something else and what else is there? You have to take your strong suit and that's what you play with and for the Town of Fostoria that strong suit is the railroads". (Dennis Fligor, Fostoria's safety service director)

As will be discussed, railfans have provided Fostoria with significant amounts of tourist-based capital for a number of years.

4.2.0 Fostoria's Railfan Park Development

For Fostoria the idea to create a railfan park to spur economic growth started around the year 2001. Railfans had been coming to Fostoria unnoticed for years to witness and enjoy the high volumes of train traffic in, and around the town. In 2001 various business and hotel owners started noticing railfans coming to Fostoria from out of state and Canada. As a result, local business owners created a train tourism group in 2001 to discuss catering specifically to railfans. In 2001 this group with help from the chamber of commerce and the Seneca Country Visitors Bureau put on Fostoria's first rail festival.

In 2005, the train tourism group became the Fostoria Rail Preservation Society (FRPS), which is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to the preservation of and education about Fostoria's railroad heritage. In an effort to promote railfan tourism in the area, a local hotel owner collaborated with the FRPS to create and distribute rail-related information packages to railfans who stayed at the hotel or who were seen trackside. The packet includes a railway

map of the area including: a brief history of railroading in Fostoria; a Fostoria visitor's guide; a brochure about the FRPS; an operation life saver, key safety tips brochure (which provides railway safety tips); and a Fostoria rail festival flyer. For a period of time. this package also included a survey for railfans to fill out, the results of which allowed the FRPS and local business owners to create a demographic profile of railfans coming to Fostoria. The results of this survey, combined with railfan guest-based information gathered at the Best Western hotel, amazed the FRPS and local business owners.

"a lot of us had no clue railfanning was such a popular entertainment choice and as a result we realized there was genuine potential for bringing some type of tourism to our community" (Joan Reinhard, Fostoria's economic development officer),

The FRPS and local business owners had discussions regarding buying land in the iron triangle area to be able to create a safe place for railfans. Some members of FRPS had visited Rochelle, Illinois and Altoona, Pennsylvania railfan parks to gather development ideas. The FRPS, as a not for profit organization, did not have the money/ access to grants to be able to build a railfan park, but the town of Fostoria did. In the beginning, the town did not own any property where the railfans congregated, so the town purchased some property there to develop the rail park.

After purchasing the land, the Town of Fostoria applied and received an enhancement grant from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to help build the park. Due to the various railway crossings in town and amount of rail

traffic, the town also received money from the Ohio Rail Development

Commission to close railway grade crossings through their grade separation

program to help increase traffic flow and emergency services response time.

Monetary aid that the town has received as a result of these grade separations has also been used to help fund the railfan park project.

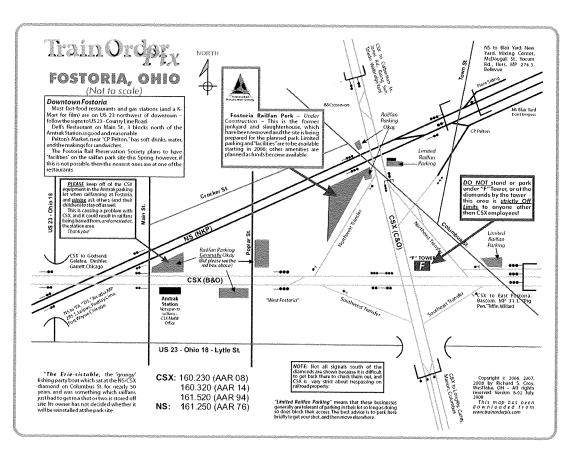
Receiving money from various associations has not come without its challenges. Since the grant money is federal, the plans to build the park become an ODOT set of plans, which have to go through a three-stage review before money is awarded. The review process is made even more difficult by the simple fact that ODOT usually reviews road infrastructure plans, not railfan parks. However, ODOT did approve the grant application and was excited about reviewing plans outside of their norm. Over a two year period plans were developed and drawn up by the town but ODOT, Norfolk Southern and CSX Railway had concerns about the entrance into the park area of Columbus Ave which was the only access point the town had into the land they owned (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4- Fostoria Railfan Park 1st Draft



After some extensive discussion with the involved parties, the CSX railroad decided they would give the town of Fostoria extra space to create a driveway access into the park off Poplar St, as seen in Figure 4.5. This entrance was determined to be safer because the distance between the two set of tracks was much wider and allowed for better entry into the park. The town then ran into another stumbling block when it was discovered that a piece of the land that CSX had donated to them was not actually owned by CSX as CSX had lost this particular parcel of land in a court case in 1910. Therefore, there is a section of property that CSX cannot donate to the project.

Figure 4.5- Overview of Fostoria, Ohio



To be able to acquire this piece of land Fostoria is currently going through a quick claim, a deed to quiet (i.e., no other entities state a claim to the property) the title. This means that the town has to post an advertisement in the local paper for 6 weeks seeking financial support to purchase the property. Once the town goes through that process and quiets the title, it can move forward with the project. Unfortunately, the entire process takes at minimum 90 days. While the NS and CSX railways had concerns about the original entrance it is important to note that the railways while excited about the project, have concerns from the standpoint of safety. These fears have been allayed by the development of the park, which will provide railfans with a safe area to enjoy viewing trains, rather than the current, dangerous situation of indiscriminate viewing all over town.

In terms of designing the park, the Town of Fostoria held two public meetings to discuss park layout and to try and get people involved. The town also wanted to involve railfans in discussing how they wanted the park to look and operate. Through these public meetings, the ODOT reviews, and through working the NS and CSX railways, the latest plan (Figure 4.5) shows the driveway entering off Poplar Street, parking for vehicles and buses, a main restroom area, and the viewing platform. The land the town purchased was an old scrap yard known as the "bone yard", and as a result is a brown field site and there are some areas that the town has had to quarantine because of the contamination. The plan is to build the parking lot over the high contamination areas and leave the rest of the park as open green space.

Due to the way the grant funds are set up there is limited funding in terms of what projects can be completed by the Town. Construction of the Railfan Park itself is slated for early summer of 2012, but could fall back to late summer. This is because the project will have to follow the time frame allotted by the association which is providing the grant money. The whole process of drawing up the plans started in October of 2007 and according to Dan Thornton (town engineer),

"from an engineer standpoint starting in 2007 and having construction done in 2012 is quick. In comparison a new overpass that the town just constructed took 10 years before construction started, so the railfan parking taking 6 years from inception to construction is fairly efficient even though the railfans and everybody is anxious to see it happen yesterday, it's just not that simple, especially when you are getting grant money".

The estimated total construction cost as of February 9th 2011 according to was \$(USD) 1.7 million. The ODOT enhancement grant is an 80/20 split so the Town of Fostoria is responsible for \$321,000 of the \$1.7 million. Of that \$321,000, \$68,000 has been covered by funds from the Ohio Rail Development Commission as a result of grade crossing closures bringing the town's total responsibility to \$253,000. Mr. Thornton stats that "this represents a major investment on the community's part, and should therefore not be taken lightly".

From an economic standpoint Fostoria is hoping to get a return on its investment through tax revenues generated by railfans staying in hotels, buying

gas, and eating at local restaurants. But the town also wants to try and draw people from the Railfan Park to the downtown area to spur further economic growth in terms of entrepreneurs creating business to cater to railfans such as bed and breakfasts, photography and hobby shots.

Essentially, the dream is for Fostoria to become an ideal tourist destination for all types of railfans, and family and friends. To that point, the town just recently repainted one of their water towers and is slated to paint the other one with a railway logo on it, advertising Fostoria as a rail center. Fostoria is home to various other rail assets, including 3 standing passenger stations, a freight house and two interlocking towers. Most railfans are not aware that these assets exist, according to Aaron Gonya the vice president of the FRPS, because they come to town, park and watch the trains at Columbus Ave or the B&O parking lot down at the old Amtrak station and fail to take in the excellent viewing points that the rest of the town has to offer. As a result, the FRPS is working on creating a map to identify all the interesting rail spots in town to further promote railfan tourism in the area.

4.2.1 Economic Impact of Railfan Tourism on Fostoria

At this point in time, without a Railfan Park, business owners and those involved with park development are unsure of the specific economic impact that railfan tourism has on Fostoria. They do, however, state that it definitely has an impact as even without the park it is estimated that 5000+ railfans per year from all over the world visit Fostoria, numbers that have stayed consistent even with the economic recession and are sure to rise, as railfanning serves as an

economically friendly form of entertainment. It is estimated that railfan tourism makes up 11-20 % of Fostoria's economy, a number which is hoped to increase with the introduction of a Railfan Park.

Similarly to Rochelle, railfan tourism was found to be a seasonal market with the majority of people coming during the spring, summer and fall (Fostoria Rail Preservations Society, 2008²). One local hotel reports that during those seasons they average anywhere between 80-100 railfans per month who spend at least 2 days in town, some spending upwards of a week or more. It was also found that railfans who visit and stay in Fostoria use it as a hub and make day trips to other railfan sites such as Deshler (another Railfan Park), and the train yard in Bellevue, Ohio

While in town, railfans are exclusively railfanning, but if it starts raining or traffic gets slow, railfans were found to also visit local antique markets and the local glass museum. The railfans coming to Fostoria were found to be mostly males who traveled with other railfans or with their family. If they travel with their family it was found that the family visited the local glass museum, as well as other small tourist attractions. For that reason Fostoria hopes to create other visitor attractions for the whole family so while dad is railfanning the rest of the family has something to do. From their perspective, the benefits provided by railfan tourism cannot be overstated, and for its part, Fostoria plans to evolve its

² In 2008 conducted a survey in railway packets distributed to railfans trackside and at a local motel and from a local hotel establishments records.

local tourism market to meet and reach beyond the basic needs of the most successful railfan parks.

4.2.2 Challenges of Creating a Railfan Park

While conducting the various interviews in Fostoria I asked how local residents felt about the railfan park development. Responses indicated that residents had mixed opinions, some were not aware of the benefits, while others could not contain their excitement over the potential possibilities that a successful Railfan Park could afford their town and surrounding community. Various people interviewed acknowledged that some believe that creating a railfan park is a poor use of money, but also noted that people with such complaints do not understand the economic benefits of tourism. Town safety/service director, Mr. Fligor, stated that he has had to lay off people from the police and fire department due to declining town revenues. Many residents have complained about the layoffs, and do not understand how money can be allocated to fund the construction of a Railfan Park. In response, Mr. Fligor stated that the "railpark is what will help my general fund, it brings money into town and with more money in the general fund as a result of railfans coming to town then I can hire people back. But the majority of people who are not educated or been exposed to tourism don't see it."

4.3 The Story of Deshler, Ohio

Deshler, known as the Corn City, is located approximately 45 minutes away from Fostoria, and 30 miles from Napoleon, Findlay, and Bowling Green, Ohio. Deshler was home to various automotive industries much like Fostoria.

Currently, Grammonex is the main industry, a company that makes cancer drugs out the pollen from various plants; in addition, there are a few other smaller industries that provide local employment (Malaham, 2011).

Tourism has not been a part of Deshler's economy much like the other communities visited during phase two of this research. A railfan park was constructed on private property by railfans for railfans in 1997. The railfan park is located between a connecting track and close to the intersection of the two rail lines that pass through Deshler as seen in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6- Deshler Railfan Park (Photo Copyright Kyle Stefanovic, 2011)



2.5 Conclusion

Deshler is located a mere 45 minutes from Fostoria. The story of its railfan park development is quite different from the other locations visited as part of phase two of this research. Deshler's railfan park was not created for economic development purposes; instead it was created for railfans, by railfans. The land where the Railfan Park is currently located was donated to the Barlow Township historical society by a former local business man. The land is one of a few places

in the United States of America that has private property inside a connecting track. The area itself was originally a disused, neglected area that railfans would gather at to watch trains. In 1997 Don Rutter initiated the park's development. By beginning to take care of the land and After cleaning up the area the CSX railway built and donated a shelter house to the township to be used as the covered area for the Railfan Park; this building is now dedicated to Don and his wife, to acknowledge their efforts in creating the park. Since Don's initial work the park has been financed by donations and run by volunteers. The money from the donation box that is located in the park goes towards paying the electrical bill for the lights and scanner, and towards the portable washroom, all of which costs approximately \$ (US)150 per month depending on usage.

