

BENEFITS AND COSTS OF TOURISM: A REGIONAL POINT OF VIEW

Donald H. Farness, Department of Economics, Oregon State University

This paper explores the impact of tourism on a regional economy. It is both conceptual and empirical insofar as quantitative measures are available for the Oregon economy. Its intent is to illuminate public policy decisions and give direction to research appropriate to their implementation. Inasmuch as the objective of regional policy is to promote the welfare of the residents of the region, careful consideration is given to distinguishing between resident and nonresident effects—a distinction not generally made in tourist impact studies. Also, contrary to most studies, the costs associated with tourism are given explicit consideration. And, in addition to the gross effects, attention is directed to redistribution effects among residents of a region. The fiscal effect appears to be adverse in Oregon; that is, the costs incurred by the state to provide facilities and services (parks, highways) used directly by tourists are greater than the taxes collected directly from them (user fees, state gasoline tax). Financial capital is sufficiently mobile that it is affected little by growth or nongrowth of the tourist industry. Labor, on the other hand, is not so mobile, and there appears to be a small labor benefit. Despite the fact that the jobs pay little, are seasonal, and offer limited opportunities for upward mobility, they do match the needs of a part of the labor force. Owners of natural resources have the most to gain from tourism, but their gains are partially offset by losses to resident consumers who pay higher prices for products of fixed-quantity natural resources. The local fiscal effect is unknown. The low capital-labor ratio in tourist industry activities and the low wages of the industry tend to result in low property tax revenue generated per worker in the industry. Whether this results in an adverse fiscal effect on local government depends on the characteristics of its labor force. Because of the difficulties in assigning weights to the various effects and in handling redistribution effects, it is difficult to arrive at a consensus.

•THOUGHTS on the subject of costs and benefits of tourism have tended to be confused or at least incomplete because of two types of error, failure to account for the geographic distribution of effects (in-region and outside-of-region) and failure to account for costs as well as benefits. If the point of view is the welfare of the residents of a subject region it is necessary to distinguish resident effects from nonresident effects. And if the objective is a comprehensive accounting of the effects of tourism it is important to recognize the existence of costs. In addition to conceptual shortcomings, considerations of self interest are involved; consequently a third factor, interpersonal, in-region, redistribution effects also should be given explicit attention.

The term tourists as used here refers to nonresidents of a region who visit it for pleasure-oriented reasons. And hereafter the term state will be used in place of region; however, the analysis is applicable to regions not defined by state boundaries.

STATE FISCAL IMPACT

Analysis of the state fiscal impact is limited to direct costs and benefits, i.e., costs incurred in providing facilities and services used directly by tourists and payments by

tourists made directly to state government. Some of the funds expended are federal in origin, but, inasmuch as their magnitude is not related to the presence of out-of-state visitors, for purposes of this paper they are viewed the same as revenue derived from Oregon residents. Also it is true that indirectly state revenues increase as a result of higher taxes paid by businesses and households that directly and indirectly serve tourists. But if these are allowed then it also would be necessary to take into account the government costs of providing incremental public goods and services to them. Data are not available to make these calculations, and the effect of ignoring them is to treat these revenues and expenditures as if they were fully offsetting. In the section on the local fiscal impact, indirect fiscal consequences are taken into account.

The facilities and services that state governments provide tourists include highways, parks and roadside rest areas, police, and litter removal services. Both monetary benefits and costs are incurred. State taxes (gasoline, sales, hotel-motel) and park user fees are the principal sources of revenue. Costs arise from land acquisition; construction, maintenance, and operation of facilities; and provision of various services. Additional but avoidable costs are generally incurred in tourist advertising and information programs. The relationship between all of these costs and revenues provides one measure of whether the region is encouraging or discouraging the tourist industry through its expenditure and revenue policies.

The measurement of tourist-related expenditures and revenues involves both data and conceptual problems. Those posed by highway investments are perhaps the most complex.

