

Economic Impact of the Chicago Bears'
Training Camp on the Platteville Region:
A Preliminary Analysis

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This past summer the City of Platteville and the University of Wisconsin-Platteville celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Chicago Bears conducting their annual summer training camp at the UW-Platteville campus. In the summer of 1983, the Chicago Bears and the Kansas City Chiefs conducted a joint three-day training session at the UW-Platteville campus. The experience was sufficiently gratifying to all parties that both the Bears and Chiefs' organizations explored the possibility of returning to Platteville the falling year.

Today, the Wisconsin Cheese League is composed of four National Football League teams: the Chicago Bears in Platteville, the Kansas City Chiefs in River Falls, the New Orleans Saints in La Crosse, and the Green Bay Packers in DePere. During the late summer months, the residents of Wisconsin benefit from not only the recreational value of having these professional football teams practice within the state, but also economic benefits in terms of increased tourism activity associated with the Cheese League.

The purpose of this study is to attempt to garner a better understanding of the economic impact of the Chicago Bears' training camp on the Platteville area and the distribution of these impacts within the area. In addition, this information is intended to be used to help develop strategies which would increase fan satisfaction of the recreational event, including their impression of Platteville and southwestern Wisconsin, and

maximize the economic contribution of the visitors.

During the last two weeks of the Bears' training session this year a team of volunteers, organized by the Platteville Chamber of Commerce, surveyed a small sample of fans attending the training session. The survey instrument, designed by University of Wisconsin-Extension analysts in conjuncture with the Grant County Economic Development Corporation, was intended to gather information concerning fan characteristics and spending patterns during their visit to Platteville and the surrounding area.

Given this information, a profile of an average fan has been developed along with an estimated of the impact these tourist dollars has on the Platteville economy. A total of 87 fans attending the training camp responded to the survey. But for most of the analysis, only responses for non-Platteville attendees are used, thus reducing the sample to 82 persons, a rather small sample. While this sample size would not be considered "statistically significant" in an academic setting, the data which was collected is consistent with other surveys conducted in Wisconsin. For example, the recent study of the Experimental Aircraft Associations' annual air show conducted by the UW-Extension' Tourism Research and Resource Center.

In this report, a summary of the analysis is provided. The report is composed of three sections. First, a profile of a typical Bears' fan attending the

summer training camp is developed and reported. Next, an analysis of fan expenditure patterns and the resulting economic impact on the Platteville area is provided. The report closed with a forthright discussion of the limitations of the study and directions for future analysis.

A Fan Profile

As expected, the majority of fans attending the Chicago Bears' summer training camp in Platteville are from Illinois and in particular the Chicagoland area. As depicted in Figure 1, 65 percent of the surveyed fans are from Illinois, 10 percent are from Iowa, and four percent are from other states such as Minnesota, Indiana, and as far away as Ohio. Nearly one-in-five of those surveyed are Wisconsin residents, and slightly more than one-in-ten are residents of Platteville. This latter figure suggests that the residents of Platteville benefit from the Chicago Bears' training camp in more than simple economic terms.

A somewhat surprisingly large number, 39 percent, of the fans surveyed are first-time attendees of the camp. This may be explained in part by the fundamental changes that the Chicago Bears have undergone in the past year. The foremost change being the replacement of Mike Ditka as head coach with David Wannstedt. It has been suggested by some Platteville merchants who directly benefit from the training camp, that this year's collection of attending fans are different from those of past years. Thus, these survey results must be interpreted in this light.

Still, many fans are repeat visitors to

Platteville with the typical number of camps attending being three. Removing first-time attendees, the average number of years attending increases to four with some attending all ten years. Still, the vast majority, 91.4 percent, stated that attending the Bear's training session was the primary reason for their trip. Very few "stumbled" upon the training camp.

Despite the fact that attending the training camp was the primary reason for the trip away from home, many fans attending the sessions did participate in other activities. As depicted in Figure 2, 50 percent of the surveyed fans stated that they toured the area for the purpose of sightseeing. One-in-four explicitly went shopping in the Platteville area, most likely for souvenirs of their visit, while 12.5 percent took advantage of the gaming opportunities available along the Mississippi River. Less than one-in-ten took advantage of outdoor recreational opportunities, 6.9 percent of those surveyed visited friends and relatives, and 4.2 percent conducted business while in the area. Perhaps more important is the large number of fans that reported not partaking in any other recreational activity.

As part of the survey instrument, those surveyed were allowed to express their opinions as to what they most, as well as least enjoyed, about their visit to Platteville. A consistent concern was the lack of activities between and after the training sessions. This observation is consistent with the information contained in Figure 2 and suggests possible directions for future community efforts designed to maximize the benefits of the Bears summer camp. These efforts could include the

development of new activities as well as promoting existing activities which are not widely recognized.

