

a. Bass Coast Council Plan 2021 – 2025

Celebrates diversity, creativity and businesses by understanding community values, including rebounding from the COVID-19 pandemic, and fostering partnerships within communities. A resident population of approximately 36,000 that increases during the holiday seasons. Bass Coast Shire Council provides services for the benefit and well-being of communities, working in partnership with all levels of government, private and not-for-profit entities, to improve everyone's lives.

- Planning and monitoring
- Service delivery
- Law making
- Stewardship
- Advocacy
- Councillors are the voices of our community

Some of the challenges for Council along with the rest of Victoria is addressing climate change, planning for an ageing population, housing affordability and balancing population growth. The strategy objectives are listed as:

- Protecting the natural environment
- An inclusive and healthy community
- Strengthening and connecting between people and places
- Growing our economy
- Sustainable development
- Leading for our community through good governance, transparency and accountability

The Community Vision was prepared comprising of 43 community members who worked together to write the vision statement, taking in aspirations and priorities for Bass Coast for the next 20 years. Online workshops, then face to face workshops were conducted. Identified Bass Coast's attributes of flowing hills, vibrant townships with distinct characters, creativity, innovation and resilience including a diverse economy that supports sustainable agriculture.

On Bunurong Country and build on Learnings from our First People, we coexist in harmony with our environment and are prepared for future challenges and changes. Key elements to come out of the workshops:

Climate Change

The challenges faced by the community as with all communities are increase average temperatures and solar radiation, increased extreme heat days and increased sea level rises, increased ocean acidification.

Housing affordability

With increased number of people moving to the area and decreased rental vacancy rates, this is a critical issue.

Growth

While increased growth can bring economic benefits, it places the character of a 'smaller town feel' in jeopardy.

Family Violence

Bass Coast has significantly higher level of family violence incidents compared with other parts of Victoria.

Ageing Population (Between 2016-2026)

The age structure forecasts for Bass Coast Shire indicate a 24% increase in population retirement age.

COVID 19

The impact of COVID 19 is far reaching. Business, families and individuals face financial implications with fewer visitors and decreased spending.

KPI's provide Council measures to monitor and Council does not control the results, but seeks to influence with advocacy, partnerships and the community

Council will report back on the progress of the Council Plan quarterly to the community, then an end of year review against KPIs.

Of relevance to the Woolamai to Nyora Rail Trail study:

1. The Healthy Community: to increase connectivity and provide residents to be active in a range of leisure, investigate elements of Aboriginal culture and heritage. Ie Bass River.
2. Our Places: Connected and sustainable communities lower transport emissions.
3. Growing Our Economy: The implications the trail's construction would have on employment then the longer-term maintenance.

b. Bass Coast Shire Community Vision 2041

The Bass Coast Community vision is a guiding document for Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.

Forty-three community members made contributions and wrote the vision statement including the aspirations and priorities for Bass Coast for the next 20 years. The community wants Bass Coast to be recognised for its natural environment, healthy inclusive communities to emerge as a region that is proud to develop its people, business and infrastructure to support growth sustainability and accessibility. To create a place where arts and culture is recognised and revered, the coastline, foreshore and beaches, open space and biodiversity is to be celebrated and protected. Bass Coast needs to become more effective in responding to and anticipating community needs.

The Vision

Flowing hills, unspoiled coastlines a source to celebrate for all who live in and visit the region. Townships will be vibrant, rich with culture, full of life each with its own distinct character. Townships to draw on creativity innovation and resilience, creating thriving and diverse economies supporting sustainable agriculture and industry. Live on Bunurong Country and build on learnings from our First Peoples.

Community Aspiration

Climate change – renewable energy through partnerships, manage recycling keep the community safe, aim for a net or zero emissions future, protect the shorelines, estuaries and controls on waterways through tighter planning.

Protect and enhance the Natural Environment embracing cultural understanding of the Bunurong People's connection and care of the country enhance biodiversity and promote farming practices that are regenerative. Encourage healthy and

inclusive communities providing housing options that are avoidable, a robust and affordable local health care maintain the highly engaged community priorities arts and cultural activities. We have inclusive and supportive communities, we have healthy lifestyles, exercise programs and sporting facilities. We are committed to reconciliation with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community members. We are resilient community and promote open conversations about mental health, we support older residents to continue to live at home. We have community groups that are well supported and valued and promote community connections and wellbeing.