Highway Costs and Benefits

The response to out-of-state tourist traffic can range from no response—i.e., to build no new capacity with the result that all costs to state residents are incurred in the form of increased congestion costs—to construction of enough new capacity to fully accommodate the additional traffic and thus avoid increased congestion costs to resident drivers. (Congestion costs include increased travel time, selection of second best recreational alternatives, a higher incidence of accidents, psychic costs due to discomfort and inconvenience, and so forth.)

The Oregon experience appears to fall between the two polar cases. The amount expended on highways does not appear to have varied significantly as a result of the volume of out-of-state traffic; however, the selection of projects appears to have been affected. Because tourist automobile traffic is concentrated by season and route, traffic peaks for many highways have been quite different from those that would have occurred in the absence of tourists. Additional capacity has been built to accommodate these peaks at the cost of forgone construction on routes used predominantly by resident traffic. In this case there are no direct net monetary highway costs; hence, any revenue from the Oregon gasoline tax would tend to ensure an excess of highway-generated revenue over costs and would seem to imply an arrangement favorable from the standpoint of residents.

Of course, this conclusion is correct only insofar as congestion costs to residents are ignored or are less than the amount of highway-generated taxes collected from nonresidents. Although it is not possible to accurately measure congestion costs, it is possible to indicate the per capita magnitude of these costs that would be necessary to offset the tax revenues collected. For 1972 it is estimated that out-of-state travelers paid Oregon gas taxes of \$7,322,000. (Oregon does not have a state sales tax or state hotel-motel tax; hence, gasoline tax revenue is the only revenue that can be classified as highway generated.) This amounts to less than \$4.00 per capita, which indicates that the congestion costs need amount to only \$4.00 per person before adverse highway effects are experienced by Oregonians as a result of out-of-state visitors. If the value of time per vehicle in road use is \$3.00 an hour for passenger vehicles and \$6.00 per hour for trucks as is commonly assumed, the number of hours in lost travel time alone necessary to exhaust the tax benefit is relatively small. It is true that premature construction would result in excess capacity during much of the year and that some resident

user benefits would result from off-season use of these highways; however, benefits from what is largely redundant capacity are assumed to be small relative to the congestion costs.

If the response to out-of-state visitors is to build net additional highway capacity, the resultant costs should be identifiable and measureable. Implementation of the measures, however, requires information that is not generally available, particularly traffic count data for out-of-state light vehicles. Conceptually what is required is the identification of (a) improvements that are premature from the standpoint of resident and commercial traffic, (b) the costs of such improvements, (c) the number of years the improvements occurred in advance of justifying resident and commercial traffic, and (d) an appropriate interest rate or opportunity cost of capital. The cost of premature projects is not the actual construction cost but rather interest costs or opportunity costs of committing resources premature to resident needs.

Although Oregon generally does not appear to have built any net additional capacity in response to tourist traffic (rather it has reallocated highway funds), estimates have been made as if a net increase in expenditures occurred. Twelve projects involving expansion from two to four lanes were chosen to estimate the monetary costs that would have been incurred by Oregonians if they had expended funds that otherwise would not have been committed in the absence of tourists. The improvements cover 255 miles or approximately 5 percent of all primary roads in the state. The various projects were judged to be premature by from 1 to 16 years. That is, in the absence of out-of-state light vehicles, the volume of domestic traffic alone was estimated to not reach a level sufficient to justify these improvements until 1 to 16 years after the improvements occurred because of the presence of out-of-state light vehicles. An interest rate of 6 percent was arbitrarily selected, and interest costs were calculated for each project for each year of premature construction. Summing over the various projects gave an estimated interest cost for 1972 of approximately \$4,500,000. Because the calculations were for only 5 percent of the primary roads (roads with a high volume of out-of-state vehicles) and because no consideration was given to nonprimary roads or improvements other than expansion from two to four lanes, a conclusion that the total highway costs incurred as a result of out-of-state visitors exceeded state gasoline taxes collected, \$7,322,000 for 1972, is not particularly heroic.