4.3.0 Economic Impact of Deshler's Railfan Park

Mr. Mahlman, through driving by the park and talking with railfans at the park estimates that 5,000 railfans from all over the world visit Deshler's Railfan Park per year, the vast majority during the summer and on weekends. On any given weekend there can be 100 people at the park. Of the people who come to the park, some come because they read about it in *Trains Magazine*, but many are regulars who come every year in their campers to set up for a week.

Deshler itself does not have a hotel or motel, the closest being located in North Baltimore, approximately 15 minutes from Deshler. As a result, the potential economic impact of the railfan park on the Town of Deshler is minimized: although it is not unusual, for example, for a railfan to spend a couple hundred dollars over the course of a visit. Despite this, Mr. Mahlman states, that

local businesses are starting to realize the monetary benefits of railfan tourism. For this reason, the possibility is being discussed of expanding the park and converting some of the downtown buildings into a bed and breakfast to increase the economic impact of railfan tourism.

4.3.1 Drawbacks of Creating Railfan Park

In terms of how the local community feels about the railfan park there is some conflict between local residents and railfans. Sometimes local residents, "drive by and make fun of us but we just ignore them although they can be kind of funny at times." (Mahlman). Local residents poke fun at the railfans because they do not understand the enjoyment that is found in viewing, and photographing trains. Mr. Mahlman stated that he would recommend other communities create railfan parks like Deshler has, but stressed that not everyplace could create a park, as significant amounts of rail traffic is needed in order to attract the most seasoned railfans. Tourists come to Deshler because of the high volume of train activity that passes through the town, and according to Mr. Mahlman this is an absolute requirement for the success of any railfan park.

4.4 Case Study Analysis and Discussion

A critical examination of all three communities illustrates a number of commonalities and differences, in terms of their process, funding and economic impacts. Table 4.1 summarizes the way in which each community developed and funded their railfan tourism projects, as well as illustrating the economic impact they receive as a result of this development.

Table 4.1- Side by Side Comparison of 3 case study communities

Dayl	Rochelle, Illinois	Fostoria, Ohio	Deshler, Ohio
Park Completed	1998	Anticipated completion summer of 2012	1999
Idea	Noticing railfans blocking driveways.	Noticed railfans and created train tourism group to understand these people discuss accommodating them. Viewed as opportunity to diversify economy.	Created park because land was donated for that purpose.
Research	Initially visitor data gathered from license plate count and through talking with railfans. Visitor data now obtained through logbook at railfan park. Before creating park visited Horseshoe Curve to see what they had done.	Visitor data collected in survey included in railfan packages distributed at local hotel and to railfans sitting by the tracks. Traveled to Rochelle, Illinois to see what they had done.	None
Purpose	To generate tourism and get more money in the local tax base.	To generate tourism and get more money in the local tax base.	To create a safe place to watch trains.
Developed	By the Town of Rochelle for photography and to create a safe place for railfans to go	By the Town of Fostoria and the FRPS to create a safe and accessible place for railfans to go.	For railfans by railfans to provide a safe place for railfans to be able to watch trains

Funding	1) created new hotel/motel tax to	Ohio department of transportation	Donations
	support railfan park development 2) Grant monies from the Illinois State Government	enhancement grant, 2) grade separation monies, 3) Use of hotel/motel tax to support railfan park development	
Cost	1) \$250,000 to build the park which came from Illinois State Tourism Grant and hotel/motel tax 2) \$32,500-\$35,000 per year from hotel/motel tax to run gift shop/visitors center, advertise and conduct maintenance on park	1) 1.7 Million to build. 1.36 million from the ODOT enhancement grant, \$68,000 from grade closures, \$ 253,000 the town is responsible for a portion of which will be covered by hotel/motel tax. 2) Not known how much it will cost per year to run, costs to be covered by hotel/motel tax.	1) Land and Shelter house donated. 2) \$150 per month to run electricity and have port potties which is covered by donations.
Community Support (*Based on participant opinions*)	Limited in the beginning, community has started to realize its potential. Tried to sell it to the community by incorporating local history.	Blue Collar community that is not well versed in tourism. Fostoria Rail Preservation Society attempting to educate local community about railfan tourism. Consultation with community on parks design	Limited, some people from the community yell at railfans that are in the park

Partnership with Railway	Railways did not want the railfan park due to safety concerns. Railway has since come to see the railfan park as a safe place for railfans to go.	Constant communication with both the NS and CSX railways to make sure that it is something they are OK with them	CSX donated the shelter house to the railfan park. Work with the railway to ensure the safety of the park
Economic Impact	Hard to track as business do not track railfan expenditures although it is estimated that 1) Consistently 30-40,000 railfans per year from all over the world visit 2) Railfan Tourism makes up approximately 10% of overall economic revenue	Hope that it will be significant. Currently estimated that 1) Consistently 5000+ railfans per year from all over the world visit. 2) Railfan Tourism makes up approximately 11-20% of overall economic revenue.	Not developed for economic purpose although it is estimated that 1) 5000 railfans per year visit from all over the world 2) Railfan Tourism is minimal as there are no hotels located in community. Some local businesses have noticed the extra business.
Future	Plans for future development to increase parking, RV access and to make it a year round destination	Plans for future development into a destination for the whole family	Plans to acquire more land and covert downtown buildings into Bed and Breakfast.

When examining the common themes and differences across all three communities it becomes obvious that Deshler's railfan park development is significantly different in comparison to the other two communities. For Rochelle and Fostoria, the Railfan Park was created to enhance tourism and economic development, while Deshler's railfan park was created by railfans as a safe place

to enjoy their hobby with little consideration given to revenue generation. This fundamental purpose sets Deshler apart from Fostoria and Rochelle.

Although Fostoria and Rochelle have a similar purpose for developing a park, how they made this decision varies. Fostoria turned to railfan park development to capitalize on their existing assets as they were hit hard by economic recession, i.e. they turned to railfan tourism in a time of need. In contrast, Rochelle turned to railfan park development as a way to diversify their overall economy and put money into the retail sector; their economy was thriving when the idea to develop a railfan park emerged. These results illustrate that railfan park development has been undertaken as a form of economic diversification and in times of need.

Shifting attention towards research that was conducted about railfans before or after creating a railfan park revealed that visitor logs/sign in books were used in both Rochelle and Fostoria. Deshler, on the other hand, did not conduct research, as they were not interested in developing demographic profiles or determining economic impact. While visitor logs/sign in books and license plate counts provide general information about where people are from, if they sign the log book or are recorded during the license plate count, this does not provide information about how long they stay, where they are spending their money, if they are satisfied with their experience or whether they will return. To address some of these concerns, the Town of Fostoria included a small survey with their rail packets to determine some base-line information about the railfans coming to

Fostoria. Specifically the survey administered by the Fostoria Rail Preservation (FRPS) from May 2006 to December of 2007 asked railfans:

- 1) If they had heard of the FRPS
- 2) If they had heard about the boneyard area becoming a rail park
- 3) What they thought of the railfan park location,
- 4) What amenities they would like to see present in the railfan park,
- 5) If having Bob Lorenz (a famed rail photographer involved in the rail park planning process) provided confidence that the park will be railfan friendly
- 6) If they would care if Fostoria become a quite zone, i.e no train whistles.
- 7) What their occupation is
- 8) If they were retired
- 9) How many years they had been railfanning
- 10) How often they come to Fostoria per year to watch trains
- 11) Where they come from
- 12) If they spend the night and how many
- 13) If they do not spend the night how long they stayed
- 14) Who they come to Fostoria with
- 15) If they purchased food while in town and where
- 16) Other items purchased

The results from this survey were used to help get government grants for the railfan park project. Information from surveys like this provides more detailed research regarding railfans' economic impact, information neither Rochelle nor Deshler have gathered.

Another common theme across all three case study communities is that local businesses do not keep track of railfan expenditures. While it is acknowledged that tracking railfan and tourist expenditures is somewhat problematic, having some numbers help communities understand potential economic impact. Such information, as opposed to broad estimations, provides potential entrepreneurs, which all three communities stated they would like to support, with detailed information about who the market is and what their needs are. Knowing this information helps entrepreneurs create businesses to fill these needs and be profitable. Deshler, while not specifically interested in the economic impact of railfan tourism, could use such information to determine if there is a need for a bed and breakfast. Potential business owners are going to want to know such information not only in Deshler but in other communities who hope to attract railfan related business.

Having economic impact research is important for explaining the economic benefits and potential for catering to a niche tourism market is clearly important to share with community residents; participants in the three case study communities involved with this research all indicated that they have struggled to "sell" the idea to their local citizens. The FRPS is attempting to educate Fostoria residents on railfan tourism and its impact by providing tours during their railroad days to residents as well as railfans to show them what Fostoria has to offer. While illustrating how many railfans are in the community they ask participants to look at the various US states and countries represented on the railfan license plates. They then explain that these people come from various places to watch and

photograph trains in Fostoria, spending money at restaurants and hotels illustrating the economic impact they have on Fostoria. In contrast, to educate its residents and to gain support for railfan tourism, Rochelle used rail and hobo elements of their local history to connect the community to the park. All of these examples illustrate the common theme of a lack of community support and understanding of tourism and its impact on the local economy.

Comparing the cost to build each park with its associated economic impact reveals interesting results. The funding that these communities received to help build their railfan parks varied significantly. Rochelle got money from their hotel/motel tax and grants, Fostoria has received funding from a variety of granting associations as well as a hotel/motel tax and Deshler had the land and shelter house donated to them. These various funding sources have resulted in three different development processes. For example, Fostoria's railfan park development has been largely shaped by the granting associations who have to approve the railfan park plans. This has meant that Fostoria's railfan park has taken much longer to build then Rochelle's or Deshler's because of the levels of approval they have to go through.

Not only has it taken longer to build Fostoria's railfan parks but it has also cost substantially more money. Deshler had its land donated while a private individual purchased the land for the park in Rochelle and offered it to the city.. In Fostoria, the land owner of the potential building site was aware of the towns plan to build a railfan park and that knowledge increased the sale price. As a result, the town paid more for the property than what it was worth and then had to

spend money to clean it up as it was a contaminated brownfield site.

Consequently, before construction of the park has even begun the cost of acquiring the land and cleaning it up has been substantial.

It is difficult to make an economic impact comparison between all three case study communities as Rochelle is an established railfan tourism destination, while Fostoria is currently in the process of developing its site. Deshler is an established destination but they do not advertise their park as it was not developed for economic purposes, rather Deshler is known by word of mouth While they cannot be compared from an economic standpoint, in all three communities railfans were already coming prior to the park development, though there are no numbers to indicate the levels of visitation. However, it is reasonable to assume that visitation has increased. Having railfans present before the creation of the park provides an interesting point of discussion as all three communities built their infrastructure based on a "build it, they are already coming" philosophy rather than the highly criticized "build it and they will come" philosophy which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Each of the communities has had to develop a relationship with the railways. Fostoria and Deshler have had a working relationship with the railways from the beginning as Rochelle has developed a railfan park previously which may have paved the way for this relationship. In Rochelle, the railways were at first not receptive to the idea but now that the park has been built they acknowledge and appreciate the safety aspect that the park brings. Safety is a common theme across all three communities. Creating a park for all three

communities provided safe places for railfans to be able to watch and photograph trains instead of being sprawled all over the community.

Regardless of where the idea came from, how much it cost, how it was funded, and what economic impact each town receives as a result, all three towns are in agreement that the creation of the park has been and will continue to be a benefit to the community as their construction has cleaned up derelict parts of town. It has also put each town "on the map" and has illustrated that although they did not think they were a destination with a viable market, railfans worldwide know the names of Rochelle, Fostoria, and Deshler as desirable railfan destinations.

4.6 Conclusion

As exemplified through this research, the development of railfan tourism has occurred in various ways, though there are common themes that emerged. First there is a pattern of development between communities who want to develop a railfan park for tourism and economic purposes as opposed to a community who develops because of the generosity of one railfan who wishes to accommodate fellow railfans

Second, although the ways railfan parks are developed for tourism and economic purpose vary in terms of how started, development costs, funding and economic impact, both Rochelle and Fostoria follow the same fundamental process of a) noticed railfans and discussed catering for them, b) purchased land to develop a park where the most trains could be seen c) received funding to

support the development and d) receive an economic impact in the form of increased tax dollars being spent and local business getting new customers.