Under Access and Movement

Advocate reliable public transport access and connection across the shire and to Melbourne's CBD. We encourage visitors to explore Bass Coast using eco-friendly transport to reduce traffic congestion at peak holiday times. We provide walking and cycling through safe and well-connected pathways. We invest in infrastructure that prioritises and supports the community to transition to low or no emission modes of transport. We reduce car use in main streets, we continue to maintain and improve our road networks and advocate safety improvements.

Under Education Creative Economy and Industry

We have adverse and thriving local business that keep locals in meaningful employment all year round. We have inspired knowledge sharing and learning across all generations and cultures, fulfilled lives with unique opportunities to connect, create, learn, work and grow. We have well- planned developing townships preserving unique identities. Invest in and embrace local opportunities. We have education employment and volunteering opportunities. We encourage new industries and embrace innovation. We have carefully planned, innovative and well balanced and sustainable tourism.

c. South Gippsland Shire Council's Plan 2022 - 2026

Six strategic objectives are aligned to the South Gippsland Community Vision 2040.

Key actions of the Council Plan are to:

- Allocate an additional \$900,000 for road maintenance and infrastructure
- Protect the character of our townships through reviewing planning zones, overlays and policies
- Kerbside bin collection Food origins
- Attract business and events that boost our economy

The plan draws on attributes of scenery, agricultural and rural production and tourism pursuits across the three wards Strzelecki Tarwin and Coastal Promontory.

The six strategic Objectives are:

1. Connecting people and places

One of the priorities is to enhance the network of tracks and footpaths to improve pedestrian accessibility and connections between towns, tourism sites and within local neighbourhoods. The Great Southern Rail Trail Extension Leongatha to Nyora and Welspool to Hedley. Another initiative is to review the unfunded project list in future capital works program, focus on connecting small towns.

2. Economy and industry

Farming/agriculture, arts, culture and creative industry. Enhancing visitor experiences and encouraging visitors to remain longer.

3. Healthy and Engaged Communities

Strong sense of belonging and purpose where neighbours know one another. Encourage volunteerism, engaging places for activities, inclusive sporting, cultural and social activities.

4. Leading with Integrity

Build trust again. Work genuinely with the community, leadership, partnerships, advocacy, customer service.

5. Protecting and enhancing our environment

Addressing the impacts of climate change on agriculture, bushland, residential areas and tourism can thrive side by side. Support measure includes promoting appropriate regeneration and revegetation, development of bio-link corridors. Additionally, conduct a hazard inspection of the Great Southern Rail Trail to assess its general condition and ensure safety.

6. Sustainable Growth

Regional Australia is going through unprecedented growth and demographic change. Council is planning for sustainable growth with an appropriate mix of residential properties farming and lifestyle.

d. Summary SGS Economics and Planning Report

Executive Summary

SGS engaged by the Great Southern Rail Trail Extension Stakeholder Group to undertake a costs benefit analysis (CBA) and economic impact assessment of the proposed extension of the Great Southern Rail Trail (GSRT) from Leongatha to Clyde and a spur trail linking the GSRT to the Bass Coast Rail Trail at Nyora.

Provide a clear understanding of the key benefits and fuller understanding of the net community benefits.

A cost benefit framework was prepared with Incremental Costs against Incremental Benefits taking into account:

- Capital and operating costs
- Environmental resource depletion costs
- Community impacts of improved health outcomes
- Increased recreational opportunities
- Increased tourism

On page V the benefits appear to outweigh the costs. The largest benefit is the tourism spending into the CGA's area.

Economic Impact Assessment

EIA measures the degree to which the economic stimulus associated with a project accumulates in total economic activity

Construction Phase

Construction of the GSRT and BCR is expected to span 8 years and cost \$27 million.

Operational Phase

Once the trail extension is done expected maintenance of around \$400,000 per annum. *Accommodation, retail, food and beverage.*

The EIA highlights the upfront and ongoing expenditures and will create substantial flow on benefits across the region. Employment during construction will be variable. Trail and extensions could play an important role.

Introduction

The GSRT extension Stakeholder Group engaged SGS Economics and Planning to conduct a Cost Benefit Analysis and EIA of the extension from Leongatha to Clyde. Additional section Nyora to Woolamai link GSRT to the Bass Coast Rail Trail.