State Park Costs and Benefits

State park costs and revenues arising from out-of-state tourist users are more readily identifiable, particularly if overnight use is important, fees are collected, and the origin of the user is recorded. In Oregon these conditions prevail, and, in conjunction with various expenditure data, tourist-related costs and revenues have been calculated. Given various assumptions regarding the assignment of costs between resident and nonresident users, the annual net subsidy (costs in excess of user fees collected) to out-of-state visitors for the three fiscal years 1969 to 1971 (1) ranged from \$1,302,078 to \$8,968,917.

If allowance is made for other direct state costs such as policing and litter control for which there are small or no revenue offsets, there is strong evidence to conclude that Oregon has pursued a policy of subsidizing tourists and indirectly the Oregon tourist industry. This is not necessarily desirable or undesirable. Such a judgment depends on the significance of this subsidy for the levels of tourist activity, the consequences for resources (human, natural, and capital) owned by Oregonians, the local fiscal impact of tourism, redistribution consequences of tourism, and the difficult-to-quantify amenity consequences.

It also should be noted that the Oregon case is probably not significantly different from that of other states. Just as Oregonians appear to subsidize out-of-state visitors, Oregonians are probably subsidized when they travel in other states. This is not to say that it all balances out. States that have a favorable net balance of trade on the tourist account will receive subsidies smaller than those granted visitors to their states. And, even where the subsidies do balance out, income redistribution effects should be considered inasmuch as it is exceedingly unlikely that they would balance for each individual.

BENEFITS TO STATE HUMAN AND INVESTMENT (FINANCIAL) CAPITAL

Within areas of unrestricted labor and capital migration, it has been conventional to assume a high degree of labor and capital mobility. Under this assumption and the additional assumption of full employment, the consequence of more or less economic activity in any particular region is not assumed to significantly affect the welfare of either labor or owners of investment (financial) capital; the next best alternative to employment within the state is assumed to be virtually equally remunerative. Hence benefits from state growth or nongrowth have been ignored. With respect to financial capital, the assumption of full mobility is reasonably valid and can therefore be disregarded in the measurement of tourist benefits. However, with respect to labor, this assumption is not appropriate. Labor is not perfectly mobile, and a favorable employment effect from tourism is a distinct possibility. A measure of such benefits is elusive however.

As indicated earlier, the employment benefit to residents is the difference between wages received as a result of tourist-induced employment and the benefits (wage and leisure) derived from the next best nontourist alternative uses of labor. Resident is defined as of a particular point in time. Both out-migration and in-migration are possible over time. Yet from the standpoint of state policy, which is presumably directed to maximizing the welfare of residents, the only population that counts is the constituent population as of the decision-making point in time. Policies that induce in-migration bring direct employment benefits to nonconstituents, and these should not be included in the labor benefits. On the other hand, if out-migration occurs, the employment loss is not equivalent to the full decrease in wages inasmuch as the policy point of view is in terms of the one-time-constituent who in most instances would have an alternative income earned outside of the state.

The employment benefit is not equivalent to total wages received directly as a result of tourist employment and indirectly through linked and induced employment. This overlooks possible benefits of alternative employment and leisure activities in the absence of tourist employment opportunities. Nor is the employment benefit the difference in total state payroll that would occur with and without a tourist industry. This overlooks employment possibilities outside of the state and nonwage benefits from increased leisure. For state residents the alternatives to work in the state tourist industry and indirect tourist-induced activities include (a) nonwork with associated leisure benefits, (b) work in the state in non-tourist-related activities, and (c) work outside of the state. Each presumably is an inferior alternative. How inferior and therefore how large the net labor benefits of tourism are depend on the degree of labor mobility and the value placed on leisure. Benefits to labor that migrates into the state as a result of tourist expansion should not be included in the calculation of benefits to state labor as a result of expanded tourism. On the other hand, if there are social costs as a result of unemployment or underemployment and if tourism increases the level of employment, an additional benefit must be included.

