By Polk County Economic Development
NC Dept. of Commerce, Rural Division ULRC Grant 2015-072-2589-1534

** Purposes:** To help improve TIEC visitors’ experience in the region and to determine the economic impact of visitors to the Tryon International Equestrian Center (TIEC). Visitors are defined as exhibitors/competitors and their team members, vendors, and TIEC staff.

**Vehicle Counts:** Vehicles in the barn parking lots and in the support areas are counted to determine a baseline of vehicles on regularly-scheduled event days at 3:00 to 4:00pm. These vehicles belong to event competitor team members, TIEC staff, and vendors. A record of the state of vehicle registration (license plate/tag) is also noted.

**Spectator Vehicle Counts:** Vehicles entering TIEC for major events (“Saturday Night Lights”) are counted at the main gate and the Pea Ridge Road entrance beginning at 4:00pm until traffic ceases about 8:30 or 9:00pm.

**Spectator Attendance:** The actual number of people in vehicles entering the main gate and the Pea Ridge Road entrance are counted at the major events at the same time vehicles are counted.

**Horse Trailer Counts:** Trailers parked at the top of the hill at the corner of John Sheehan and Pea Ridge Roads and the parking area on Pea Ridge Road across NC Highway 74 are counted on regularly-scheduled event days at 3:00 to 4:00pm.

**Horse Counts:** The TIEC Stabling Manager provides the total horses on site count by the end of the day Sunday.

**Summer 2015 Summary:**

**6 June 2015 (Saturday):**
- 3,200 vehicles on site, from 25 states
- 10,000 people on site (estimated)
- 543 Horses stabled on site

**23-27 June 2015 (days):**
- 237 to 450 exhibitor & staff vehicles on site, from 25 states
- 93 horse trailers
- 577 horses stabled on site
- 51 RVs on site
- 711 spectator vehicles (“Saturday Night Lights”)
- Approximately 2,000 spectators (“Saturday Night Lights”)

**30 June – 4 July 2015:**
- 232 to 612 exhibitor & staff vehicles on site, from 28 states
- 149 horse trailers
- 887 horses stabled on site
- 65 RVs on site
- 1,164 spectator vehicles (“Saturday Night Lights”)
- Approximately 3,000 spectators (“Saturday Night Lights”)

**8-12 July 2015:**
- 414 to 725 exhibitor & staff vehicles on site, from 30 states
- 172 horse trailers
- 820 horses stabled on site
- 64 RVs on site
- 1,144 spectator vehicles (“Saturday Night Lights”)
- 2,644 spectators (“Saturday Night Lights”)
- 3,400 exhibitors & staff
13-19 July 2015:
- 332 to 458 exhibitor & staff vehicles on site, from 29 states
- 172 horse trailers on site
- 621 horses stabled on site
- 36 to 51 RVs on site
- 1,144 spectator vehicles ("Saturday Night Lights")
- 2,824 spectators ("Saturday Night Lights")
- 2,432 exhibitors & staff

Comparison with September-October 2014:
- 87 to 214 exhibitor & staff vehicles on site, from 24 states
- 39 to 41 RVs on site
- 593 vehicles on site Sunday 26 October 2014 ("Grand Prix" event)

Conclusions
As the Equestrian Center completes show rings, adds parking, and adds events the overall attendance and vehicular traffic grows. The census of vehicles and visitors has evolved to become increasingly more precise as the need for more accurate data became apparent and additional people were brought on board to collect the data. This data collection process will continue to improve during the Fall Series beginning on 16 September 2015.

Traffic and parking will continue to provide challenges to the TIEC staff as well as the spectators until the facility is completed. We need to remind ourselves (and visitors) that this venue is actually a construction site that has horse shows. Construction continues in almost every area of the site. And yet, the facility has received reviews as a "world-class venue" by exhibitors and spectators alike.

Given the data to date we can confidently estimate the spectators at 2.5 people per vehicle while exhibitor/team members are estimated at 3 to 4 per horse until we get additional clarification. The TIEC Stabling manager is the source for actual horse counts (and stall rentals) thereby allowing the actual number of registered horses to be documented in our study.

The Economic Impact surveys were “beta tested” during the month of July 2015. Paper survey forms were placed in the Show Office along with the “Win a Kindle Fire” promotion. Tablet surveys were conducted during the Exhibitor’s Receptions on Friday evenings. Both of these methods and formats will be refined with the continuing assistance of Western Carolina University, School of Business faculty and the assigned student assistant.

Contact for additional information:
Robert Williamson
Polk County Office of Economic Development
Columbus, NC 28722
rwilliamson@polknco.org
828-894-2895 (o)
828-817-9428 (m)