The study will assist councils to better understand the viability of the project, social and environmental perspectives and support future funding.

Potential unbroken connecting of Melbourne's outer suburban area of the eastern township of Welshpool and Nyora to Wonthaggi.

Potential net increase in welfare for residents across the region, increased tourist visitation and expenditure, recreation benefits for local resident trail users and health benefits for local residents.

The Project

The GSRT follows the former railway line opened in 1892 connecting Dandenong to Port Albert. Ceased operation in 1994.

The original trail was completed in 2005 and stretched 49 kilometres from Leongatha to Foster. The Port Welshpool section was the missing link.

The GSRT stretches 72 kilometres in the west, Leongatha and Welshpool in the east. Passes through settlement of Foster, Toora and Fish Creek. Important contributor to the regional economy. Tourists can pick and choose sections of the trail they wish to travel.

The BCRT runs from Wonthaggi to the Woolamai Racecourse. Also connects at the George Bass Coastal Walk at Kilcunda and takes in the Bourne Creek Bridge. The Woolamai to Nyora route would connect the Bass Coast Rail Trail and the GSRT and then to eastern suburbs.

On completion the extended GSRT would become Australia's longest coastal rail trail being 148 kilometres in length and longer than the Great Victorian Rail Trail (134 kilometres) and Murray to Mountains (118 kilometres).

Trails used by locals for exercise and option of access to shops, school and recreation reserves.

The Project Context

Traditionally the area is driven by agriculture and lesser extent mining and manufacturing jobs. The closure of Hazelwood Power Station in 2017 had a dramatic effect on the population.

The regional economy is fragile. To the western edge of Clyde there is substantial residential development and a lag in recreation infrastructure.

Key Concepts

Purpose to connect Leongatha to Clyde and the spur of Nyora to Woolamai. Analysis conducted over twenty years regarding welfare, net community benefit, external tourists and local tourists.

Project Options

A 176 kilometre extension of the GSRT bringing a total length of 148 kilometres linking Leongatha with *outer east* of Clyde.

The cost benefit framework is headed as Financial Impact, Community Impacts, Tourism Impacts and Economic Development Impacts. The report documented the estimated delivery time for the six sections of trail.

Cost Benefit Analysis

Incremental costs and incremental benefits set against Financial Impacts, Community Impacts, Tourism Impacts and Economic Development Impacts. Capital cost breakdowns into each of the four shires.

Annual maintenance for the entire trail length of 76 kilometres is \$400,000 spread out across the four shires, with Cardinia the most cost and Casey the next. *Construction costs, environmental costs*

Incremental Benefits

The number of people visiting the region time and the time/duration of their stay will increase as a result of the GSRT and BCRT extensions. Tourism yields associated with visitors outside the area. When tourists are outside of the region the local community benefits as a result of increased spending.

Each shire and relative township has attractions such as accommodation, festivals, cafes, other attractions, hotels, caravan parks and historical attractions.

Lack of visitation/use data on the existing trails.

Remote sensors has called Wallan to Heathcote Rail Trail \$41,000

Research by Latrobe University shows 88% of use was day trips.

Gateway towns are important.

Improved Health Outcomes

Improved health outcomes with the extension of the GSRT and BCRT inducing locals to participate and provides transport for locals.

Anecdotal evidence is locals using the trails for school commuting and elderly residents accessing town.

A lot of assumptions and estimates have been made.

Lengthening trails increases locals' opportunity to access leisure and recreation facilities.

Non-Use Values

To build on promotion marketing and the regional value is people making applications for other projects/attraction that the trail can leverage.

A graph shows the peaks and troughs. Obviously in the construction there are significant costs and the total benefits is a slowly inclined line.

Patronage in higher density municipalities, Melbourne's outer suburbs, rather than a rural shire.

As to locations with a tourism attraction or combination of attractions ie Loch provides scenery events and culinary destination.

Economic Impact Assessment

Measurement of the degree to which economic stimulus associated with a project accumulates in total economic activity after measuring the cumulative impact of all buyer/suppliers.

Input/output (1-0) Model

Quantifies economic linkages between 114 industry sectors across the economy. Multipliers derived from the model 3 key measures:

- Output
- Value-added Gross Regional Product
- Full time equivalent jobs

Economic Stimuli

Split into two stages: construction and operating.

Economic stimuli: short-term construction, spending visitors, food, beverage, retail, ongoing trail maintenance.