Information is not available to measure the net labor benefits of tourism to a state economy. When estimates of labor impact are made they are gross estimates and tend to be in terms of employment. Also they tend to be exaggerated relative to other basic industries (industries that engage in production for nonregion residents) because of tourism's high visibility and the difficulty of separating in-state from out-of-state components. Another source of exaggeration arises from the assumption that the indirect and induced effects of a tourist job are equivalent to those of the average basic job. (Basic jobs are jobs engaged in production for nonresidents; hence, they bring purchasing power into a region, which, in turn, through the expenditure process induces additional jobs engaged in production for the local market.) This is incorrect. In the case of the Oregon economy tourist jobs constituted between 7 and 9 percent of all basic jobs between 1962 and 1968. However when correction was made for differences in wage levels, direct tourist jobs accounted for between $4\frac{1}{2}$ and 5 percent of total basic job remuneration (tourist jobs paid between 55 and 58 percent of the average basic job). Assuming that the economy-wide average multiplier is valid for tourism, then the total employment effect, direct, indirect, and induced, was $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 percent of total state employment.

As indicated by the rates of remuneration, these jobs are not necessarily ideal either. Not only are the rates of pay low, but the jobs tend to be seasonal, geographically dispersed, and limited in opportunities for upward mobility. Of course, a certain number of such jobs are desirable insofar as labor force skills, seasonal and geographic labor availabilities, and job preferences match job opportunities. Beyond this number, further expansion of the industry in its traditional pattern would seem to be undesirable. Upon absorption of a resident labor force of students, other part-time job seekers, and low-skilled members of the labor force, growth in the industry will tend to exercise a downward influence on a state's per capita income level. This may occur either through in-migration of new labor force members—a result that is not the objective of policies to maximize benefits to the initial population—or through entrapping residents, primarily new entrants to the labor force, in these jobs. Indeed, if public policy can and is used to influence the pattern of economic growth, from the standpoint of employment opportunities, beyond some level of activity, further growth of tourism is not an appropriate policy.

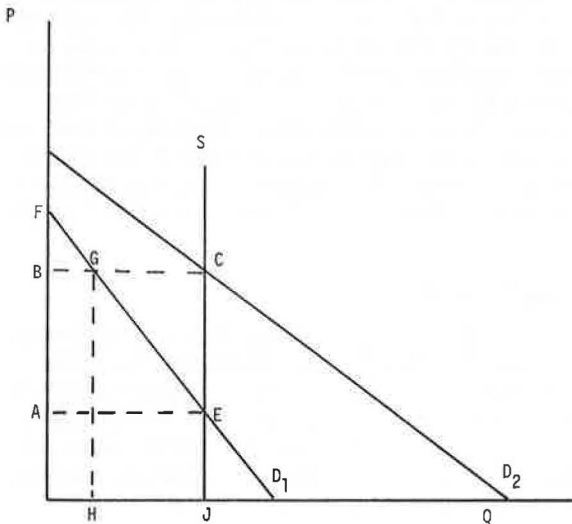
BENEFITS TO NATURAL AND FIXED CAPITAL AND REDISTRIBUTION CONSEQUENCES

The one who stands to benefit most from tourist expansion is the owner of natural resources and in some instances underutilized fixed-capital resources that are dependent on in-region demand.

In the case of privately owned natural resources, e.g., residential and recreational land, the effect of tourist growth is to increase demand for those resources as shown in Figure 1 by the shift from D_1 to D_2 . If market pricing prevails, the result is an economic rent of ABCE. This is the gain to owners of natural resources. It does not represent the net gain to residents of the region however. For one thing, ownership rights may reside with nonresidents. More importantly, there are accompanying losses to regional consumers.

Assume that D_1 represents resident demand, D_2 total demand including nonresident demand, and S represents the supply schedule of a resource for which there is a fixed quantity. In the absence of nonresidents, residents would consume J of the resource and pay A per unit. The consumer surplus to residents would be the area AEF. Consumer surplus is the difference between what buyers are willing to pay, which is pre-

Figure 1. Welfare effects of out-of-state tourism through increased demand for privately owned resources of fixed supply.



sumably indicative of the benefits derived from a good, and what they in fact pay. [For a discussion of the concept see any theory text (2).] With the addition of nonresident demand, residents reduce their consumption to \bar{H} for which they must pay a price of B. Their consumer surplus decreased by ABGE. The gain in rent to property owners is larger than the loss in consumer surplus by GEC. The analysis also applies to fixed-supply resources for which demand is indirectly increased as a result of the expansion of tourist-oriented activities.