Of those surveyed, a slight majority, 52 percent, stayed over at least one night while attending the training camp. For the remaining 48 percent, the trip to Platteville to attend the camp was a single day trip. This high percentage of "day-trippers" helps explain, in part, the low activity levels revealed in Figure 2: the only free-time for most day-trippers is the two to three hour period between the morning and afternoon training sessions. This is too short of a period of time to undertake other recreational activities such as sightseeing. A potential direction for community action is to design a series of activities during the mid-day break. Possibilities are discussed in the conclusion section of this report.

Of the 52 percent of the respondents that stay over a night, the vast majority, 79 percent stayed in either a motel or hotel. Only 10 percent used campground facilities, while seven percent stayed with friends and/or relatives. Interestingly, of those surveyed, none took advantage of the extensive network of Bed and Breakfasts throughout the area. This result is surprising and might be a result of the relatively small sample size.

Less than half, 46 percent, of those respondents who stayed over a night during their visit stayed within Platteville itself (Figure 5). But, taken together, 58.9 percent reported that they stayed within Grant County. Nearly one-in-five

stayed in other Wisconsin communities outside of Grant County, and almost one-in-four (23.1 percent) stayed in communities outside of Wisconsin, most commonly Galena, Illinois and Dubuque, Iowa.

The primary reason for this disperse pattern in the location of overnight accommodations is the relatively small hotel/motel room capacity of Platteville. In essence, during the Bears' training camp, the hotel/motel capacity of the Grant County area is saturated. Therefore, the direct benefit of the Bears' practicing in Platteville spills over into surrounding communities, and indeed, several more distant communities. Although, in part due to increased tourism traffic, two new motels and an expansion at one of the new motels in Platteville has taken place since the arrival of the Bears.

As previously mentioned, casual observation suggests that the nature of the collection of fans attending this year's training session appears to be different from previous years. One potential difference was explored in the survey design. Specifically, concern has been expressed over the family environment of the sessions. Within the survey instrument questions designed to solicit camp attendees' attitudes toward the family environment of the camp. A clear majority, 69.9 percent, respondent that they viewed their trip to Platteville to observe the training session as a family function.

When further queried about the age makeup of their group, a clear pattern develops. As reported in Figure 6, more than one-in-three are

under the age of 21. The next largest category, with 26.9 percent, is the 36 to 50 years of age group. The pattern that develops is clear: the majority of parties traveling to Platteville to observe the Bears' training sessions are families with young children. The question that arises is whether this is a consistent profile, or whether it has changed over the years.

Economic Impact Assessment

In addition to developing a general profile of the fans attending the Bears' summer training camp, a focal point of this study is to assess the economic impact of the camp on the Platteville area. The camp impacts the local economy in two ways. First, the Bears have a set contract with the UW-Platteville for the use of the University's facilities. Therefore, there is a direct injection of new money into the Platteville economy. Part of this injection is also a one-time contract with the Cleveland Browns' organization for the exhibition game which took place in Platteville.

Second, as fans travel into Platteville they bring with them tourist dollars. While detailed information surrounding the Bears' direct contribution is available from the UW-Platteville Chancellor's office, detailed information concerning the expenditure patterns of the fans themselves was gathered from the survey instrument.

Once the expenditure data were gathered, the economic impact assessment was conducted with the use of a regional economic model of Grant County. The model, developed for this project by the authors, is a standard input-output model of

the county. At the heart of the Grant County input-output model is the *transactions table*. The transactions table shows the flows of all goods and services produced (or purchased) by industries in the region. By altering these flows, or in this case, adding to the flows in terms of new dollars entering the economy, changes in the economy can be assessed. Because of the detail of the model, the impact of the Bears' training camp on individual industries in Grant County can be derived. Therefore, the analysis captures direct impacts plus indirect, or multiplier impacts.¹

Fan Expenditures

A total of six commodity groups were identified for the purpose of the soliciting expenditure levels of the fans: accommodations; eating and drinking places; grocery stores; entertainment; gasoline/services; and miscellaneous retail. Each fan participating in the survey was asked to estimate how much they have spent or plan on spending in a typical day while in Platteville. The summary of these expenditure patterns is reported in Table 1.

Based on these survey responses, the typical person attending the training camp spends an average of just over \$50 per day.