Sensitivity Analysis

Capital costs, completion dates, visitation estimate.

Conclusion

SGS has assessed the likely economic benefits and impacts of the extension of the GSRT and BCRT. Analysis shows a sound investment of capital from a regional perspective as the CBA estimate the \$1.28 in *benefits will be* . Bulk of benefits from tourism yields associated with greater visitation particularly *metropolitan*.

e. The Gippsland Trail – Gippsland Odyssey Feasibility Study 2020

Prepared two TRC Tourism in relation to the development of the Gippsland Trail Feasibility Study. TRC Tourism were engaged by Destination Gippsland and stakeholder of the six local governments of Gippsland to undertake a business case and feasibility assessment of the Gippsland Trail. The Gippsland Trail and Tracks Feasibility Study completed in 2019 by TRC Tourism recommended a range of actions, experiences and developments to determine the regions signature Trails to encourage visitation to the region. There are many trails and opportunities but need to be marketed under the one umbrella that will promote state wide significance. The trail will have several contained experiences that can be enjoyed in sections. The trail could have several longer routes, promoted as bike packing routes allowing options for longer journeys through Gippsland.

The Concept

The proposed route stretches over 700 kilometers through Gippsland commences near Clyde or at the Drouin Railway station. With options along some sections including public transport the trail covers the length of Gippsland including outstanding experiences scenery and communities.

Advantages:

- A single spine
- Access to public transport at Clyde and Drouin
- Strengthens recreation, health and connecting communities
- Different experiences for different markets
- Attracted to trail/rail history and each community
- Provides links into Philip Island and connects Cowes and San Remo
- Activates areas that are off the beaten track for visitors
- Provides strong economic outcomes for Gippsland

Issues for further resolution:

Safety concerns for riders using busy roads, review off road routes ie sections Inverloch to Venus Bay and the South Gippsland Highway. Not ideal to promote the routes given high speed traffic, machinery, and trucks.

The use of public transport between Morwell and Moe is problematic

The most effective governance arrangements while a general MOU best suits the type of trail. Opportunity to create a unique innovative solution.

Trail development will generate substantial positive economic benefits for the Gippsland Region.

Rides on trails projected to increase from \$123,000 to \$227,000 in year 10.

Spending in the region increase from \$11.045 million in years 1 to \$20,30 million in year 10.

There will be indirect and induced jobs generated during the construction phase operational/ maintenance employment would increase.

Most of the jobs generated would be in accommodation, food, services and other retail.

Benefit Cost Ratios (BCR) indicate the development of the trails is validated.

This study reviews the linking of existing trails and the off-road shared pathways in Gippsland, building on the already strong suite of trails. The existing trails have their own separate identity or brand with some being more effective than others.

The study aims to:

- Get actions and strategies for defining and developing an off-road shared pathway, connections to the outer Melbourne Metro Rail System
- Identify and understand the existing rail trails, including off road shared paths

- Identify and describe user markers
- Consider ongoing management, maintenance and governance requirements
- Provide recommendations to decision makers
- TRC assessed the feasibility and viability according to critical factors
- Creation of the best possible, most appropriate user experience and the logical sections that may exist
- Best use of existing trail infrastructure
- Build on the existing studies and assessments of the various Shire Councils
- Environmental and sustainability
- Different experiences of each trail
- Improvements required to meet user marker expectations
- Linking townships with view to understanding the extent of investments post COVID and bushfire

The vision for trails in Gippsland is “Gippsland will be recognised as a “World-Class Trails’ Destination” offering a diversity of outstanding landscape and experiences.

To achieve the vision, the following recommendations were:

- Effective co-ordination
- Consistent and collaborative planning
- Delivering trail experiences
- Sustainable management
- Supporting trail use and community involvement
- Marketing and communication

Signature trails and tracts showcase a region and offer outstanding experiences attracting people to Gippsland, other trails are Regionally Significant or Locally Significant.

The report documents the desired outcomes of quality, good infrastructure, low impact on the environment, accessible to target markets, supported by high quality information environmentally and culturally sustainable. Supported by effective management and good coordination within the community brand/theme reputation to target markets.

Under Tourism:

- Gippsland is one of Victoria’s most important tourism regions
- Comprised of six shires
- Many national parks
- Existing infrastructure
- Proximity to urban centre

The tourism economy is important for Gippsland.