If the ownership of the resource resides with residents of the state and if the potential for making some individuals better off without making others worse off is a sufficient condition, expansion of tourist demand can be said to increase the welfare of residents of the state. Inasmuch as compensation by gainers (resource owners) to losers (consumers) will not occur in the absence of intervention by government, the result is a redistribution from a state's consumers to its resource owners. If the resources are partially or wholly owned by nonresidents, then a part or all of the redistribution is from consumer residents to resource-owning nonresidents. This, of course, need not be a matter of particular concern. Changes in market forces regularly effect new equilibriums that alter the welfare positions of individuals. In the case of tourism, however, what is involved may not be entirely market forces. State governments through various expenditure and pricing policies (taxes, user fees, and the like) relating to highways, parks, and travel information programs may influence the level of nonresident demand. If this is the case, the formulation of such policies should give explicit consideration to the redistribution consequences.

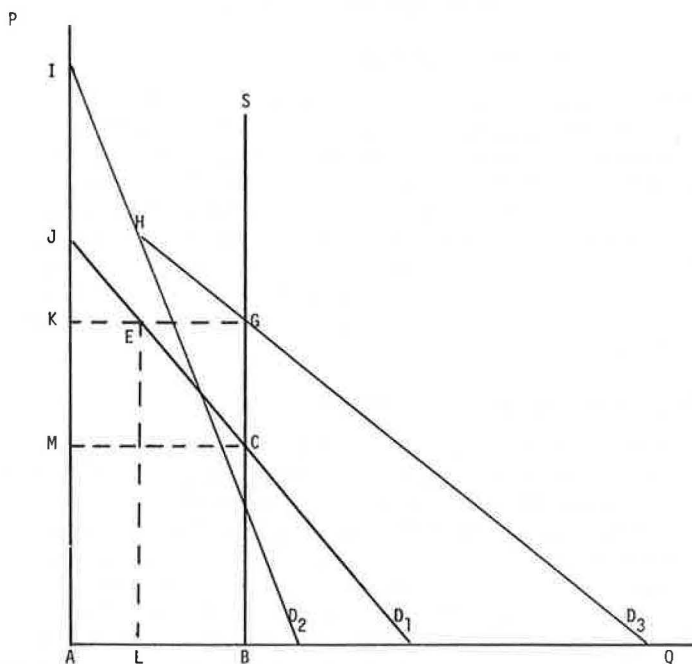
When fixed resources, say amenity-producing resources such as wilderness areas or water resources, are publicly owned, shifts in demand through increased tourism also can be expected to reduce the welfare of resident consumers except in instances in which the resource is available in sufficient quantity that neither rationing (price or nonprice) nor congestion costs occur as may still be the case of wilderness resources in certain northern Rocky Mountain states. If rationing is necessary and is not accomplished through pricing (and nonprice rationing is generally the case), the gain in resource value (as evidenced by what users are willing to pay for it) is unrealized, and indeed depending on the rationing outcome the actual consumer surplus enjoyed by users may be even less than in the resident-use only case. In Figure 2 D_1 is resident demand, D_2 nonresident demand, D_3 total demand, and S the supply schedule of a resource for which there is a fixed quantity.