In the following chapter the common themes and unique aspects from phases one and two of this research are compared and contrasted to paint a more complete picture of railfan tourism development and the associated economic impacts. This comparison/contrast includes a comparison to literature.

Chapter Five: Critical Examination

Each phase of this research is compared and contrasted in this chapter to examine railfan tourism development in North America in terms of how and why it was undertaken and the economic impact that has resulted from this niche market. Phase one illustrated that railfan tourism has been undertaken in various forms, funded in various ways and as a result, has seen varying economic impact. A further examination revealed that those communities who had developed railfan parks received the greatest economic benefit. Phase two further examined the development and economic impact of railfan park development through interviews conducted in three case study communities, extending and deepening my understanding of the data from phase one.

Following Charmaz's (2006) grounded theory approach, this critical discussion includes a review of relevant literature to examine the findings within the context of the overall field of tourism research. This chapter begins by discussing the similarities and differences found between both phases of this research. Following that a conceptual understanding of railfan tourism is identified and discussed which includes a framework of the way in which railfan tourism development should be undertaken.

5.1 Similarities

Through examining the results of the two phases of this research various themes emerged that illustrated similarities and differences between the two data sets. The identified similarities included the themes of planning frameworks, economic impact, defining success, build it, they are already coming, economic

diversification and creating space (see Table 2.1, p.33). The following subsections provide a discussion of each of these themes, with reference to relevant literature.

5.1.0 Planning Frameworks

A similarity that emerged was that railfan tourism development has not followed a formula for development (planning framework), rather each community has catered to railfans in their own unique way. This varying development process has led to communities catering to railfans based upon what railfans are currently doing in their community. Gartner (2004) argues that most rural developments in North America are unplanned. Furthermore Butler et. al (1998) state that there is no clear concept in terms of rural tourism policy or planning and therefore no uniform framework to follow when developing rural tourism, particularly within a North American context. This research has supported the findings of Gartner (2004) and Butler et. al (1998) as while similarities can be found between how each railfan tourism destination developed, each was developed in their own unique way with little to no planning.

Based on their study of rural tourism developments in Canada,

MacDonald and Jolliffe (2003) have determined that there are four general
stages of rural tourism development, and a comparison with their findings
illustrates that the processes for the case study communities is very similar. In
Stage 1, MacDonald and Jolliffe (2003) have found that a few residents will
recognize opportunities and integrate tourism resources into their planning. In the
case of my research, it was manily local railans who recognized the potential

their community had to develop tourism products and therefore approached local business and government

In stage 2, MacDonald and Jolliffe (2003) have found that community groups plan and implement tourism strategies as part of economic development. In this stage the government plays a major role in terms of providing funding, support, etc. Railfan Tourism development has again followed this stage of development. The idea for developing railfan tourism was brought to local community groups, such as the Fostoria Rail Preservation Society and the Rochelle economic development cooperation, who then took on the task of determining the appropriate funding sources and processes to develop this niche market.

In stage 3, MacDonald and Jolliffe (2003) found that communities develop partnerships and a formal tourism body which help to turn development plans into attractions. In this stage educational programs are developed and better planning occurs to ensure long-term preservation of local assets. Railfan tourism has again followed this stage of development as many of the communities who catered to railfans did not have a formal tourism body. Through catering to railfans formal tourism organizations were developed to handle catering to this niche market. Railfan Tourism development has lacked educational programs and better planning for long term preservation of local assets. As will be discussed later in this chapter, educating local residents regarding tourism, especially in communities which have not been exposed to tourism, is critical for the long term success of railfan tourism development.

In stage 4, MacDonald and Jolliffe (2003) found that fully centralized, cooperative, long-term planning and marketing of tourism occurs. Railfan tourism development to date has fallen short in this stage of development. Despite 12 years of railfan tourism development in Rochelle, fully centralized, cooperative long term planning and marketing has yet to occur but is something that all communities who have catered to railfans and plan on catering to railfans should strive for. Fostoria's railfan tourism development is coming close to accomplishing this stage of planning but much work still needs to be done in educating and getting support from local residents.

Another major theme that emerges from the literature and from this research is the need for community based planning. Several authors (MacDonald and Jolliffe, 2003; Wilson et. al, 2001; Sharpley et. al, 2007) contend that local residents need to become involved in the planning process to obtain effective tourism planning and positive long term outcomes. Sharply et al. (2007) further discusses how important a community approach to tourism development is in obtaining funding and suggest that community involvement is a key element in successful tourism development. For example, Slee, Farr & Snowdon (1997) state that rural tourism should: (i) be embedded within a diverse local economy; (ii) make use of local products as inputs (crafts, food, etc.); (iii) employ local people and yield them satisfaction and enhanced self-esteem; (iv) not place unacceptable burdens on the environment; and (v) respect local traditions and ways of life. Reid, Fuller, Haywood and Bryden (1993), echo these points and

offer a tourism planning process model that attempts to map out how communities should establish tourism in their jurisdiction (Figure 5.1).

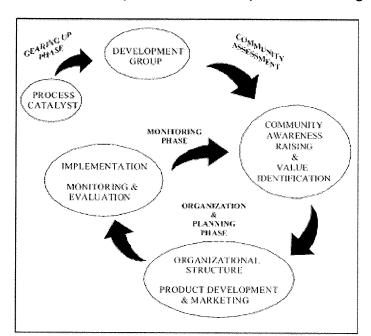


Figure 5.1 Community Tourism Development Planning Model.

Source: Reid, Fuller, Haywood and Bryden (1993)

Evaluating a railfan tourism development process within Reid, Fuller, Haywood and Bryden's (1993) community based tourism planning framework reveals that railfan tourism developments across all three case studies are just getting to the community awareness raising and value identification phase. All communities involved in this research had a process catalyst: in Rochelle it was a local person noticing the presence of railfans, in Fostoria it was two development groups (Fostoria Rail Preservation Society, Fostoria Economic Development Cooperation), and in Deshler, it was a group of volunteers.

The community assessment phase has not occurred in any of the communities, except Fostoria, where they have assessed what the community is

interested in. Furthermore the local residents in Deshler and Rochelle have not been educated in terms of the value of tourism; in contrast, Fostoria has made several attempts at providing this information through tours conducted for local residents.

Examining the product development and marketing phase of Reid et al. (1993) framework reveals that railfan tourism is somewhat of an anomaly compared to most tourism products. As will be discussed in a later section, railfans are already coming to these communities and local leaders are choosing to build infrastructure and encourage business developments that will support and grow this market. Therefore the need to determine a market for the product is not an issue, but developing the product is the area of concentration. Amongst railfans, most hot spot railfan destinations are well known prior to railfan park development. This raises the question of whether building a railfan park creates a larger economic impact or if the economic opportunities are already significant without park development.

While some communities such as Rochelle have implemented their railfan tourism plans and are further along in the process, they, like the other communities in this research, do not monitor or evaluate the success of railfan tourism development. This is a crucial part of the Reid et. al. (1993) framework.

As exemplified in this research (summarized in Table 4.1), the development of railfan tourism has occurred in various ways. Close examination of the three case studies illustrates that although these variations exist, common themes begin to emerge across all developments. First there is a pattern of

development between communities which want to develop a railfan park for tourism and economic purposes as opposed to a community which develops other ventures. Second, although the ways parks are developed for tourism and economic purposes vary in terms of how they got the idea, how much they cost, how they were funded and the economic impact, they follow the same fundamental process of a) someone notices railfans and begin discussions on how the community can capitalize on their presence, b) land is purchased where the most trains can be seen to develop a park c) funding is sought to support the development and d) the community businesses and local government begin to recognize the economic impact in the form of increased tax dollars being spent and local business getting new customers.

Another similarity between the results from both phases of the research was that the kinds of products created for railfan tourism development differed between sites. In most cases, however, the community does not just develop a railfan park, but they do so in conjunction with other products or services (e.g., creating a map of railway locations, providing discounts for railfans, having railway themed restaurants).

Lastly this research revealed that those communities who have recognized railfans have developed products and services to support them. Interestingly the idea to cater to railfans was found to have been brought forward by railfans, either through local railfans talking with various community groups and organizations or through being noticed in town. While railfans themselves were found to be creating recognition and awareness of themselves it was

illustrated in phase two of this research that much of the process of railfan development has been conducted by non-railfans. This illustrates that while railfans sparked the idea, it is non-railfans who have taken charge of development.

Through examining the relationship between planning frameworks and railfan tourism development it becomes clear that railfan tourism development has not followed a set planning framework. Rather most communities have created a product that they feel will support what they see railfans already doing, and as a result, what works for one community may not work for another. While each community has catered in their own unique way, similarities can be found between developments. However, the uniqueness has led to a disconnect between existing tourism development frameworks and their application to railfan tourism development. As a result an ideal railfan tourism development framework is presented later in this chapter.

5.1.1 Economic Impact

Through examining both phases of this research it became clear that those communities who are aware of railfan tourism have catered to them in varying ways or are considering it, if more research was present about railfans and their potential economic impact. Those communities that were not aware of railfans indicated an interest in catering to this niche market but required information about what railfan tourism is and its potential economic impact. In both instances the results of this research identified a need for more research

about railfan tourism and its economic impact, as limited research exists regarding railfans tourism.

This research has shown that creating a Railfan Park, developing signage and advertising this product yields the greatest economic impact. Creating a railfan park is not for every community as the right ingredients need to be in place, which include: 1) the number of trains that can been seen in a concentrated area in one 24 hour period, which supports Stefanovic's (2009) findings, 2) A good place to photograph/video the passing trains and 3) safe access for viewing.

Funding sources also had a direct influence on economic impact.

Accessing various funding sources and in turn, needing several levels of approval were found to be common themes in the case studies and more generally in the larger sample. The kinds of funding required and associated approvals were dependent on what was developed. Those communities that claimed significant economic impact from railfan tourism received federal, state/provincial and or municipal funding for their projects. As might be expected, these communities were also the ones who built railfan parks, a project that requires substantial funding.

The purpose of catering to railfans also had a direct influence on economic impact as evidenced by the story of Deshler, Ohio. Those communities (Rochelle and Fostoria for example) that have accommodated railfans for tourism and economic development purposes report positive economic impact from these developments. In contrast, Deshler did not develop the railfan park for tourism

purposes, but for local railfans, and participants there are less inclined to be positive about railfan tourism's contribution to the local economy and they are not developing services or products to support greater economic impact.

This research illustrates that railfan tourism development is high risk, high reward as developing a railfan park cost substantially more money than any of the other development initiatives (such as maps or pamphlets) and as a result required more funding. Creating a map and providing discounts does have an economic impact but not as much as creating a railfan park. A railfan park encourages longer stays and more spending as illustrated in both phases of this research. Dolnicar et al. (2008) state that travel and hospitality enterprises share a common interest in encouraging tourists to part with as much of their discretionary income as possible. Several studies, have reported a positive association between length of stay and tourism expenditures; (Jang, Bai, Hong, & O'Leary, 2004; Kastenholz, 2005; Kim, Han, & Chon, 2008; Kozak, Gokovali, & Bahar, 2008; Laesser & Crouch, 2006; Mehmetoglu, 2007 & Wang, Rompf, Severt, & Peerapatdit, 2006) as the longer a tourists spends in a community the more likely they are to spend money at local establishments.

Those communities that have created railfan parks report that while there is a noticeable economic impact, they would like it to increase and have plans to expand their railfan park development as well as provide attractions for the whole family.

Both phases of this research revealed that the economic impact of railfan tourism is difficult to determine because local business for the most part do not

track railfan expenditures and the communities do not conduct economic impact studies. As a result the numbers provided for the purpose of this research were for the most part best guess estimates, although some communities like Fostoria have done some research regarding the economic impact of railfan tourism. From the estimates that were provided, railfan tourism was found to generate extra income for existing business and put increased money into the local tax base, but it does not create or support many jobs. The research illustrated that railfans spend most of their time railfanning but when they are not, they eat at local restaurants, buy gas, stay in local hotels and visit attractions. English, Marcouiller & Cordell (2000) state that many expenditures made by tourists fall into one of four economic sectors: lodging (including hotels, motels, campgrounds, and inns), eating/drinking (restaurants and bars), retail (grocery stores, gas stations, and gift shops), and recreation services (ski areas, golf courses, and amusement parks). When determining the economic impact that tourism has on rural communities, separating tourist spending from resident spending or visitors arriving for business travel is a critical step (English, Marcouiller & Cordell, 2000), one that has yet to be done in railfan tourism destinations.

