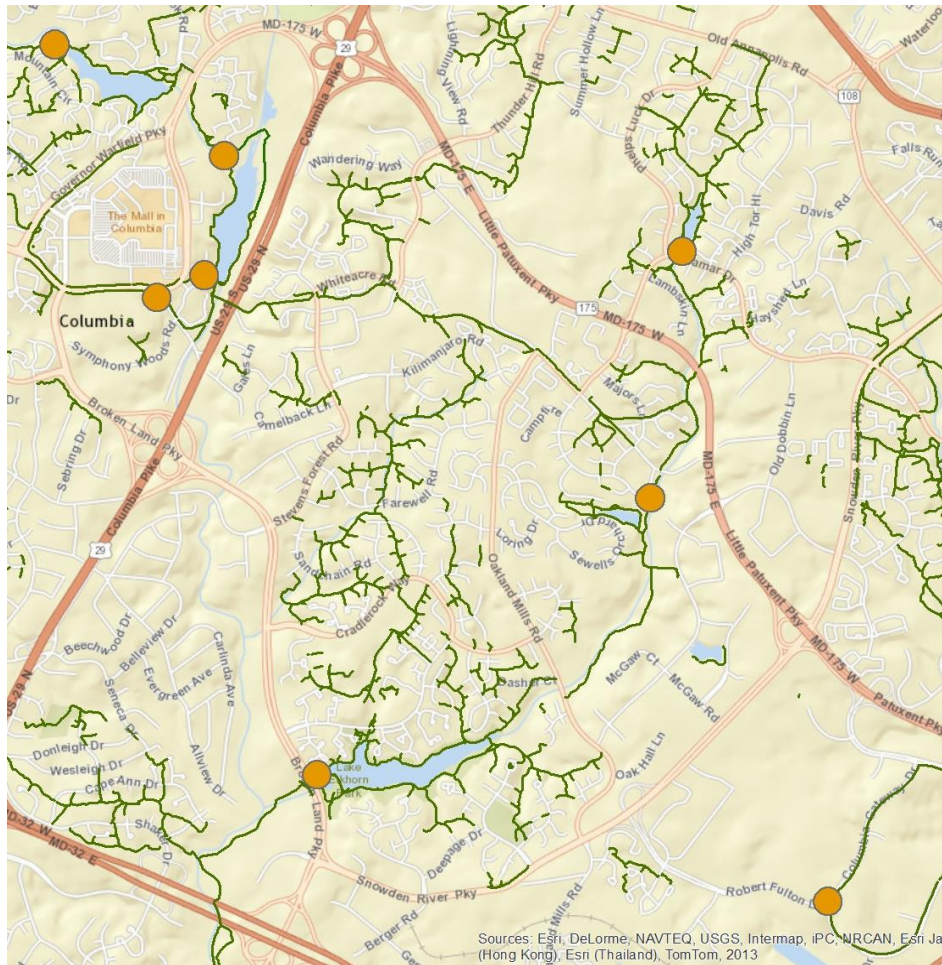


# CA's Annual Pathway User Count Program 2015 Summary Report

## Introduction

During the month of May 2015, Columbia Association initiated the second annual pathway count program, with the assistance of approximately 30 volunteers. The counts were taken at key intersections along the Columbia pathway network. Of the eight count locations, four were on the east side of Columbia and four were on the west side. The count locations were at Wilde Lake, Lake Kittamaquindi, Lake Elkhorn, Jackson Pond, Tamar Drive southern terminus, Downtown Columbia and the Columbia Gateway loop. Columbia Association undertakes the count program to better understand pathway usage and the impact pathway investments have on pathway usage.

## 2015 Pathway Count Locations



## 2015 to 2014 Comparison

The majority of count locations experienced an increase in pathway users from 2014 to 2015. This may be due to weather conditions, which were much more favorable during the 2015 count period as compared to 2014. In 2015, there was only one day of inclement weather (clearing thunderstorms), while the 2014 count period had three days of inclement weather. CA also made some significant pathway investments during the last year, which may have also resulted in increased pathway usage.

### *Pedestrian Counts*

Pedestrians using the pathways increased in each count location in 2015 as compared to 2014. Total pedestrian count information by location is shown in Table 1. The two greatest pedestrian count increases were at Lake Kittamaquidi. At the south end of the lake, there were 485 more pedestrians counted in that location than in 2014, an increase of almost 200 percent. At the northern location, where the path joins the pathway link to Vantage Point Road, 480 additional pedestrians were counted over 2014 numbers, an increase of over 240 percent over 2014 counts in the same location.

Table 1: Pedestrian Count Totals by Location

Comparison	2014 Total	2015 Total	# Change	% Change
Downtown Columbia	N/A	347	N/A	N/A
Wilde Lake	288	489	201	70%
Lake Elkhorn	925	977	52	6%
Lake Kittamaquidi North	198	678	480	242%
Lake Kittamaquidi South	244	729	485	199%
Jackson Pond	329	523	194	59%
Tamar Drive	84	158	74	88%
Gateway	184	266	82	45%

Table 2 displays pedestrian counts by two-hour observation period and compares 2014 and 2015 counts. The location that experienced the greatest weekend two-hour average difference from 2014 to 2015 is Lake Kittamaqundi North. When the pathway counts were conducted in 2014, the pathway loop was not complete around Lake Kittamaqundi. In November 2014, CA completed that pathway loop and in May 2015, the counts taken at the north end of the lake showed an increase of the weekend average for pedestrians of more than 160 percent over 2014 numbers. The weekday location that had the largest two-hour average pedestrian increase from 2014 to 2015 was Lake Kittamaqundi South, which had a 611 percent increase. This is likely a result of improved weather conditions compared to last year as well as the newly constructed pathway loop that increased usage at Lake Kittamaqundi overall.