If allocation of supply were made to those placing the highest value on the product (to individuals willing to pay a price of M or higher), the resident consumer surplus would be ABCJ in the absence of nonresident users and ALEJ in the presence of nonresident users (assuming that allocation is made to individuals willing to pay a price of K or higher). Total consumer surplus would increase to ABGHI, whereas the resident share would decrease. Rationing other than by price would most certainly alter this outcome inasmuch as some allocation would be made to individuals unwilling to pay prices as high as M or K . Total consumer surpluses would be smaller as a result of a different mix of users. How different would depend on the workings of the rationing system. Despite such ambiguities, it is safe to conclude that, unless the rationing system was peculiarly perverse, the effect of introducing nonresident demand would be to reduce consumer surplus of residents. Thus, in the absence of a price system and a zero increase in resource rents to the state, the result of nonresident users is a decrease in welfare to residents of the state.

LOCAL FISCAL IMPACT

At the local community level there is also a fiscal impact. Social overhead facilities and government services are required by tourist-serving enterprises and the labor force of these enterprises. Revenue is derived from taxes and fees, mainly property taxes on the land and improvements of the commercial enterprises and residential property (owned and rented) of the tourist labor force. The match between costs and revenues depends on a number of variables including the character of the community, the types of tourist enterprises, and the characteristics of the labor force.

Figure 2. Welfare effects of out-of-state tourism through increased demand for publicly owned resources of fixed supply.



Costs will be smaller if a community has excess social capital and residential housing, for example because of stagnation or decline in its other basic industries, and therefore the community will not need to construct new schools, water systems, sewage treatment plants, residential streets, public buildings, and so forth.

The enterprises (motels, golf courses, summer resorts, convention centers) vary by the level of demand for public facilities and services, the seasonality of demand, and their capital intensity. Low levels of demand for public facilities and services are preferred over high levels. The smaller the seasonal fluctuations of the enterprises are, the less the off-season idle social overhead capacity will be. The more capital intensive the enterprise is, the higher the real property values and hence tax revenue per worker will be.

The labor force varies by rates of pay, seasonality of work, age, marital status, number of school-aged children per worker, geographic origin of worker, and so forth. The higher the wage rate is, the more valuable the residential property is and therefore the higher residential property tax revenues are. The fewer the number of school-aged children per worker is, the smaller is the educational impact. This is particularly important inasmuch as education cost is the major item in local budgets. The more stable the employment and the milder the seasonal employment variations are, the smaller the community welfare needs are. If the worker already resides in the community, the smaller are the needs for additional social capital.

An adverse local fiscal impact shifts support of tourist expansion to commercial and residential property owners not directly related to the tourist industry, whereas a favorable local fiscal impact, in effect, constitutes a subsidy from the tourist industry to the rest of the community. Tourist communities, of course, vary widely, and generalization is tenuous, particularly in the absence of any systematic studies. A number of characteristics are fairly universal however. Capital-labor ratios tend to be fairly low relative to other basic industries. Rates of employee pay are low, and therefore the value of residential property per worker is low. Both tend to contribute to a low per-

worker property tax. Whether this results in an adverse fiscal impact depends on the expenditure side and the extent to which nonproperty taxes and fees collected directly and indirectly from tourists are used. Here generalization is not possible.

OTHER COSTS AND BENEFITS

There are, of course, effects of tourism other than those discussed. Two in particular might be noted. Environmental quality may be affected, with the direction of change generally adverse to the resident population. Also benefits may result from expanded consumer choice caused by available facilities and services that were tourist induced, and possibly prices may be lower for certain facilities and services because of scale effects or lower off-season rates as a result of off-season marginal pricing. These and other effects have been treated less systematically because of difficulties of measurement or because of a judgment that they are of lesser importance. Nonetheless, they should not be overlooked in a tourist impact study, particularly since their importance may vary widely among states.

PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The case for promotion, neutrality, or discouragement of tourism depends on the total impact of the industry on the welfare of the residents of the region. As indicated, the effects are diverse and are not unambiguously favorable or unfavorable when redistribution effects are involved. Therefore, the case for tourist promotion (tourist information and advertising programs and the less than full cost pricing of facilities and services used by tourists) is supported (a) if tourist encouragement policies work, (b) if the state fiscal impact is favorable, (c) if the job impact is favorable, (d) if the local fiscal impact is favorable, (e) if the redistribution impact is viewed favorably (redistribution from resident consumers to resident or nonresident natural resource owners), (f) if there are no adverse environmental consequences, and (g) if the region has an unfavorable balance of tourist payments; hence residents receive a larger tourist subsidy when traveling outside of the region than nonresidents receive when traveling within the region.