When examining the impacts of these expenditures, Ennew (2003) suggests that tourism expenditures should be considered under three headings, direct effects, indirect effects and induced effects. Wilson et. al (2001) contend that tourism particularly helps two types of small businesses in rural areas: those directly involved (e.g., attractions and hotels/motels); and those indirectly

involved in tourism (e.g., gas stations and grocery stores). "Direct effects arise from expenditures made by tourists which immediately generate income for businesses and households though employment, revenue and taxation" (Ennew, 2003, p.3). For railfan tourism these direct effects would come from a railfan staying at local hotels, eating at local restaurants, buying gas and spending money at other attractions. By spending money at these establishments the "indirect effects of tourism arise as initial income received by households, government and local businesses is re-spent on activities necessary to provide the products and services purchased by tourists" (Ennew, 2003, p.3). "This indirect expenditure provides further income to other businesses, to households and to government, they in turn will re-spend the income received in order to buy necessary products and will provide income to other businesses, households and governments" (Ennew, 2003, p.3). Through this process the "initial expenditure by tourism can have significant additional effects throughout the rest of the economy, resulting in increased income and expenditure by a range of different groups, many of whom are not directly connected with tourism" (Ennew, 2003, p.4). This process of spending and re-spending is commonly described as the multiplier effect. Wilson et. al (2001) state that rural tourism works well with many existing rural enterprises (such as agriculture) and can generate important secondary income for such households (Wilson et. al., 2001).

As a result tourism in many rural areas is closely tied to small businesses (Gartner, 2004). The rural tourism industry is heavily characterized by small, family-centered enterprises (Fleischer & Felsenstein, 2000). This is due to the

fact that tourism provides an economic base for these small businesses that might not otherwise exist in rural communities (Wilson et. al, 2001). This is exemplified in railfan tourism as the railfans coming to town offer an additional source of revenue to existing local businesses. The communities involved in this research also stated that through catering to railfans there is an opportunity for entrepreneurs to create new businesses to support railfans needs. As an industry that is dominated by small businesses, tourism provides many opportunities for entrepreneurs (Wall, 1999) and helps encourage entrepreneurship and the development of new small businesses (Douglas, Douglas and Derret, 2001). As a result, entrepreneurship is critical to tourism development and plays an important role in developing tourism in communities with no tradition of attracting visitors (Kokkranikal and Morrison, 2002; Russell and Faulkner, 2004; Harrison and Schipani, 2007), much like the communities involved in this research. While all of these businesses create new jobs, these jobs are often seasonal and have low wages (Fredrick 1993) which is important to consider in the context of this research as railfan tourism will not replace jobs lost to a decline in the economy. For example, those residents in Fostoria who have lost their job due to the changing automotive industry will not be able to transition into the tourism industry and make the same salary they did at the factory where they previously worked, furthermore as this research found railfan tourism creates minimal or no jobs to be able to transition into.

This connection between rural tourism and small businesses is key to the success of rural tourism, as these small businesses need to buy into, and

support the overall tourism product. The results of this research revealed that some local businesses have bought into and support the idea while others were still unsure of the economic impact of railfan tourism and as a result have not fully bought into or support the idea. Fleischer & Felsenstein (2000) state that even minimal support from small businesses can yield substantial economic and social returns for the rural community as a whole.

When examining the economic impact results of this research it is important to consider why railfan parks were found to have the greatest economic impact. It may be because these communities have catered to railfans by creating parks and they recognize railfans coming to the park and visiting local business. In contrast it is more difficult to recognize railfans in places who have just developed signage or advertised. Also those communities who have developed railfan parks also have conducted some research regarding the economic impact of railfans to support the development of the park. When this fact is considered in conjunction with the estimated economic impact numbers provided by participants, it is difficult to determine if the development of a railfan park really results in the highest economic impact. Combining the two data sets also revealed that more railfans were present in towns that built parks. This again begs the question of whether more railfans are actually present in these communities or are these communities more aware of railfans because they have developed a park.

5.1.2 Defining Success

Those communities that were aware of railfan tourism and accommodated this niche market have had varying economic "success" as illustrated previously in table 4.1. It is difficult to determine what is successful in terms of railfan tourism development, as success is dependent upon the purpose for catering to railfans. Defining success is also dependent on being able to understand on a more precise level what the economic impact of railfan tourism is, something that is not truly known.

Markey and Vodden (2000) and Pierce (1999) as found in Koster and Randall (2005) propose using "success factor frameworks" to be able to determine the success of community economic developments. Their success factor frameworks identify four internal capacity areas (human, social, economic and ecological) with indicators that allow communities to asses and monitor its own internal capacity. The North Central Regional Centre for Rural Development (NCRCRD) at lowa State University has developed a similar indicator framework (Flora et. al. 1999 as found in Koster and Randall, 2005). The NCRCRD framework identifies internal attributes of a community and measures the success and sustainability of chosen development paths based on human socioeconomic and ecological attributes. It is an outcomes model where 1) a community must define the goal or outcomes it wants to achieve, 2) determine how those goals can be reached and 3) identify what internal capacities the community possess and is able to commit to achieve these goals.

Koster and Randall (2005) argue that no framework to date specifies how the broader community is supposed to judge the results of the chosen outcome. Including community views and opinions on whether a particular venture has been successful is critical for evaluating success as "development actions ripple throughout a community creating intangible outcomes" (Koster and Randall, 2005, p. 47). They further contend that if residents "buy in" to an idea, they are more likely to support it in their multiple roles within the community, contributing more broadly to the initiative.

To be able to evaluate success Koster and Randall (2005) stated a community must compare outcomes to stated objectives when the program was implemented taking into account whether emphasis was placed on community development or economic elements. Furthermore any 'success framework' must include indicators that span the social, economic and ecological capacities of a community as well as the communities' attitudes towards the chosen endeavor. Regardless of the framework utilized, Wilson et al. (2001) argue that there are identifiable factors that must be present for successful tourism development in rural areas. The following paragraphs identify and compare each of the 10 factors/conditions to railfan tourism development.

The first success factor identified by Wilson et al. (2001) is to have a complete tourism package. A successful/complete tourism package involves getting tourists to stay longer than just visiting a major attraction. For that to happen, the right mix of tourism business (lodging, restaurants, attractions) that entice visitors to stay, and shops where tourists can spend money locally need to

be in place. To accomplish this, a community must appeal to tourists and have good cooperation from local government and businesses to avoid creating unattractive environments. Railfan tourism development to date has yet to reach this success criteria. Currently the railfan development is the major attraction and limited attractions have been created to support longer stays in a community. While it is hoped in communities such as Fostoria to create products for the whole family to promote longer stays and receive a greater economic impact, that has yet to occur. Furthermore the relationship between local government and business needs to be stronger as illustrated in Deshler, to collectively promote a railfan friendly community.

The second success factor is good community leadership. A good community leader is someone who understands the importance of tourism, funds it, and promotes it. Such key community leaders are often found in local government, community groups, businesses, non-profit organizations, chambers of commerce, and convention and visitors bureaus. Examining the results of phase two of this research revealed that good community leaders were present in Fostoria and Rochelle. In Fostoria the Fostoria Economic Development Cooperation, Seneca Country CVB, Fostoria Rail Preservation Society, as well as local government and businesses all played leadership roles. The driving force of the project was found to be Ellen Gatrell of the Fostoria Rail Preservation society; she was the glue that held everything together. In Rochelle good leadership was found in the form of Ken Wise, who pushed on with the project in the face of criticism as he knew the project would be beneficial for the

community. Good leadership in Rochelle has also come from the Rochelle Economic Development Cooperation (Jason T Anderson) and Tourism Rochelle (Ross Freier). Deshler was not developed for tourism purposes and as a result a good community leader who understood the importance of tourism, funded it and promoted it was not needed.

The third success factor is the support and participation of local government. The local government funded and supported the railfan tourism development in both Rochelle and Fostoria. Outside of funding and support they also actively promote the development and are highly involved in the development process. In the case of Deshler the local government is not actively involved in the process as the park is run by a group of volunteers.

The fourth factor is sufficient funds for tourism development. Through applying for grants and establishing a hotel and motel tax the communities of Rochelle and Fostoria have received sufficient funding to support development. As for Deshler, the land and shelter was donated and the park is run via donations left by railfans and as a result it also has sufficient funds for development.

Strategic planning is the fifth success factor determined by Wilson et. al. (2001). According to the foundation for community association research (2001)

[&]quot;strategic planning is projecting of where your association expects to be in five, ten, or fifteen years and how your association will get there. It is a systematic planning process involving a number of steps that identify the current status of the association, including its mission, vision for the future, operating values, needs (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), goals, prioritized actions and strategies, action plans, and monitoring plans". p.4

Wilson et. al (2001) stated that communities with successful tourism have planned out their tourism development and linked it to overall plans for the community. "Without strategic planning, a community will never know where it is going much less know if it ever got there" (Foundation, 2001, p.4). Through examining the development of railfan tourism it becomes obvious that some strategic planning has occurred in Rochelle and Fostoria but not in Deshler as it was developed for a different purpose as noted previously. Rochelle and Fostoria have developed railfan tourism development plans but as will be discussed later in this chapter these plans lack elements (monitoring, community awareness and involvement) and as a result an ideal railfan tourism development model is presented at the end of this chapter.

The sixth is coordination and cooperation between businesspersons and local leadership. So far railfan tourism developments have had some coordination and cooperation between businesses and local leadership but much remains to be achieved in this area. As illustrated in phase two of this research, some hotel/motel businesses work in coordination by providing discounts and packages but other business such as restaurants and attractions have little or no coordination with local leadership. As a result a strong network needs to be developed between all business and the leadership groups to actively promote tourism in the community.

Coordination and cooperation between rural tourism entrepreneurs is the seventh factor. As noted previously, some tourism entrepreneurs are involved in the process while others are not. Developing a strong network as noted above

will develop strong relationships not only between business and the local leadership group but also between and amongst tourism businesses.

The eighth factor is information and technical assistance regarding tourism development and promotion. Examples include "how to design a brochure, technical assistance and knowledge about tourism development, and information about tourism grants and how to write them" (Wilson et. al, 2001, p 136). It was evident in this research that communities had access to information and technical assistance through their local convention and visitor bureaus. This assistance and information allowed two communities (Fostoria and Rochelle) to apply and receive government grants. Information and technical assistance was crucial for communities involved in this research as they had not been exposed to tourism development previously. Wilson et. al (2001) state that "information and technical assistance are especially important to rural tourism development because small communities usually cannot afford to hire experts or professional grant writers" (p.136).

In the ninth factor for success, the importance of good convention and visitors bureaus is emphasized. According to Gartrell (1988) (as found in Wilson et. al (2001)), "the responsibilities of convention and visitors bureaus are to market local tourism, recruit persons to start tourism businesses, provide technical assistance to start-up businesses, aid with local tourism development, coordinate or sponsor local tourism special events, and provide leadership for tourism development" (pg. 136). As illustrated in the findings of this research, Rochelle's CVB and the Seneca County CVB (Fostoria) played an important role

in the development and continued success of railfan tourism as both were responsible for what Wilson et. al. (2001) noted above. Wilson et. al (2001) further state that CVB's "should act as a link between local government and entrepreneurs by facilitating cooperation and coordination between the two groups" (p. 136). As mentioned previously, cooperation and coordination were found to be lacking between certain groups in the community and a result such linkages needs to be made stronger and include all business and entrepreneurs within the community.

The final success factor identified by Wilson et. al.(2001) is having widespread community support for tourism. As noted throughout this research, widespread support for tourism development was found to be lacking as the communities who have catered to railfans are not traditional tourism venues. They have not been exposed to tourism previously, as railfan tourism is their first and only tourism product consequently the communities are minimally supportive and reluctant to be involved. There is, therefore, a need to educate local communities about tourism in general and railfan tourism specifically.