Table 2: Pedestrian Count 2-hour Average Comparison

Comparison	2014 Weekday Avg. (2 hour)	2015 Weekday Avg. (2 hour)	# Change Weekday Avg. (2 hour)	% Change Weekday Avg. (2 hour)	2014 Weekend Avg. (2 hour)	2015 Weekend Avg. (2 hour)	# Change Weekend Avg. (2 hour)	% Change Weekend Avg. (2 hour)
Downtown Columbia	N/A	54	N/A	N/A	N/A	93	N/A	N/A
Wilde Lake	57	73	16	27%	87	136	49	56%
Lake Elkhorn	160	321	161	101%	303	205	-98	-32%
Lake Kittamaqundi North	37	116	79	213%	63	166	103	163%
Lake Kittamaqundi South	22	156	134	611%	111	130	19	17%
Jackson Pond	60	116	56	93%	75	88	13	17%
Tamar Drive	17	37	20	116%	33	24	-9	-27%
Gateway	61	89	28	46%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Notes: Downtown Columbia was not a count location in 2014. Gateway pathway counts were not held on weekends. Lake Elkhorn's weekend average was significantly lower than previous year due to partial count one day.

## Bicycle Counts

Total bicycle count information by location is shown in Table 3. Bicycle counts increased in all locations over 2014 numbers except Wilde Lake, which stayed about the same. The greatest increase from 2014 to 2015 occurred at Tamar Drive with 64 addition bicyclists (a 152 percent increase). This is a bicycle commuter route that was recently improved with navigational pathway signage, which could account for the increase in 2015. Another factor, as stated above, might be the weather conditions, which were better than in 2014.

Table 3: Bicycle Count Totals by Location

<b>Comparison</b>	<b>2014 Total</b>	<b>2015 Total</b>	<b># Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Downtown Columbia	N/A	47	N/A	N/A
Wilde Lake	74	71	-3	-4%
Lake Elkhorn	215	218	3	1%
Lake Kittamaqundi North	59	93	34	58%
Lake Kittamaqundi South	77	116	39	51%
Jackson Pond	68	112	44	65%
Tamar Drive	42	106	64	152%
Gateway	0	4	4	N/A

Table 4 shows average two-hour bicycle count information and compares that to 2014 information. The location that experienced the largest average percent change from 2014 to 2015 for a two-hour period on a weekday was Lake Kittamaqundi South. This was followed by Lake Kittamaqundi North. Tamar Drive experienced the largest increase for weekend bicycle usage over 2014 levels.

Table 4: Bicycle Count 2-hour Average Comparison

Comparison	2014 Weekday Avg. (2 hour)	2015 Weekday Avg. (2 hour)	# Change Weekday Avg. (2 hour)	% Change Weekday Avg. (2 hour)	2014 Weekend Avg. (2 hour)	2015 Weekend Avg. (2 hour)	# Change Weekend Avg. (2 hour)	% Change Weekend Avg. (2 hour)
Downtown Columbia	N/A	12	N/A	N/A	N/A	10	N/A	N/A
Wilde Lake	10	10	0	0%	28	30	2	7%
Lake Elkhorn	21	46	25	117%	87	64	-24	-27%
Lake Kittamaqundi North	3	16	13	422%	27	33	6	22%
Lake Kittamaqundi South	3	22	19	633%	37	42	5	14%
Jackson Pond	10	25	15	153%	28	28	0	0%
Tamar Drive	5	20	15	307%	26	45	19	73%
Gateway	0	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Notes: Downtown Columbia was not a count location in 2014. Gateway pathway counts were not held on weekends. Lake Elkhorn's weekend average was significantly lower than the previous year due to partial count one day.*

## Methodology

All pathway counts (except Columbia Gateway) were held in May 2015 on two Saturdays between 11:30am and 1:30pm and three weekdays on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 5 to 7pm. Columbia Gateway counts were held on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 11:30am and 1:30pm to capture office park workers, who use the pathway at lunchtime.

A few adjustments were made to the count program in 2015. At Wilde Lake and Lake Elkhorn, counts in 2015 were taken in one location rather than multiple locations due to a better understanding of the highest traffic locations from 2014 observations. The Kendall Ridge location was not included in 2015 due to extremely low pathway count volumes in 2014. A new count location was added in Downtown Columbia along Little Patuxent Parkway in front of

Symphony Woods to begin documenting pathway usage along the new cross-Columbia pathway from Howard County General Hospital to Blandair Park.

The count forms were also modified in 2015. Pathway routing (direction of travel) documentation was not collected in 2015 because the pathways are more recreation oriented, and therefore the collected information in 2014 was found to have little value. A new demographic segment was added to the count form to capture older adults.

There were better weather conditions during the period of the 2015 pathway count program than in 2014. This year, only one weekday had inclement weather (clearing thunderstorms) compared to all three weekdays experiencing thunderstorms at some point during the count last year. This likely had some impact on the increase in pathway users in 2015 as compared to 2014.

### **Summary Remarks**

The 2015 pathway counts were completed successfully. Volunteers more consistently honored their commitments in 2015 to be in place and complete their pathway counts as compared to last year. As a result, CA has a fuller dataset (more complete counts for each location) for 2015 than in 2014. The weather conditions were also more favorable, providing full two-hour counts each day save one location as opposed to several partial counts (less than the two-hour count period) in 2014. The biggest change in total usage as well as the percent change occurred at the pathway around Lake Kittamaqundi and is most likely due to the investment CA made in 2014 to complete the paved pathway loop around Lake Kittamaqundi. Other CA investments that may have resulted in increased usage in the east Columbia count locations were the additional pathway navigation signage.

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