Woolamai Nyora Rail Trail Feasibility Study

Community Engagement Summary

Project Description

Bass Coast Shire Council, in partnership with South Gippsland Shire Council, received funding through the State Government's Investment Fast Track Fund to complete a Feasibility Study for the Woolamai- Nyora rail trail extension.

Michael Smith and Associates Landscape Architecture and Urban Design were appointed to undertake the Study.

The feasibility study is a high-level investigation into the considerations and infrastructure that would be involved in the design and construction of the rail trail extension. It is intended to strengthen this potential project's investment evidence base and accelerate investment readiness.

Background

The Woolamai to Nyora railway line ceased operations in 1978. There has been growing support to construct a rail trail along this 25km section to extend the Bass Coast Rail Trail and connect with the Great Southern Rail Trail.

Destination Gippsland in the *Gippsland Odyssey Investment Strategy and Implementation Review 2022* identified this rail trail extension as a high priority and requiring a feasibility study be undertaken.

Bass Coast Shire Council adopted its *Tracks and Trails Strategy 2022* which identified this trail connection as the second highest priority project.



Timeline of Engagement

5 June 2023	Letter sent to adjacent landowners advising of the feasibility study
22 March 2024	Community presentation and feedback at Woodleigh Hall
27 March 2024	Community presentation and feedback at Kernot Hall
June/July 2024	Individual property visits and discussions with adjacent landowners
June/July 2024	Project survey live via Engage Bass Coast for community feedback
10 April 2025	Draft feasibility report released via Engage Bass Coast project page
16 April 2025	Community presentation of the feasibility study report findings at Wonthaggi Civic Centre
30 April 2025	Community drop-in session at Kernot Hall

Engagement by the numbers

- Letters sent to 76 property owners at feasibility study initiation
- 28 people attended the community presentation at Woodleigh
- 34 people attended the community presentation at Kernot Hall
- 28 visits to property owner properties for discussions
- 3,630 views of the project page
- 2,195 visitors to the project page
- 895 documents downloaded
- 424 survey respondents
- 32 people attended the presentation of feasibility study at Wonthaggi Civil Centre
- 22 people attended the drop-in session at Kernot Hall

A significant amount of community feedback was received via the online engagement survey, with 424 responses received. The survey results showed that 96% of respondents would use the trail if constructed. This indicates strong community support to have this rail trail constructed.



Feedback from the general community

Through the survey, meetings with the community and feedback via email and phone. The main themes received;

- Hurry up and get it built so we can use it
- Build it and they will come. It will attract tourists
- Economic benefits for both local and tourists
- Linking to other trails provides better connectivity
- Health benefits by encouraging cycling and walking
- Safety benefits by providing a safe off-road trail for vulnerable road users
- Parking concerns raised
- We need to have suitable toilets

Feedback from adjacent property owners

There was a mixed response from adjacent and nearby property owners. Although the adjacent property owners do not own or lease the existing railway land, there has been use of the land and infrastructure for farming operations that has been occurring since the railway line ceased operating in 1978. As such, the local property owners were concerned about several factors if the rail trail were to be constructed, such as:

- Impact to farming operations, particularly if the rail trail dissected their properties
- Loss of use of the high ground of the existing rail line embankments currently utilised to herd cattle
- Expense of reconstructing farm tracks on private property
- Biosecurity risks associated with overlapping foot and cycling traffic with livestock crossings on the rail trail
- Impact on amenity to farms and privacy concerns
- Security concerns
- Fencing concerns and financial impact
- Spooking of livestock from rail trail users and risk of dogs entering private property
- Reduction of productivity in farming operations

There was also feedback in support received from the adjacent property owners such as:

- The rail trail would provide recreational connections to nearby towns
- The rail trail would provide a vegetated corridor to allow biolinks for flora and fauna.
- The rail trail would attract more tourism to the area and boost the local economy in nearby towns.
- A great use of the old railway reserve – making it a transport corridor for people and wildlife
- A more equitable use of public land that benefits the entire community
- Provide safe connections over waterways where there are abandoned / disused bridges
- Economic boost of jobs in the construction phase



Next steps

A completed feasibility study strengthens this potential project's investment evidence base and accelerates investment readiness. Council would need to allocate funding and seek suitable grant funding opportunities to progress any further. Any next steps would be subject to Council approval.

More Information

For more information call the Customer Service Team on 1300 BCOAST (226 278) or 03 5671 2211 or email basscoast@basscoast.vic.gov.au