Through applying Wilson et. al.'s (2001) success factor framework to railfan tourism developments, it is evident that they have had good community leadership, support and participation from local government and the local convention and visitors bureaus, sufficient funds for tourism development, and access to information and technical assistance and. Railfan tourism developments have fallen short in creating complete tourism packages, strategic planning and cooperation and coordination between and amongst local business

and local government. Using Wilson et. al (2001) success factor framework provided a good evaluation to measure the outcomes of railfan tourism development and illustrated and informed where other planning was needed. Evaluating the success of railfan tourism development through Wilson et al. (2001) framework helped in creating the ideal railfan tourism planning model that will be discussed later in this chapter.

5.1.3 Build it and they will come?

A major finding and theme of this research is the philosophy of "build it, they are already coming". Communities who have catered to railfans through creating a railfan park or though other forms of railfan tourism development were found in this research to first recognize railfans travelling to their community to watch trains. Through this recognition communities decided to cater to this niche market of railfans, by creating products to support the railfans that were already coming. This is in direct contrast to the often discussed and criticized "build it and they will come" philosophy in which a tourism attraction is developed with hope that visitors will come. This statement is predicated on the idea that by building a major attraction and associated supporting infrastructure (such as accommodations, transportation venues and community beautification initiatives) there will be an increase in visitor numbers and by extension revenue, profit, growth and development (Bishop, 2010). The "build it and they will come" assertion "was fine in the 1980s and 1990s but since 1999-2000 a whole new operating environment has changed tourism" (Advance, 2007, p 5). Today according to Advance

"the biggest challenge for tourism is not "product" but being competitive with other destinations and their professional marketing approach. The new era dictates that a balanced approach is required with much more emphasis on marketing that targets business than product development. Product alone no longer brings visitors" (p 5)

The "build it, they are already coming" philosophy is a market led approach to tourism development as opposed to a product led approach. In a market led approach, the need is already present (market) and product is created specifically to meet that need (Sharma, 2005). In contrast, the product led approach to tourism development starts with developing a product and then a need for that product is created or identified (Sharma, 2005). For railfan tourism, the market already exists and is coming to particular destinations; products are then created specifically to meet the needs of the railfans.

This "build it, they are already coming" philosophy begs the question of whether creating a railfan park has the potential to increase the number of railfans that travel to a particular community? Or are the same number of railfans still coming that were coming before? There is no way of knowing if the number of railfans have increased due to a railfan park's existence as baseline information of the number of railfans coming before the parks creation often does not exist. Furthermore, accurate estimates of the amount of railfans that are currently coming are not gathered. As a result it is difficult to determine the return on investment and in turn the direct economic impact of creating a railfan park.

5.1.4 Economic Diversification

Another common theme of this research was that railfan tourism is considered as one form of economic diversification, not a panacea. Fleming & Topper (1990) stated that many communities have recognized the potential economic benefits of increased travel (e.g., jobs, wages, and tax revenues) which has led communities to intensify their tourism development efforts. Communities like the ones involved in this research turn to tourism as it can be developed with relatively little investment, credit, training, and/or capital, making rural tourism a less costly development option when compared to other economic development strategies (Wilson *et. al.*, 2001). In some cases, (e.g.,Fostoria) increased tourism development effort has coincided with regional economic slumps brought about by shifts in the underlying economic base. Flemming and Topper (1990) suggest that as a result tourism, as a viable economic alternative to traditional industries (e.g., manufacturing, agriculture, etc.) is receiving increased attention.

Resource-based industries have dominated the rural landscape and were the reason for rural town development (Gartner, 2004). Eventually, extractive mineral industries declined and agricultural research resulted in higher yielding crops and more intensive and profitable agricultural practices (Shaw & Williams, 1994). This meant that fewer people were living in rural areas and, as a result, North American society became increasingly urbanized. These changes limited rural communities' economic development options, making older development strategies such as manufacturing less viable and forcing many to look for nontraditional ways to sustain themselves (Shaw & Williams, 1994), as

exemplified in the story of Fostoria and in Van der Step (2000) who points to the decline of the commercial fishing industry in Canada as a major influence in the appearance of newly redefined tourism communities. Troughton (1990) explains that "many rural areas even those villages and town with viable agriculture, were stagnating or in decline due to loss of population and in turn loss of basic functions such as transportation links, schools, doctors, churches and industry"(p.25). Hudson & Townsend (1992) suggest that as a result, it is not surprising that many local authorities have turned to tourism as a last resort in the face of failing agriculture and industrial employment.

Rural societies and economies have been restructured extensively since the 1950's (Ilbery, 1997). Rural to urban migration, the enclosure of open fields, the commercialization of agriculture, the impacts of technology, and changes in the political and economic climate have all played significant roles in this restructuring of rural area (Butler, Hall & Jenkins, 1998). Recreation and tourism were major elements of change in rural areas. During the late 1970s and early 1980s tourism was 'discovered' as an economic development tool for rural North America (Gartner, 2004) as a result of the lack of viable development alternatives (Fleischer & Felsenstein, 2000). Wilson et al. (2001) and English, Marcouller & Cordell (2000) argued that economic restructuring reduced rural communities' economic opportunities and, as a result, many amenity-based rural communities shifted from an economy based on manufacturing to one driven by retail and service sectors, which opened space for the development of tourism within the service industry.

What makes tourism a popular rural development strategy is its potential to bring in money and generate jobs (Wilson et. al., 2001). This point is also stressed by English et. al. (2000) who stated that rural tourists have affected rural economies by injecting new dollars into local businesses, supporting local tax bases, and creating increased demands for locally available land, labour, and capital. As a result, tourism as a strategy for economic growth has been on the regional development agenda for some time and has been discussed at length by various researchers as a tool for economic diversification (Bridenhann, 2007; Albacete-Saez et. al., 2007; Sharply, 2002; Slee, Farr, & Snowdon, 1997; MacDonald, & Jolliffe, 2003; Bulter, Hall & Jenkins, 1998). These authors all share the same general conclusion that "tourism has long been considered an effective catalyst of rural socio-economic development and regeneration" (Sharply, 2002, p 233). Although promotion of rural tourism is perceived as a suitable economic diversification tool in rural areas, its impacts are often controversial and not always obvious (Fleischer & Felsenstein, 2000), and as such rural tourism as an economic diversification tool should be approached and used cautiously (Sharply and Roberts, 2004).

My research has revealed that railfan tourism is an economic diversification strategy, and not a panacea. Even for those communities who have created parks and are aware of its economic impact, railfan tourism does not make up a large portion of their overall economic structure. Railfan tourism is used as a way to diversify the overall economy and help certain sectors. This research illustrated a need to better understand what the precise economic

impact of railfan tourism is through conducting extensive tourism expenditure studies, rather than providing best guess estimates regarding the economic impact of railfan tourism. Conducting economic impact measures should be a part of the process of catering to railfans, as it is important to understand whether the resources invested into catering to this niche market have been worth it. This chapter provides some recommendations regarding how to determine tourist economic expenditures which will in turn help one better determine the "success" of railfan tourism. These recommendations should be taken into consideration as part of the process of catering to railfans as it would be foolish to create something for economic development/diversification and not understand how economically successful it has been.

5.1.5 Creating Space

Another commonality found across both phases of this research was the idea of creating space. As noted previously, railfans were already frequenting the places that developed railfan parks: they just did not have space in which to safely railfan. Instead they railfanned from parking lots, railway crossings and private property. As a result of creating railfan parks, communities have created safe places for railfans to go. These communities are unique places for railfans to travel to as until recently, railfans have tried to hide their hobby as people thought watching and photographing trains a strange pastime. Having infrastructure created to accommodate railfans and therefore making it socially acceptable to railfan in a community is important to railfans. As a result, these communities who have accommodated railfans are comfortable places for railfans to go and

engage in their hobby without being hassled about what they are doing and why they are doing it.

Through looking at history of drag racing a similar comparison in terms of creating space can be made. According to The National Museum of American History (n.d) drag racing "grew from illegal match racing on rural roads by high-schoolers in the postwar early 1940s and 1950s" (paragraph 2). "To accommodate this group of people in the early 1950s promoters built legal drag-racing strips" (National, n.d, paragraph 6). "Local law enforcement authorities were pleased with the development of such tracks as it gave the drivers a legal, and safer, place to race" (National, n.d, paragraph 6). These drag racing strips are now major tourism destinations attracting thousands of visitors per weekend event. Through comparing the development of drag racing strips to the development of railfan parks it can be seen that they follow a similar path in terms of the creation of space to accommodate the specialized groups.

A comparison to birders, a similar tourism niche market to railfans also reveals a similar theme of creating space. Kim, Scott, Thigpen and Kim (2008) state that birders go to "hot spots" where various bird species can be observed. As a result of birders visiting these "hot spot destinations" birding festivals, events and areas were developed to support the amount of birders coming. Railfan development follows a similar pattern as railfans were frequenting hot spot destinations and communities built services and space to support their visitation.

Although creating space for tourism groups is nothing new to tourism development, from the railfan development perspective it is interesting to consider why railfans feel the need to "hide their hobby". It is also interesting to consider as the creation of space for railfans in these communities is about moving railfans off railway, private and public property where they currently park their cars and watch and photograph trains and into safe designated areas (i.e., railfan parks). For example, as illustrated in Rochelle creating the railfan park provided a centralized location for railfans to park and watch trains instead of being scattered all over the community, which was creating conflicts with local residents.

Creating space for railfans through developing parks requires substantially more money than other railfan development options presented in this research. While expenses are greater, parks also provides the greatest economic impact. Aside from cost and impact it is important to consider that by developing a park that space becomes permanently devoted to railfans; if rail traffic levels were to decrease and railfans were to stop coming to the area the park would still continue to exist. The idea that it is permanent and costs substantially more money is an important point to consider before investing in a railfan park. Other development options such as creating signage or maps requires substantially less investment and do not involve creating space or structures. However, not creating space and having railfans scattered throughout a community can create problems as illustrated in Rochelle and it also makes the railway authorities nervous.

5.2 Unique Elements

Due to the fact that phase two of this research is an extension of the findings of phase one, results from both phases have many similarities as noted previously, but some unique elements of each phase are still present. These unique elements include tourism education, community support for tourism and community based tourism, as emerged from the interviews. This section discusses each of these differences separately, with reference to relevant literature.

5.2.0 Tourism Education

Phase two of this research illustrated a need for communities to educate local residents about tourism in general as well railfan tourism. The communities that have catered to railfans have not traditionally been involved in tourism and as such, members of the community have difficulty understanding tourism and its potential economic impact. Research and education regarding tourism is needed in these communities who are now attempting to cater to railfans. Those communities who are not well educated about tourism and railfan tourism have a hard time understanding why their community is spending substantial monies to create a railfan park; for example residents in Rochelle thought Ken Wise was crazy and that the idea of creating railfan park was never going to fly. The same can be said for many of the residents in Fostoria who do not understand why the community is putting so much money into a railfan park development when their community has lost so much.

This lack of education and understanding in communities who have not been exposed to tourism is not unusual especially in rural communities. Gylfason (2001) in Schmallegger & Carson (2009) state "there is a severe lack of education and capacity building in staples trapped economies" (p 206); staples trapped economies are those that are over dependent on natural resource extraction/manufacturing industries and as a result are susceptible to boom and bust cycles. During bust cycles "there often seems to be a certain mindset that, if nothing else works, then tourism might be an alternative" (Schmallegger and Carson, 2009, p 207). This was illustrated in this research in the community of Fostoria whose economy was largely based on the automotive industry. When the automotive industry began to decline Fostoria turned to railfan tourism as a means of economic development and diversification. As has been noted previously, most tourism literature seems to agree that tourism in rural areas can be an effective tool for economic development and revitalization. But Hall (2007) (in Schmallegger & Carson 2009) offers a more critical review of tourism in rural areas and suggests there is a lack of evidence to support the long term success of tourism as an economic diversification strategy, and that it has often failed to deliver expected benefits. Furthermore Schmallegger & Carson (2009) state that:

"previous research (Baum, 1999; George et., 2009; Kneafsey, 2000) found that transitioning from traditional industries to tourism can be difficult in rural areas as these new industries are likely to follow past patterns of development and simply replace one dependence with another" (p.203).

The data regarding the development of railfan tourism, especially in communities that have turned to tourism in a time of need like Fostoria, suggests that community leaders should ensure that tourism education is provided to its residents. Part of this education includes informing people that tourism developments are not intended to replace previous industries; rather the intent is that tourism should be used as part of a broader strategy to achieve a more diversified and sustainable economic base.