Table 1. Average Expenditure Rates Per Person

Accommodations:	\$16.45
Eating & Drinking Places:	14.32
Grocery Stores:	2.57
Entertainment:	2.10
Gasoline/Services:	4.03
Miscellaneous Retail:	<u>10.58</u>
TOTAL:	\$50.05

Source: Fan Expenditure Survey, UW-Extension

Clearly the largest categories are overnight accommodations, eating and drinking places, and miscellaneous retail, most of which is expenditures on souvenirs. Expenditures on groceries, entertainment and gasoline/services appears small due to the fact that a number of the respondents reported no expenditures in these latter categories. While these specific expenditure levels are specific to the Bears' sessions, they are comparable to similar studies of recreational events.

Based on an estimated total attendance of 42,000 fans over the duration of the training camp, the total direct injection of new monies into the Grant County economy from Bear fans is approximately \$1.47 million (see Table 2).

Given the information provided in Table 2, and details of the contract between the Bears' organization and the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, a detailed analysis of the economic impact of the summer camp was undertaken. The results of that analysis are reported in Table 3.

Table 2. Total Direct Injection of New Dollars from Bear Fans

Accommodations:	\$234,955
Eating & Drinking Places:	528,064
Grocery Stores:	94,771
Entertainment:	77,439
Gasoline/Services:	148,610
Miscellaneous Retail:	<u>390,148</u>
TOTAL:	\$1,470,000

Source: Fan Expenditure Survey, UW-Extension

Combined Economic Impact

The combined economic impact of the Bears' contract with the University and the direct fans' expenditures, as outlined in Table 2, is \$2.426 million in terms of income and nearly 170 jobs, where employment defined here is annual full-time equivalents (see Table 3). Clearly, the heavily affected sectors are retail trade, services, government, and finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) sectors. This makes intuitive sense given the direct impacts of the new injections of money. However, there is a notable "spill-over" or "multiplier" affect which indirectly affects nearly every sector of the area economy. Indeed, even the natural resource based industries (e.g., agriculture) are touched by the presence of the Bears' summer training camp.

Table 3. Economic Impact of the Chicago Bears' Training Camp on Grant County

Sector	Income (\$000)	Jobs
<u>Bears Organization Alone</u>		
Natural Resource	\$ 2.8	.2
Construction	4.5	.2
Manufacturing	3.7	.1
Tran-Com-Utilities	18.1	.3
Trade	49.1	4.0
FIRE*	57.0	.7
Services	47.7	3.0
Government	335.9	18.1
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>518.8</i>	<i>26.6</i>
<u>Fans' Expenditures</u>		
Natural Resource	20.6	1.3
Construction	32.9	1.5
Manufacturing	31.1	1.3
Tran-Com-Utilities	130.0	1.9
Trade	907.0	93.9
FIRE*	314.3	3.8
Services	436.3	38.5
Government	35.0	1.0
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>1907.2</i>	<i>143.2</i>
<u>Total Economic Impact</u>		
Natural Resource	23.4	1.5
Construction	37.4	1.7
Manufacturing	34.8	1.4
Tran-Com-Utilities	148.1	2.2
Trade	956.1	97.9
FIRE*	371.3	4.5
Services	484.0	41.5
Government	370.9	19.1
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>2426.0</i>	<i>169.8</i>

Estimates by the authors

*Finance, Insurance, Real Estate

Perhaps the single most important conclusion of this study is: *through the interconnectedness of the Platteville area economy, more specifically, the Grant County economy, nearly all aspects of the economy are positively affected by the Chicago Bears' summer training camp.* Through the direct injection of new money into the local economy, specific businesses and their employees directly benefit. Examples of such businesses that directly benefit include the lodging and restaurant sectors. As these sector prospers, the business itself, the owners of the business and employees of the business, have additional money to spend locally.

For example, a local restaurant may find that the increased traffic during the training camp accelerates the deterioration of the restaurant carpets. Because of the enhanced revenue the restaurant is experiencing, the restaurant owner finds it necessary to replace the carpets. If the carpet is bought locally, a carpet supply and installation business receives an order it would not have otherwise. It is through this "ripple" or "multiplier" affect that most aspects of the Platteville economy benefits from the Bears' training camp.

When the sources of these impacts are decomposed across the Bears' organization and the fans, it becomes apparent that the largest source of the overall impact is from the fans' and the tourism dollars which they bring to the Platteville area. In essence, \$1.47 million dollars worth of direct expenditures translates into \$1.9 million in income to the residents of Grant County through some 143 jobs. Whereas the injection of new money through the Bears' contract translates into \$518,800 in new

income through almost 27 jobs. Because most of this latter new money goes to support UW-Platteville, which falls into the government sector, it is intuitive that this sector be the most affected by the Bears' contract itself.

Discussion and Conclusions

In order to address the central question, what is the impact of the Chicago Bears' summer training camp on Platteville, the Grant County Economic Development Corporation and the Platteville Chamber of Commerce approached the University of Wisconsin-Extension with the proposal to construct an economic impact assessment study. The research team identified two immediate problems: first, the training camp had already begun, thus time was of the utmost, second, there was little if any financial resources to support the project.

