Acknowledgements

The Hume Region Significant Tracks and Trails Strategy has been prepared with considerable input by many individuals and organisations in the Hume region and beyond, including the following members of the Project Steering Committee:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruth Tai (Chair person)</td>
<td>Rural City of Wangaratta Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe Giglio (Administrative Support)</td>
<td>Rural City of Wangaratta Council</td>
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<td>Wendy Daly (Administrative Support)</td>
<td>Rural City of Wangaratta Council</td>
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<td>Mark Martin</td>
<td>Regional Development Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mandy Nelson</td>
<td>Sport and Recreation Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darin Lynch</td>
<td>Parks Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ted Stabb</td>
<td>Department of Environment and Primary Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louise Perrin</td>
<td>Mt Buller-Mt Stirling Alpine Resort</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clayton Neil</td>
<td>Alpine Shire Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrie Donaldson</td>
<td>Greater Shepparton City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joanne Turner</td>
<td>Greater Shepparton City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Koren</td>
<td>Indigo Shire Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Geer</td>
<td>Mansfield Shire Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Myles</td>
<td>Murray to Mountains Rail Trail</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Many other individuals and organisational representatives attended workshops, provided written submissions, took part in key stakeholder workshops and completed the trail user survey. Their input is greatly appreciated.

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- Regional Development Victoria
- Alpine Shire Council
- Benalla Rural City Council
- Greater Shepparton City Council
- Indigo Shire Council
- Mansfield Shire Council
- Mitchell Shire Council
- Mt Buller and Mt Stirling, Falls Creek and Mt Hotham Alpine Resorts
- Moira Shire Council
- Murrindindi Shire Council
- Strathbogie Shire Council
- Towong Shire Council
- Rural City of Wangaratta Council
- Wodonga City Council
How the Strategy will be Used

The Hume Regionally Significant Tracks and Trails Strategy will be owned and endorsed by the Hume Regional Manager’s Forum, or the appropriate authorising body. In order to implement the recommendations contained within the Strategy, the first step is to establish a Hume Region Significant Tracks and Trails Committee. This Committee will comprise of Local Government representatives, Alpine Resort representatives, Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Parks Victoria, Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure, Regional Development Victoria and community representatives. Regular liaison will need to occur with peak bodies, businesses, tourism bodies, VicRoads, indigenous representatives, community based organisations and user groups. The first priority of the Hume Region Significant Tracks and Trails Committee is to establish the terms of reference to outline the roles and responsibilities of each organisation and the overall purpose of the Committee.

Meeting half yearly, the Hume Region Significant Tracks and Trails Committee will use the Strategy to support land managers (Local Government Authorities, State Government Agencies and community based groups) to seek funding and resources to develop, enhance and upgrade regionally significant tracks and trails in the region in accordance with the recommendations contained within the Strategy. Whilst the list of recommendations in relation to track and trail development is currently in priority order, it must be noted that these priorities may change slightly over the next ten years, depending upon a variety of factors, such as levels of community support, available funding, land manager priorities, political will and planning work undertaken to further advance the track / trail. Each of the recommendations contained within the Strategy is therefore of importance to the development of an overall high quality network of regionally significant track and trail opportunities in the Hume region, regardless of its current ranking.

Overview of the Hume Region

From snow covered mountains to river plains, thick native bush land, waterfalls, river flats and undulating agricultural land, the Hume region of Victoria provides some of the most scenic and diverse opportunities for cycling, walking and horse riding in the nation. It is widely renowned for its natural beauty; its high quality gourmet food and wines; and its ecotourism opportunities. Already thousands of visitors flock to the region annually to enjoy riding or walking along some of Victoria’s, and indeed Australia’s, best quality rail trails, hiking tracks, horse riding trails, on road mountainous cycle trails and mountain bike tracks. Many local residents also take advantage of the magnificent resources available on their doorstep to improve their health and wellbeing and to enjoy time with family and friends.

The Hume region of Victoria, which encompasses 40,000 square kilometres of land, is managed by 12 Local Government Authorities and three Alpine Resorts. Parks Victoria and Department of
Environment and Primary Industries manage vast tracks of this land too. Collectively these organisations wish to continue to lead the way in providing a diverse range of world class tracks and trails that provide a high quality recreational experience for visitors to the region and local residents. At the same time they wish to enhance and protect our natural environment and cultural features; and provide economic development throughout the various villages, towns and cities that make up the Hume region.

**Scope of the Strategy**

Through this Strategy, specific issues that need to be addressed to further advance track and trail development, create an improved visitor experience, provide opportunities for business development and partnerships, along with several new or upgraded track and trail experiences, have been identified. These strategies link to and complement a wide range of local, municipal and state-wide strategies, including the Victorian Trails Strategy. The Hume Regionally Significant Tracks and Trails Strategy is therefore a blueprint for the Hume region in relation to the development and enhancement of tracks and trails over the next ten years.