Various researchers (Reid et al, 1993,) have stressed the need for capacity building and education regarding tourism development in communities who have not been exposed to tourism. Capacity building and education applies to both local residents and those involved in developing tourism in communities (economic development officers etc) to avoid following the development path of previous industries and to garner support and participation from local residents which has a positive effect on the overall tourism product.

Lack of education and associated community support for unplanned tourism development illustrates a disconnect between tourism planning frameworks and the reality of tourism development in a real world setting. This is further complicated by the fact that accurate economic impact measures often do not exist, consequently, data cannot be provided to convince local community members about tourism and its positive impact on the local economy. Conducting more precise economic impact measures as discussed in this chapter not only helps tourism developers and local businesses understand railfan tourism, it also

helps the community at large to realize the economic advantages of catering to this niche market.

5.2.1 Community Based Tourism

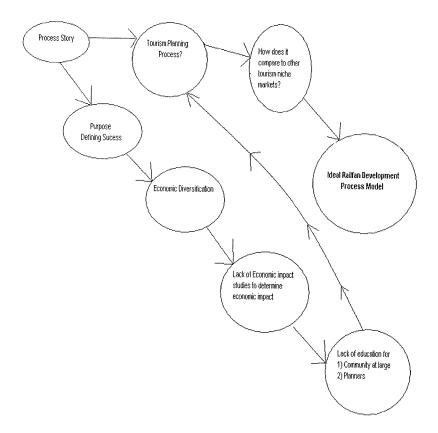
Not being exposed to tourism makes selling the idea of railfan tourism difficult for many community leaders due to the fact that railfans are not a well known tourism niche market that local residents can identify with or understand. Pearce (1980) suggests that "government policymakers and travel advocates continue to accelerate their planning efforts to stimulate tourism without empirical evidence that tourists will be received hospitably by members of the community" (p.225). To address this issue, Allen and Gibson (1987) suggest that "efforts should be made to gather information directly from the residents through town meetings, public hearings, community-wide surveys, or other public involvement approaches so that the residents' attitudes can be improved by giving more attention to residents primary likes and dislikes about local tourism" (p. 100). Lankford (1994) further supports this point by stating that "more public accountability by the industry and more open public discourse are needed in the planning process between various interest groups if tourism development is to be successful" (p 36) Furthermore the goals and strategies of tourism development must reflect or incorporate local residents' views to ensure community consensus on tourism development, if resident perceptions and preferences do not support tourism development, then tourism developments will likely fail or be ineffective in their implementation (Pearce, 1980). These authors stress the need for business and local community to be involved in tourism

development planning to create mutual support and understanding. Butler et. al (1998) stated that local control of tourism is critical. As discussed previously the rural tourism product needs to be developed with the local community members' wants and needs in mind and any product that is developed needs to be planned and integrated into the pattern of the existing rural life style.

5.4 Summary of Overall Themes

Through comparing the similarities and differences between both phases of this research a conceptual understanding of railfan tourism development begins to emerge, as illustrated in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2- Overall themes of railfan tourism development



The conceptual understanding of railfan tourism development begins with a process story. Each community involved in this research had their own unique story regarding how they cater to this niche market. Their story illustrates the purpose of why railfan tourism development was undertaken, and provides the opportunity for each community evaluate the success of the development, related to whether the purpose was achieved. This research indicated that economic diversification was the overriding purpose of railfan tourism development.

However, the lack of data regarding the economic impact of railfan tourism makes it difficult to determine its success. Further, there is limited understanding amongst the local community and local planners regarding tourism and its economic impact. Both the limited data and lack of understanding relates directly to the tourism planning process. These limitations, in addition to the lack of community involvement and monitoring of outcomes, are important elements that need to be included in planning frameworks for the development of railfan parks.

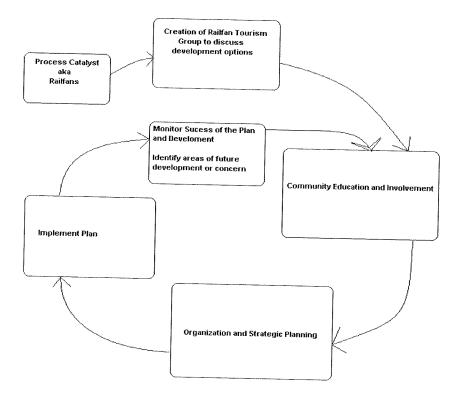
By comparing the results of this research to relevant literature including a comparison to other niche tourism markets, an ideal railfan tourism planning process emerges, which addresses the issues of railfan tourism development. By providing an ideal framework, communities who have developed or are planning on developing products and services for railfans, can identify how to best plan, implement and monitor the success of these developments.

5.5 Railfan Development Planning Process

Part of the purpose for this research was to develop a framework to illustrate how railfan tourism development should be undertaken, based upon the

experiences of the communities examined. By examining the data, it becomes apparent that railfan tourism has not followed a set process of development, but rather has been undertaken in a way that reflects the uniqueness of each community. As a result, a conclusive model/framework of successful railfan tourism development was not evident. However, based upon what participants shared about their processes, challenges and outcomes and in examining literature regarding tourism planning frameworks, an ideal process of how railfan tourism development could be undertaken is proposed (Figure 5.2). This ideal process is largely based upon Reid et. al's (1993) community based planning model, as it addresses many of the issues facing railfan tourism development.

Figure 5.3 Ideal Railfan Tourism Planning Framework



Phase One: Process Catalyst

Following the Reid et. al (1993) model the first phase is the Process

Catalyst Phase. For railfan tourism that process catalyst was found to be railfans,
either through being recognized (by a local community member) or suggesting
something should be done to local government officials and businesses. During
the process catalyst phase it is decided whether to proceed and develop
products and services for this niche tourism market.

Phase Two: Railfan Tourism Development Group

If the idea is received well by local government and businesses, a train tourism development group is created to discuss ways in which the community can benefit and to discuss possible ways to cater to this niche market. This train tourism group is also responsible for conducting pre-research regarding a community's existing railfan tourism product. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis could be conducted in the community to fully understand the present conditions and the appropriateness of developing railfan tourism. Some questions to address in the SWOT analysis include:

- Train elements:
 - how many trains pass through the community?
 - o Will the train traffic pattern change?
- Railfan elements:
 - o how many railfans are currently coming to the community?
 - o where do they come from?

- how long do they stay?
- o how much they spend?
- Where do they spend their money?

Attractions:

- What other rail related attractions does the community and surrounding area have?
- What supporting attractions does the community have?

Through conducting this analysis the development group becomes aware and educated about what product exists in their community. This research will set the foundation for the monitoring phase which will be discussed later in this chapter. This group also explores how much funding will be required for development, determines where the funding will come from and researches and applies for grants to fund the development. An example of a development group would be the Fostoria Rail Preservation Society.

5.5.2 Community Education and Involvement

The ideas discussed through the previous stage are then presented to the community at large to assess community support for development and to include local residents in the planning process, something that is evidently lacking in current railfan tourism development. My data suggest that the majority of communities pushed on with the idea without any form of community consultation or involvement beyond those directly involved in project development. As a result, project developers reported that the local residents initially (and some continue) did not support the development of railfan tourism. Over time, some

project developers indicated that residents became more receptive to the idea but it took some convincing on part of the development group and the railfans. To avoid having these issues community involvement in the planning and development process is critical (Reid et al, 1993).

This phase of the model involves raising community awareness and identifying the benefits of catering to this niche market through educating the community at large about the potential economic, social and environmental impacts (both positive and negative) on the community of tourism generally and railfan tourism in particular. To accomplish this it is suggested that the development group should host local events to involve community members and businesses and encourage interest in engaging with this niche market. At these events, the development group could take local residents on free tours of the railfan spots, much like the city of Fostoria did, to illustrate who railfans are and what they do in their community and host meetings with local businesses to discuss and plan possible synergies. Through providing these tours and discussions, local residents and businesses will be better able to understand and appreciate the value of catering to this niche market. In addition to providing tours, printing articles in the local newspaper about railfans and tourism in general would be beneficial in developing awareness and understanding of this niche market.

5.5.3 Organization and Strategic Planning

In the organization and planning phase ideas become solid, and a purpose is developed. Strategic plans are then created in conjunction with

community, businesses and railway authorities' support and involvement is garnered. As illustrated in this research railfans have been frequenting places with good train viewing conditions before community leaders decided to cater to railfans: the "build it as they are already coming" market led development philosophy. These destinations are already familiar and attractive to railfans Although this is the case, communities still need to market to this opportunity to make railfans aware of the products and infrastructure that has been developed to accommodate their needs. Furthermore this stage involves developing a strategic plan to decide what is going to be developed, how it is going to be developed, how funding is going to be acquired and how it is going to be marketed.

5.5.4 Implementation

Upon completing the organizational and strategic planning phase of the model, the next phase of the development model is the implementation of the strategic development and marketing plans.

5.5.5 Monitoring

Once the plans have been implemented it is crucial to monitor and evaluate the success of implementation. Conducting economic impact studies to explore ongoing changes in demographic profiles of railfans and their impacts is essential to remain sensitive to an evolving market. In this phase of the model, post implementation research is conducted and compared to the pre research that was conducted in the train tourism group phase to show how much of an

effect catering to this niche market has had and if efforts need to be made to better or change this impact. Regardless of the purpose and as illustrated in Figure 5.1 all communities should be monitoring and tracking ongoing basis changes in economic, social and environmental impacts.

The results of this research indicate the need for communities to conduct more accurate expenditure studies to better understand the economic impact of railfan tourism and in turn a community's return on investment. More accurate railfan tourism expenditures can be achieved by conducting visitor expenditures studies, which Frechtling (2006, pg. 26) suggests helps those interested in tourism development to achieve a variety of objectives:

- 1) It informs public officials and business managers of the benefits to a community of investing in tourism promotion and in the development of tourism facilities and sponsorship of events
- 2) It assists tourism marketers in evaluating the effectiveness of their efforts and the effects of additional facilities on demand for current ones.
- 3) It helps educate tourism-related employees about their role in economic and business development and how their labour contributes to the economic health of their communities.
- 4) Through expressing the returns to promotional and facility investment, it can encourage both business and government to seek out cooperative partnerships for mutual benefit.

5) By demonstrating the effects of tourism development to the general public, it helps citizens rationally choose whether to encourage or resist additional tourism marketing or development.

6) It aids public officials in developing laws and policies that best promote the economic, social, and cultural health of their citizens and avoiding decisions that would threaten this health.

In summary this work indicates the importance of developing techniques to measure the economic benefits and costs of tourism activities as it assists residents, consumers, businesses, and governments in making efficient and effective marketing and development decisions.

To measure the economic benefits of tourism, the World Tourism

Organisation (as found in Frechtling (2006) has identified a number of estimation methods available to assess visitor spending. Of these, Frechtling (2006) advocates using visitor surveys and cost-factor models as they produce the best estimates for a community. Getz (1994) states that "visitor surveys are required to determine the proportion and number of tourists and their trip motivations, activity, and spending patterns" (pp. 444–45). While visitor surveys are regarded as the best tourism expenditure model, Smith (2000, p. 225) states that "most economic impact measures of tourism are ad hoc indicators based only on visitor survey data". This stresses the need for communities who have or are planning on catering to railfans to estimate railfan tourism expenditures through a variety of avenues to produce more accurate estimates rather than relying on a singular source.

Based upon past studies and through examining the findings of this research it is suggested that communities should monitor railfan tourism development through a) visitor surveys and b) having a sign in log book.

Conducting a visitor survey with railfans during wait times between trains as Fostoria did, allows one to understand where railfans come from, how long they stay, how much they spend, and where they spend their money. The results of this research can then be used in conjunction with a visitor sign in book that is located by the scanner in each park or in the gift shop to track the amount of visitors that are coming to the region on a yearly basis. Extrapolating the results from the survey to the number of railfans that have signed the log book creates a general understanding of how many railfans are coming and what economic impact they have on the community.