Seasonal – summer months to March will be more popular, whereas June to September there will be less visitation.

Trails trends:

- Visitors want experience-based holidays, exploration at a quiet pace
- Trend is authentic ways to experience places and connect with locals
- A well-planned and thoughtfully constructed track or trail is essential in meeting objectives of sustainability, cultural values, ensuring socially sustainable and providing an enjoyable journey

Gippsland's diverse and accessible landscape provides the platform to build stronger and more sustainable trails/destinations.

Desire to experience the journey and the destination at a slow pace (slow travel) rather than packing in as much as they can.

Breaking trails into smaller and more manageable sections.

Regional Victoria and Gippsland has strong positioning as a destination place of food, wine, touring, cycling, scenery and diversity of products.

Increase trail usage translates to improved health and well-being, heightened environmental interest and greater community engagement.

Summary of trail types and experiences:

- Walking: to commute or exercise, link with nature
- Running: such as trail running and organised events of orienteering and regaining
- Cycling: as both leisure and community
- Mountain biking: group activities as leisure or competition
- Horse riding: ranging from short journeys to longer overnight journeys

The study documents the various markets of walkers, cyclists and mountain bikers and the specific experiences anticipated by each group.

Several key facts:

- Safety, appealing destinations, link with activities, attractions accommodation, café and good local food
- Provide link to accommodation, bike repairs/hire, picnic and toilet facilities close to the trail
- Good pre-trip information to inform
- Good interpretive information

The proposal:

To be recognised nationally and internationally as a must do long distance multi-purpose trail showcasing attractions and activities.

Activation of underutilised infrastructure.

Connect and provide for the health benefits and increase leisure through good quality trails.

Dispersed benefits across Gippsland.

Reduce dependence on private vehicles.

Support the growth of Gippsland business.

Bass Coast

Great Southern Rail Trail

Which runs from Leongatha to Port Welshpool is 72 kilometres in length and there is the recently established Leongatha to Nyora trail of approximate 36 kilometres. There is a proposed trail heading from Nyora to Pakenham which will join the Melbourne to Bairnsdale railway service. The Nyora to Woolamai trail of approximately 21 kilometres will then link to Wonthaggi and planned on road (safety issues) to Walkerville and Fish Creek.

The Greater Southern Rail Trail and Bass Coast Rail Trail will offer people from Melbourne and Gippsland Regional Centres, short stay breaks from one to several days and visitors with food and beverages along with quality accommodation services. There are good food and beverage and accommodation services. The close proximity to bus and rail networks enhances support for these initiatives.

f. Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018 – 2025

Prepared for the Victoria Department of Economic Development. Growth of Melbourne and transport systems. More people to use public transport to address road pressures. Unfortunately, the number of people cycling has plateaued. The Cycling Strategy aims to get more people on bicycles by delivering safer lower stress better connected network and establishing a more inclusive cycling culture. More direct and separated cycle paths to important destinations. 60% of Victorians are unsure about cycling, with women, children and seniors being wary about cycling and safety. Transport for Victoria through the Active Transport unit will work with council and the state government agencies to key elements and needs by the Communities. People want continuous low-stress routes, convenience to connections and destinations. Establish cycling corridors – destinations of work centres, retail centres and transport hubs. The issue is the lack of open space corridors close to centres and hubs. Competition of road users and even of shared trails. There is need to plan 20 minutes neighbourhoods where 20-kilometre trips can be undertaken by bicycle. Cycling is not popular in suburban Melbourne due to safety risks. Of relevance to the Woolamai to Nyora Rail Trail Feasibility study in the connections within and between communities and promotes health and well-being. In terms of environmental sustainability, a cyclist who rides 10 kilometres each way to work can save 15 tonnes of greenhouse gas per year. Motorist awareness campaigns, cyclist educating them about road rules and safer cycling behaviour on roads and on shared paths.

To make cycling a comfortable experience:

- Place routes through attractive and safe locations
- Provide wide and smoother paths allow side-by-side cycling
- Maintenance of paths
- Good lighting

E-bikes now give people with mobility issues and the ageing population the opportunity to cycle. The government will invest that will enable bicycles to be carried on regional trails and improve cycle storage at end of trip facilities at railway stations and hubs. The government will continue to develop trails to improve tourism/visitation across Victoria, including rail trails. The Victorian Government will continue to support cycling events.