Although many track / trail development opportunities were identified through community consultations, a number of these were considered to be very important at a local or municipal level, but not considered to be regionally significant. It is important that Local Government Authorities continue to develop and seek funding for local and municipal level tracks and trails as these facilities create important connections within and between communities and help to facilitate active transportation from people’s homes to schools, workplaces, retail areas and recreational facilities. This strategy does not focus on local and municipal level tracks / trails, but does acknowledge the importance of connecting regionally significant tracks / trails to these facilities wherever possible to create better linkages.
Existing Regionally Significant Tracks and Trails

A regionally significant track / trail is one that connects areas of significant natural, cultural or economic importance, are likely to appeal to international visitors and are also likely to attract economic development opportunities as well as social, health and environmental benefits. Such tracks / trails may have some degree of length attached to them or provide opportunities for a range of different experiences emanating from one central location and may lie with a number of different agencies across the Hume region and beyond. Ten existing tracks / trails in the Hume region are considered to be of regional significance. These include:

- Murray to Mountains Rail Trail (Bright, Myrtleford, Beechworth, Milawa, Wangaratta, Wahungah and Rutherglen)
- High Country Rail Trail (Wodonga to Tallangatta)
- Great Victorian Rail Trail (Tallarook, Yea, Alexandra, Bonnie Doon, Mansfield)
- Mt Buller-Mt Stirling Mountain Bike Trails
- Australian Alps Walking Track (Walhalla to Canberra)
- Bicentennial National Trail (Healesville to Cooktown via the Alpine region)
- Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing
- Razorback Walk
- Mt Buffalo Big Walk
- Alpine Loop Road Ride (from Falls Creek, through Omeo, Mt Hotham, then back to Falls Creek via Mt Beauty).

Proposed New Works and Upgrades to Tracks / Trails in the Hume Region

To determine new or upgraded tracks / trails likely to produce the most benefits within the Hume region, the project steering committee and the project team firstly classified suggested trails as local, municipal or regional level. All tracks / trails classified as having regional significance were then assessed using a specific planning tool which focussed on seven key areas:

1. Support by key stakeholders
2. Appealing to track / trail users
3. Strengthens tourism potential of a region and creates opportunities for economic development
4. Protects and enhances the natural environment and / or cultural heritage of a region
5. Supported through planning
6. Designed according to industry standards and current best practice methods
7. Connected to communities, transport and other tracks / trails

These key areas have been weighted differently depending on their relative importance in determining the likely success of a trail and each key area clearly outlined. Members of the project steering committee (which comprised of representatives of Local Government, State Government and track / trail users) used this tool to produce a final score for each trail, based on information obtained through the consultative and research processes of the project (noting that the final score reflects a snapshot in time, and therefore that the score can change as more work is undertaken). These scores were then averaged out to provide a final score. Specific trail development opportunities, in priority order, include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Track / Trail Name</th>
<th>Support by key stakeholders</th>
<th>Appealing to track / trail users</th>
<th>Strengthens tourism potential of a region and creates opportunities for economic development</th>
<th>Protects and enhances the natural environment and / or cultural heritage of a region</th>
<th>Supported through planning</th>
<th>Designed according to industry standards and current best practice methods</th>
<th>Connected to communities, transport and other tracks / trails</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Winton Wetlands</td>
<td>✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bright to Harrietville</td>
<td>✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing</td>
<td>✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Beechworth to Yackandandah</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oxley to Whitfield</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wandong to Heathcote</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Wandiligong HVP MTB Trail Network</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Falls Creek to Mt Beauty MTB Trail</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>High Country Rail Trail Wodonga CBD Connection</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mount Stirling Horse Trail</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Wahgunyah to Lake Moodemere</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Each of the priority tracks / trails identified within this Strategy is likely to bring increased revenue into the Hume region, either by providing a completely new experience (e.g. Winton Wetlands and Mount Stirling Horse Trail), or by providing additional experiences or improvements to existing tracks / trails to encourage walkers, cyclists, horse riders or canoeists to stay in the region longer (e.g. the Bright to Harrietville section of the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail and the sealing and CBD upgrades to the High Country Rail Trail). Details of each of these trails, including proposed route and indicative costings, are included in the Appendix of the Strategy.
Other Track / Trail Related Issues to be Addressed

The project not only focussed on identifying physical track / trail developments in the Hume region, but also identified many other initiatives to improve existing trails in terms of planning, management, maintenance, marketing, development of partnerships (between government agencies, the business sector and community groups) and enhancing the visitor or user experience. These improvements are likely to encourage people to stay in the region longer and continue to come back to the region to enjoy the diversity of trails. At the same time, these improvements will provide local residents with access to high quality, well connected recreational tracks / trails to enhance their own health and wellbeing.