The ideal railfan tourism planning model, like Reid et. al.'s(1993) model, should be considered as an ongoing process, where development does not reach an end point; rather through monitoring the effects of railfan tourism the development group must then return to the community awareness raising phase, and keep local residents involved and educated about the affects railfan tourism is having on their community. If areas of concern are identified, plans should be organized and developed and then implemented and monitored as they were previously and the process continues, so that constant evaluation and monitoring is occurring to ensure development is on track.

While a conceptual framework of how railfan tourism development should be undertaken as presented in this chapter, it is important to consider that this

research has revealed a disconnect between planning frameworks and what is happening in a real world setting. As illustrated, various tourism planning frameworks exist but are not being used in the development of railfan tourism. This may be due to the fact that economic development officers are not trained in specific tourism development frameworks. Community members are also not familiar with the industry which creates a further disconnect and in turn a lack of education about tourism and its impacts. All of these reasons make it important for railfan tourism developments to follow the conceptual framework provided in this chapter to avoid creating undesirable results.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter began by identifying the similarities and differences between both phases of this mixed methods research. The similarities (planning frameworks, economic impact, defining success, build it, they are already coming, economic diversification and creating space) as well as the unique elements (tourism education and community based tourism) were compared and contrasted to relevant literature which ultimately resulted in the development of an ideal railfan tourism planning model. The last chapter examines whether the development of this model achieved the desired purpose of this research, as well as identifying the limitations and areas for future research regarding railfan tourism.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

As has been presented in previous chapters, the results from both phases of this research have been collected, analyzed and discussed to understand: a) the process by which communities cater to railfans and b) the economic impact railfans have on such communities. Since information is neither known about the process through which communities develop railfan tourism nor about how railfan tourism impacts rural areas economically, this research serves to provide a base understanding. This chapter begins by re-illustrating the purpose of this research to assess whether the desired purpose was achieved. A summary of findings is then provided, followed by a discussion of the limitations/delimitations of this research. The thesis concludes by presenting potential areas of future research regarding railfan tourism, why they are necessary and how they might be conducted.

Building on my previous research (Stefanovic, 2009), which created a demographic profile of railfans, this research examined the process of and resulting economic impact of railfan tourism development. To achieve this purpose, there were several related objectives. Each of these objectives are discussed in the following paragraphs.

6.1 Knowledge of Railfan Tourism

This research revealed that those communities who are aware of railfans have catered to them or are interested in catering to them as part of a larger economic diversification strategy. Communities became aware of railfan tourism

as an economic diversification strategy through either noticing railfans in their community or through local railfans suggesting the community had something other railfans were interested in seeing.

6.2 Railfan Development

How communities across North America catered to railfans varied significantly ranging from developing a map of railfan locations to building railfan parks.

Although the ways communities created railfan parks varied, they followed a similar fundamental process: a) they noticed railfans and discussed their potential to contribute to economic diversification, b) purchased land to develop a park where the most trains could be seen, c) received funding to support the development and d) have noted an economic impact in the form of increased tax dollars being generated through visitor spending at local businesses.

6.3 Economic Impact

Economic impact results of this research revealed that those communities that created railfan parks received the greatest economic benefit. Building a railfan park requires substantially more funding then other development options (such as the creation of a map of railway locations). Because more precise economic impact studies have not been conducted in any of the communities involved in this research, it was difficult to determine if railfan parks truly are the best development investment.

6.4 Framework

Part of the purpose for this research was to develop a framework to illustrate how railfan tourism development could be undertaken, based upon the experiences of the communities examined. Railfan tourism has not followed a set process of development, but rather has been undertaken in a way that reflects the uniqueness of each community. As a result, a conclusive model/framework of successful railfan tourism development was not evident. However, based upon what participants shared about their process, challenges and outcomes, an ideal process of how railfan tourism development should be undertaken was presented (Figure 5.1) based on the model for community-based tourism developed by Reid et.al (1993). Adaptations were made to this model reflecting the unique aspects of railfan tourism. In particular, conducting baseline economic /visitor data and its use in monitoring was something that was strongly emphasized. Engaging and educating local residents in regards to railfan tourism through providing local tours was also emphasized to help garner public support and involvement. The development of a railfan tourism group to discuss ways in which the community can benefit and to discuss possible ways to cater to this niche market through conducting a railfan specific SWOT analysis was also noted. While these adaptations are not significantly different from what Reid et. al(1993) intended they have been made explicit in the ideal railfan planning model.

6.5 Research Contributions

This research has contributed to the overall field of tourism both pragmatically and academically. Pragmatically, it has built upon an existing tourism planning model to illustrate an ideal model for communities to follow in terms of railfan tourism development. As a result, it provides communities who have catered to railfans or are considering this option with the tools they need to understand how to cater to this niche market and what type of economic impact might be expected.

This research contributed academically through examining a new niche market that has unique aspects, namely the "build it, they are already coming" philosophy which is predicated on creating products and services for a market that already exists in a community. It also contributed academically by making comparisons between what was found in this research with:

a) existing tourism development frameworks. Railfan tourism development did not follow any existing development process, revealing a disconnect between tourism development frameworks and their implementation in real world settings. Based on this finding, and through using Reid et. al's (1993) model an "ideal railfan tourism planning framework" was created that outlines how railfan tourism development could be undertaken to avoid some of the issues that were identified through this research including monitoring, community support and education in regards to railfan tourism development

b) ways to conduct economic impact studies. The communities involved in this research lacked precise economic data and as a result were unsure of the economic impacts of railfan tourism. This comparison illustrated the need to collect visitor data that will provide economic information to those developing railfan tourism. Such information assists planning committees in educating others about the impacts of tourism and its benefits, is useful in applying for funding, aids in the development of products to cater accurately to the niche market, and helps in monitoring the impact of developments.

- c) defining success. Using Wilson et. al (2001) success factor framework provided an appropriate evaluation metric for assessing the outcomes of railfan tourism development and indicated where other planning was needed.

 Evaluating the success of railfan tourism development through Wilson et. al's (2001) framework helped in creating the ideal railfan tourism planning model as discussed previously.
- d) economic diversification. The case study communities stated that railfan tourism development was undertaken as a form of economic diversification and not as a panacea, as railfan tourism does not make up a large portion of a community's overall economic structure. This research illustrated that if developed properly, railfan tourism can be an effective economic diversification tool, but greater understanding of railfan tourism's economic impact is needed to be able to truly understand how diversified a community's economy is as a result of railfan tourism development. A comparison to relevant literature illustrated that although tourism is perceived as a suitable economic diversification tool, its

impacts are often controversial and not always obvious, as such tourism as an economic diversification tool should be approached and used cautiously.

- e) creating space. This research revealed a need for communities to create space to accommodate railfans, who were already visiting the community, using public and private property, and such use created issues for residents and for railway companies. A comparison with the literature revealed that the idea of creating space is common in tourism development, as space has been created to accommodate other niche markets, such as birders and drag racers.
- f) community based tourism principles. This research revealed a lack of community support and involvement in railfan tourism developments. Many of the communities involved in this research had not been exposed previously to tourism or railfand tourism which made selling the idea tough for developers. As a result, this research illustrated a need for the local community to be involved in the development process to create mutual support and understanding as well as improve local residents' attitudes towards development. A comparison with relevant literature revealed that lack of support, understanding and involvement is common in rural tourism developments as tourism plans are often pushed forward without community support or understanding which emphasises the need to involve the local community in development and planning process.
- e) tourism education. Knowledge of tourism was found to be lacking in communities involved in this research as tourism was a new industry. This research identified the need to educate local residents and those involved in

tourism developments about the development and impacts of tourism. A comparison to relevant literature revealed that a lack of education and understanding in communities who have not been exposed to tourism is not unusual especially in rural communities. While it is not uncommon to advocate for the involvement of community residents in the development process, the literature has less to say about the importance of providing education in garnering public support and involvement. This was found to be lacking in communities involved in this research, but important to consider in railfan tourism planning.

6.6 Limitations

There are a number of limitations associated with this research project.

These limitations are reasonable, given that this research was exploratory in nature, and as a result, provide numerous opportunities for future research.

A major limitation of this study was time and funding. Having access to more time and funding would have allowed me to conduct more interviews to see if the results that were found from the communities involved in this research applied in others.

The purpose of this research was to be able to understand the economic impact of railfan tourism. Economic impact data provided for the purpose of this research were best-guess estimates and as a result became a major limitation. These estimates, however, do provide insights into the perceived economic impact of railfan tourism, which is a key factor of implementation.

The final limitation was the low response rates to the quantitative survey in phase one of this research. Due to the small sample size, only descriptive analysis was possible. The low response rate was likely due to the lack of recognition of railfan tourism as a potential tourism market. As a result, and as discussed previously, communities who were not aware of this niche market did not feel comfortable being involved in this research.

6.7 Areas of Future Research

The academic study of railfans, and railfan tourism, is a relatively new research area and as a result, various aspects of railfans and railfan tourism could be researched. The following paragraphs identify and discuss these areas by identifying what the potential studies are, why they are necessary and how they might be conducted.

More precise research on the economic impact of railfan tourism is clearly required. As noted, the economic impact data provided created a limitation because I did not conduct an economic impact study; instead, I assumed that those participating in the project would able to provide me with actual data, Instead, they could only provide estimates (except Fostoria) because they have neither conducted such studies themselves, nor do they collect visitor data. Therefore economic impact information was limited in my study. To address this issue a future research project should be to conduct a specific economic impact study, in both communities with and without, railfan parks. Through this type of study a more precise determination of the economic impact of a railfan park could be made.

Knowing more precise economic impact data will help communities understand what type of impact railfan tourism has on their community, allowing them to determine the "success" of catering to this niche market. Such understanding also allows for better education of and support from, the local community because they are able to see the economic outcomes of this niche market. Based upon past research and through examining the findings of this research it is suggested that communities monitor railfan tourism development through a) conducting visitor surveys and b) having a sign in log book.

This research specifically focused on the development and economic impact of railfan tourism but it is important to consider at this juncture that railfan tourism developments also have social and environmental impacts. While not explicitly examined, it is evident that railfan tourism has social impacts in terms of crowding, as well as environmental impacts as parks are being developed on brownfield sites. Future research should be undertaken to examine the impacts of railfan tourism outside of a purely economic focus.

Another area for future research is to replicate phase two of this research in all communities who have catered to railfans to compare processes and outcomes. This research illustrated that railfan tourism development was undertaken in various forms, funded in various ways and resulted in varying economic impact. Would the results be similar in all communities with railfan parks? This information would be useful in terms of further understanding the process by which communities cater to railfans and the economic impact they receive as a result.

Conducting comparative research involving railfans in other geographic areas is also an area for future research. The United Kingdom, for example, has a rich tradition of railway preservation and consequently, enthusiasts of all ages. The way in which communities in the UK and other countries manage and service this niche might provide interesting, relevant and valuable insights into railfan tourism and what drives its success.

In recent news reports and in railfan chat rooms, it has become apparent that fears of railway related terrorism may play a serious role in the way in which railfans engage in their hobby. On August 2nd 2011 the New York state government passed legislation to strengthen penalties for individuals who trespass on railroad property. This new legislation states that anyone who is found trespassing on railway property could face 3 month in jail and a \$500 fine. With this news some railfans fear the areas from which they currently railfan from could be seen as railway property and thus they would be trespassing. Amtrak Passenger Railway also recently made it illegal for anyone but passengers to be on the passenger platform. Couple that with the fact railfans have also expressed on railway related chat groups that while railfanning they have been questioned and searched by local and federal law enforcement officials on the grounds of suspicious activity, in some instances having their camera's, pictures and magazines confiscated. With all of this recent news it would be beneficial to examine the effect that these events have on railfans in terms of the way in which they engage in their hobby and to examine weather communities with developed railfan parks become more desirable destinations.

Lastly the ideal railfan tourism development framework outlined in Chapter Four should be tested as an area of future research to determine the effectiveness of this model. The model needs to be applied to determine if it is useful or lacks components that to need to be changed or modified. One aspect of particular interest would be to determine if the proposed model would help in garnering public support. Another would be to determine if following the proposed development process is beneficial for communities or if the current ad hoc approach of varying development processes that has occurred to date is more effective.

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Appendix A- Quantitative Survey

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to invite your participation in a study I am conducting on railfan tourism entitled "Understanding the Development and Economic Impacts of Railfan Tourism". My name is Kyle Stefanovic and I am conducting research for my master's thesis under the direction of Professor Rhonda Koster for the School of Outdoor Recreation Parks and Tourism at Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.