It was decided to move forward with the study using volunteer support in the survey phase of the project. Given the short time-frame volunteer training was held to a minimum. Another important limitation to the study is the limited number of surveys that were completed: 87, 82 of which were used for the bulk of the analysis. Concern was also expressed that the internal changes to the Bears' organization over the past year has changed the nature of this years collection of fans. Therefore, the conclusions of this study may not be useful for assessing previous years. Still, given the level of prior information concerning the impact of the summer camp, the information contained in this report is worthy of consideration and discussion. Still, the discussion

should retain the limitations of this study.

The study accomplished two tasks. First a general profile of the fans attending the training camp was developed. Second, a quantitative assessment of the jobs and income created within the Platteville area as a result of the camp was developed. The overall highlights of these two accomplishments are reviewed.

The result that the majority of the attending fans are from Illinois and in particular the Chicagoland area is not particularly surprising. However, nearly one-in-five are Wisconsin residents and one-in-ten are residents of Platteville. This latter result suggests that many residents of Platteville are directly benefitting from the camp through the recreational pleasure of viewing the camp.

While many of the survey respondents noted that they partake in other recreational activities while attending the camp, the vast majority travel to Platteville for the sole purpose of viewing the training sessions: these are Bear fans with really only one thing on their agenda, watching the Bears. Somewhat surprisingly, a slight majority of the surveyed fans reported that they stayed over at least one night on their visit to Platteville. The clear majority of these overnight visitors stayed in hotels and motels throughout the Grant County area. Another surprising result is the conclusion that the vast majority of surveyed fans viewed their trip to Platteville to watch the Bears training camp as a family activity. Indeed, casual observation suggested a high number of younger fans attending the camp.

One of the problem areas identified by the survey was the lack of activities to undertake between and after practice sessions. First, many fans may be unaware of activities in the area. Second, given the high number of "day-trippers" a real problem area is the time between morning and afternoon sessions. The time period is too short to really leave the area for, say a sightseeing trip, but long enough to become restless.

There are two pieces of information that are derived from the survey that might point a direction. First, many of the attending fans view this as a family function. Second, these fans are devote Bears' fans. Activities centering around football, the Bears, and children may be worth developing. A temporary "Bears' Hall of Fame" along with the showing of old Bears' games, and kick, punt and pass contests may be viable activities.

Through the survey instrument, the direct economic contribution of the recreational activity of attending the Bears' training session is approximately \$1.5 million in new money entering the local economy. Through the "ripple" or "multiplier" affect, this results in a total economic impact on the regional economy (Grant County) of \$2,426,000 in total income, through some 170 jobs. Due to the recreational nature of the activity, the most highly affected sectors of the economy are hotels and motels, restaurants, retail establishments, and the UW-Platteville. However, the analysis revealed that nearly every sector of the regional economy is positively affected, in an economic sense.

While the study attempted to focus on quantitative aspects of the Chicago Bears' training sessions on Platteville and the surrounding area, there are several qualitative aspects that the study did not examine. For example, the Governor has actively promoted the Cheese League. Platteville has a unique "hook" to draw the Governor to town for promotional events. While in town, the Governor can be made aware of other issues facing the community. More directly, the regional and national press coverage devoted to Platteville is an extraordinary opportunity for the community and the University to promote themselves as an "ideal" community in which to live. The camp also provides a rich opportunity to use famous sports figures to promote local activities. Examples might include the local, "Just Say No" program, disabled or disadvantaged youth programs. Most players tend to be civic-minded and are open to making local appearances and addressing local groups, particularly if children are involved. Finally, the camp provides a tremendous learning opportunity for UW-Platteville students in terms of internships with the Bears' organization and the University Administration.

Clearly, there are disadvantages to the Bears' camp in Platteville. The most obvious of which is increased congestion within the community, noise, and dirt. Other less subtle disadvantages might include increased wear and tear on the local road network, and increased demands placed on the police and potentially fire departments. However, as the presence of the camp increases the profitability of businesses within the community, property values increase, thus generating greater potential to pay for the

increased service demand. Clearly these latter issues are very complex and are beyond the scope of this analysis. Still, as with all positive events, there are disadvantages. This study has attempted to quantify the positive economic impacts of the Chicago Bears' training camp.

Endnotes

1. For a more detailed discussion of the regional economic modeling approach adapted for this study, please see *Regional Economic Models for the State of Wisconsin: An Application of the Micro-IMPLAN Modeling System*, by Steven C. Deller, N.R. Sumathi, and David Marcouiller. Center for Community Economic Development, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension. Staff Paper 93.6. November, 1993.