Obviously the case for promotion does not necessitate that all these conditions be met. Yet, when some are adverse, a system of weights is necessary; and, if all effects are not quantifiable in dollar terms and redistribution effects are involved, a consensus policy is not likely to be achieved. The case for discouragement is supported by the opposite of these conditions.

Alternatively, a policy of neutrality might be followed, particularly inasmuch as the totality of effects is not fully known and appropriate weights for different effects are difficult to agree on. By one definition of neutrality, governments could dispense with all tourist promotion and price all public services and facilities used by tourists at their full cost including highways. The effect on tourism would then depend on whether present prices (taxes and user charges) are higher or lower than costs and whether the demand for facilities and services is somewhat elastic in the relevant price ranges. It may be either that prices (taxes and user charges) paid by tourists for state facilities and services are reasonably close to the full costs of producing them or that the change in prices necessary to cover full costs would have little or no effect on tourist activities and that travel promotion and information programs do not influence the number of visitors. Then policies of encouragement, discouragement, or neutrality as defined above would be equally ineffective in influencing levels of activity (although the state fiscal impact would vary). If encouragement or discouragement were desired, either sizable subsidies or penalty overcharges would be necessary insofar as the pricing mechanism (taxes and user charges) was utilized.

Unfortunately at this time we have insufficient information to be assured of making wise decisions. In this paper an attempt has been made to isolate the effects that should be measured. Insofar as data for Oregon are available, the direction and magnitude of certain effects for one state have been reported. The data are incomplete however, and no definitive judgment can be made. Insofar as evidence is available, it indicates (a) a

state fiscal subsidy to tourists, (b) a small favorable employment effect (based on an assumption of a high degree of labor mobility and some leisure benefits from nonwork), (c) a favorable real property effect from the standpoint of resource owners and an unfavorable effect from the standpoint of consumers, (d) an unknown local fiscal effect (there is no reason to believe it to be strongly favorable), and (e) probably an adverse environmental effect. If this is correct, it is not a strong case for promotion of the industry. Indeed, if the state is determined to promote economic growth, other industries should be investigated and their impact compared with tourism.

REFERENCES

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DISCUSSION

L. B. Wallerstein, Environmental Development Division,
Federal Highway Administration

With the increasing policy of no growth or slow growth on the part of states such as Oregon, because of environmental and other considerations, the tourist industry, despite its relatively low wage level, takes on increasing economic importance because it does provide some seasonal economic input without the traumata of permanent economic development.

The following comments on this paper deal primarily with economic concepts.

Although the author places the economic emphasis on employment caused by the tourist industry, he does not touch on the economic multiplier and accelerator effects of this employment or on the economic impact of goods and services, stemming from the tourist industry, purchased within the state other than the economic impacts caused by increased employment.

The Office of Management and Budget usually uses 8 or 9 percent as an opportunity cost. Also, the opportunity cost concept is not really the interest concept as indicated, although the concept of interest may be a facet of opportunity cost or one kind of opportunity cost. If the author's figures are recalculated at 8 or 9 percent, the related data derived may differ considerably from that derived by using the 6 percent figure.

The relationship between full employment and wage levels should be clarified, inasmuch as, contrary to the author's contention, full employment usually results in high wage levels because of supply and demand factors.

The author overlooks the possibility of out-of-staters coming in to be employed in Oregon's tourist industry and the impact this would have on the economy of the area.

In his discussion of per capita income level, the author neglects the question of the impact on per capita income level if there was no tourist industry and if people went on welfare instead of working in this industry.

In summary, I think that overall this is an extremely valuable paper, and I recommend that it be read by all persons in the highway community concerned with the economic considerations of the highway program and by those concerned with relationship between the tourist industry and the highway program in particular.