The purpose of my research is to understand the process by which communities cater to railfans and the estimated economic impact associated with providing services to this tourism niche market. Currently there is limited if any academic information regarding to railfan tourism development and its associated economic impact.

Often railfans visit locations all over North America without people even knowing they are there. Trains Magazine has identified the 100 best places to railfan in North America. You have been sent this survey request because your community was identified as one of these 100 best places. I acknowledge that some of you will know about and cater to railfans while others may have never heard of railfans before. Those who are aware and have catered to railfans will fill out a separate section pertaining to railfans, as well as one about general tourism in your community. For those of you who don't know about railfans or cater to them, (which is ok), you will not be asked about railfans but about general tourism in your community. Together these sets of responses will create an overall understanding of railfan tourism.

By completing the survey you are agreeing to participate in my research. You may decline to answer any questions that you are not comfortable responding to. The survey will only take approximately ten minutes to complete. You will remain anonymous and all information gathered will be kept confidential and stored in a secure cabinet for 5 years as per Lakehead University policy. If you would like to obtain a final copy of this study (it is anticipated that the results will be available in 2011), please contact me at kstefano@lakeheadu.ca.

This research project has approval from the Research Ethics Board at Lakehead University. If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Office of Research at 1-807-343-8283.

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Feel free to contact me or my advisor at the contact information provided below

Kyle Stefanovic Email- kstefano@lakeheadu.ca Phone Number-(807) 577-1584 Address- 131 Ravenwood Ave Thunder Bay, Ontario Canada

Dr. Rhonda Koster Email- rkoster@lakeheadu.ca Phone Number- (807)343-8554 Address- 955 Oliver Rd Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada

Sincerely,

Kyle Stefanovic

Appendix B- Quantitative Survey

Please provide your name as well as the name of your community for data collection purposes. The information provided here will be used as a reference ONLY to ensure that all communities involved in the research have filled out the survey.

Name:
City/Town (required):
ZIP(required):
Country:
Email Address:
Phone Number:
Have you heard of the term RAILFAN before?
Yes
No
2. What does it mean? (provide brief description)
 Have you seen people in your community taking pictures of trains? YesNo
4. Has your community done anything specific to cater to these visitors?
Yes (if yes SKIP to question 12)
No

5. Check from the list below to indicate why your community has not catered
to this niche market (check all that apply)
Never heard of them before
Did not think they were a viable niche market to cater to
Could not get government funding for projects
Hard to convince those who are not aware of railfans to spend money to
attract them
Other (please specify)
6. Before hearing about this research were you aware that your community
was identified as a "Hot Spot" in Trains Magazines Hot Spot Guide?
YesNo
7. Would you consider developing specific products, programs and/or
services to support railfan visitors?
MaybeYesNo
8. If "Maybe" why?(Please Explain)
9. If "Yes" why? (Please Explain)

10.	If "NO"	whv?	(Please	Explain)
10.	11 110	VVIIV:	11 lease	LXVIaIIII

11. Please provide any additional information that you feel appropriate regarding railfan tourism

CATER TO RAILFANS

(IF YOU ANSWERED NO TO QUESTION 4, PLEASE SKIP THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS [12-30])

12. What has your community done to cater to railfans?(check all that apply)
Developed signage
Created a map of railway locations
Advertised to this niche market
Developed a railfan park (covered area)
Provided discounts at local businesses for railfans
Created Railfan Packages
Other (please specify)
13. Where did you get the idea to cater to this niche market?(check all that
apply)
Rochelle, Illinois
Horseshoe Curve, Pennsylvania

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16.	Are you aware that your community was identified as a "Hot Spot" in					
Trains	Magazine's Hot Spo	ot Guide?				
Ye	es	No				
17.	If "Yes" what has the	at meant for yo	our community?(please explain)			
18. Ye	Is railfan tourism yo s	ur main tourisn No	n product?			
19.	If "No" is it part of th	e suite of touris	sm products?			
Ye	es	No				
	What economic important of the community? (choo		you ESTIMATE that railfan tourism has			
0-1	0%	-	51-60%			
11-	20 %	_	61-70%			

_300-400

_400-500

_500-600

21-30%	71-80%			
31-40%	81-90%			
41-50%	90-100%			
21. On average how r	nuch would you ESTIMATE that railfan tourists spend (\$)			
in your area per year? (c				
\$0-\$10,000	\$61,000-\$70,000			
\$11,000-\$20,000\$71,000-\$80,000				
\$21,000-\$30,000\$81,000-\$90,000				
\$31,000-\$40,000	\$91,000-\$100,000			
\$41,000-\$50,000	\$100,000+			
\$51,000-\$60,000				
22. Please provide an	ESTIMATE of the number of jobs supported by railfan			
tourism in your area				
0-100	600-700			
100-200	700-800			
200-300	800-900			

_900-1000

___1000+

23. Please provide an I	ESTIMATE of the amount of tax revenue generated		
from railfan tourism in you	r area.		
\$0-\$10,000	\$61,000-\$70,000		
\$11,000-\$20,000	\$71,000-\$80,000		
\$21,000-\$30,000	\$81,000-\$90,000		
\$31,000-\$40,000	\$91,000-\$100,000		
\$41,000-\$50,000	\$100,000+		
\$51,000-\$60,000			
24. Please provide an E	ESTIMATE of the number of railfan tourists that visit		
your community each year			
0-100	600-700		
100-200	700-800		
200-300	800-900		
300-400	900-1000		
400-500	1000+		
500-600			
25. What would you ES	TIMATE is the average length of stay for railfan		
tourists in your community?			
1 Day	3 Days		
2 Days	4 Days		

5 Days	12 Days
6 Days	13 Days
7 Days	14 Days
8 Days	15+ Days
9 Days	
10 Days	
11 Days	
26. Do you feel that railfan touris	sm is a viable economic diversification
strategy for your community?	
Yes No	
27. Why or Why not? Please Exp	olain
28. Are there liability/insurance is market?	ssues associated with catering to this
YesNo	

29. If yes what are the cost associated with liability/insurance?

30. Please provide any additional information that you feel appropriate regarding railfan tourism.

GENERAL TOURISM QUESTIONS

(EVERYONE TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS)

(EVERTONE TO COMPLETE THE FOI	LLOWING QUESTIONS)		
31. What percentage (%) would you	ESTIMATE that tourism makes up of you		
community's total economic structure?			
0-10%	51-60%		
11-20 %	61-70%		
21-30%	71-80%		
31-40%	81-90%		
41-50%	90-100%		
32. On average how much would you spend in your area per year\$0-\$10,000\$61,000\$11,000-\$20,000\$71,000\$21,000-\$30,000\$81,000-	\$80,000		
\$31,000-\$40,000\$91,000-	\$91,000-\$100,000		
\$41,000-\$50,000\$100,000)+		
\$51,000-\$60,000			
33. Please provide an ESTIMATE of the	ne number of jobs that tourism supports		
in your area			
0-100	100-200		

_80,000-90,000

90,000-100,000

___100,000+

20,000-30,000

_30,000-40,000

40,000-50,000

177

36. Is your over	all tourism product (check all that apply)
seasonal (sum	imer)
seasonal (wint	er)
seasonal (spri	ng)
seasonal (fall)	
year round	
<u>Hotels/Motels</u>	
37. Please provi	de an ESTIMATE of the number of hotel/motel bed spaces
available in your co	mmunity
0-100	500-600
100-200	600-700
200-300	700-800
300-400	800-900
400-500	900-1000
	1000+
38. Please provid	de an ESTIMATE of the average occupancy rate
0-25%	
25-50%	
50-75%	
75-100%	

39. Are any of hotels/motels located next to railroad tracks?
Yes No
40. Do they do anything to cater to railfans?
Yes No
41. If "Yes" what do they do (check all that apply)
Provide discounts for railfans
Provide a map for railfans
Other (please specify)
Restaurants
42. Please provide an ESTIMATE of the number of restaurants your
community has
0-1030-40
10–20 40-50
20-30 50+
43. Are any of the restaurants located next to railroad tracks?
YesNo

44. Do they do any	thing to cater to railfans?
Yes	No
45. If "Yes" what do	they do (check all that apply)
Provide discounts	for railfans
Provide a map for	railfans
Other (please spec	cify)
46. What attractions	s are present in your community?(check all that a
46 What attractions	2 are present in your community 2/sharts all the
Museum	Beaches
Water Park	Hiking Trails
Theme Park	Ski Hill
Golf Course(s)	Shopping
	Other (please specify)
47. Do any of these	attractions do anything to specifically attract railf
Yes	_ No
48. If "Yes" what do	they do (check all that apply)
Provide discounts fo	- m 116

Provide a map for railfans
Other (please specify)
49. Do you have any hopby shops in your community?
49. Do you have any hobby shops in your community?
Yes No
50. Do they do anything to cater to railfans?
20 they do drighting to cater to fallians?
Yes No
51. If "Yes" what do they do (check all that apply)
Provide discounts for railfans
Provide a map for railfans
Other (please specify)
52. General Comments about your overall tourism industry

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! Your Participation in this research is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions about this research feel free to contact me at kstefano@lakeheau.ca

Appendix C- Structured Interview Consent Form

Mr/Mrs	(city	official

You are being asked to participate in a research project being conducted by Mr. Kyle Stefanovic under the direction of Dr. Rhonda Koster, for the School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism, Lakehead University. The title of the project is *Railfan Tourism*. There are two phases to this research. The first phase will study who railfans are, thus creating a demographic profile. The second will look at what type of impact railfans can have on a local economy.

As an individual who has knowledge about what type of impact railfans can have on a local economy we are requesting your participation and collaboration in phase two of our research project. This information will be utilized to understand just how much of an impact railfans have on a local economy. The interview will take approximately 1 to 1.5 hours and is based on a broad set of questions that pertain the creation of a Railfan Park and railfans in general. As such there no correct answers and all of your responses will be accepted. Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to refrain from answering any questions or to withdraw from the interview at any time.

Your participation in this research will be extremely beneficial, as it will provide the research team with the necessary information to understand how much of an impact railfans can have on a local economy. In addition, the information collected from this research will be utilised in conjunction with the information found in phase one to understand who railfans are and how much impact they have. This information can provide cities with developed railfan parks and those who have the potential for railfan tourism, with the tools they need to understand who a railfan is and what economic impact they can have.

The information you provide during the interview will be taperecorded and later transcribed at Lakehead University. These transcripts will be returned to you to ensure that your thoughts have been accurately represented. Upon completion of the research project, this data will be securely stored for seven years at the university, as is required by policy.

Reports and publications resulting from this research are anticipated and as such, the information provided by you will become public. Should you wish to remain an anonymous participant, we will take every precaution to assure that your name, position and affiliation are not associated with any of your comments in the written documents. Copies of any research reports will be made available to you upon completion. If there is interest, town hall style meetings could be arranged to provide results to the broader community.

By signing this document, you are indicating your willingness to participate in this study and that you understand and agree to the following conditions:

- 1. Your participation in this research is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time.
- 2. You have the right to anonymity. (Please indicated below)
- 3. You will have the opportunity to review transcripts of the interview to ensure accurate representation of your views.
- 4. The information you provide will be utilized to create documents for publication.
- 5. The data generated from this research will be kept at Lakehead University for 7 years.
- 6. You will receive copies of publications that result from this research.7.

Signature: _			
Date:			

I wish to remain anonymous in any publications. []

Appendix D- Structured Interview Questions

- 1) Why and how did you decide to build a railfan park?
- 2) Did you do any research regarding railfans or the type of impact they can have?
- 3) How did you decide on the location/design of the park?
- 4) Where you aware of railfans before creating the park/business?
- 5) How many people come visit the park/hotel per year? Has it gone up or down How many are railfans?
- 6) Where do the railfans come from?
- 7) How much do they spend?
- 8) How long to they stay?
- 9) How much effect does the railfan park have on your local economy?
- 10) How much did it cost to build the park? How much does it cost to keep it running?
- 11) How was the park paid for?
- 12) Does the community support the development of the park? Or are they against an increase of railfans coming to the area?
- 13) Would you recommend building a railfan park to other cities with the potential for railfan tourism? Why or why not
- 14) How much impact do railfans have on your business?