These improvements include:

**Governance and Communication**

- A Hume Region Tracks and Trails Committee comprising of Local Government representatives, Alpine Resort representatives, Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Parks Victoria, Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure, Regional Development Victoria and community representatives will be established. Regular liaison will occur with peak bodies, businesses, tourism bodies, VicRoads, indigenous representatives, disability advocacy groups, community based organisations and user groups.

- Processes for governance of regionally significant tracks and trails in terms of composition of committee and roles and responsibilities of the committee are established.
Management

- Track / trail managers are informed of best practice regarding track / trail management, including roles and responsibilities, management plans, MOUs, management options, community engagement and volunteer support.

Communication Structures

- Advocate for the establishment of a state and / or national tracks and trails advocacy group or think tank comprising of representatives from Local Government Authorities, Alpine Resorts, State Government Authorities, Federal Government Agencies, Regional Tourism Bodies, Bicycle Network Victoria, Bushwalking Victoria, International Mountain Bike Association (Australia), Rail Trails Australia and Australian Trail Horse Riders Association, which meets once per year (or more if required) to discuss track / trail related issues.

- Track / trail managers establish a database of track / trail users and provide regular information via tools such as e-newsletters.

Resources

- Lobby State and Federal Governments for additional funding to Local Government Authorities for the development and management of tracks and trails.

- Lobby the State Government for additional resources to be made available to public land managers to manage and maintain tracks and trails in their jurisdiction.

- Work in partnership with state/ national based agencies such as Bicycle Network Victoria, Bushwalking Victoria, International Mountain Bike Association (Australia), Australian Trail Horse Riders Association, Rail Trails Australia, VicHealth, Tourism Victoria, Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure and Sport and Recreation Victoria to develop resources to promote the benefits of tracks and trails to Local Government Authorities.

- Local Government Authorities and Tourism bodies in the Hume region support volunteers and Friends of Groups through recruitment, training, assistance with grant writing and provision of shared trail development and maintenance tools.

Marketing

- Regionally significant tracks / trail managers develop a marketing plan.

- Regionally significant track / trail managers work collectively to market the track / trail opportunities available across the entire Hume region, with support from the Hume Region Tracks and Trails Committee and regional tourism bodies.

- Regionally significant track / trail managers develop suitable high quality, fully integrated and fully mobile marketing resources.
Regionally significant track / trail managers establish links with appropriate external bodies to assist with cross-marketing.

Regionally significant track / trail managers develop a brand style guide, outlining expectations in terms of the tone, style and resources as well as specific details around the brandmark, colours, typography, photography, stationery, online applications, pull up banners, etc.

**Signage and Wayfinding**

Regionally significant track / trail managers adhere to Australian Standards and best practice when installing or upgrading signage.

**Risk Management**

Regionally significant track / trail managers develop a suitable risk management plan and effective mechanisms and procedure for addressing identified risks.

**Maintenance**

Regionally significant track / trail managers develop a suitable maintenance program and budget and commit long term to maintaining each track / trail that it is responsible for.

**Business / Private Sector Development**

Advocate to State Government authorities to create an environment that is more conducive to private sector development (to meet the needs of walkers and cyclists) on public land where regionally significant tracks / trails exist.

Provide information to the private sector of the benefits of investing in track / trail related opportunities.

Facilitate training to existing and potential businesses about the culture and needs of cyclists, mountain bike riders, hikers and horse riders so that they are better able to meet their needs and expectations.

Advocate to State Government for planning support, advice and small start up grants for businesses wishing to establish themselves along regional tracks and trails to support the needs of walkers and cyclists.

Advocate to Tourism Victoria to promote the benefits of working in the hospitality industry to the workforce, including young school leavers.
Encourage local tourism bodies to implement an annual award (as part of existing Tourism awards) for exemplary track / trail related businesses and hospitality staff who provide exemplary customer service standards.

Planning

- Regionally significant tracks / trails managers undertake a feasibility study prior to developing any new tracks / trails.
- Regionally significant tracks / trails managers develop a track / trail management plan, Memorandum of Understanding, maintenance plan and marketing plan prior to the establishment of the track / trail wherever possible.
- Regionally significant tracks / trails managers engage with local communities in track / trail developments from the very beginning of the planning stage.
- Encourage State Government to identify and document clear processes and requirements around the development of tracks / trails.
- Advocate to State Government for the development of a state-wide mountain bike strategy.

Trail Design and Planning Guidelines

- Local Government Authorities undertake their own planning in relation to potential business and partnership opportunities, marketing, and management of local or municipal level tracks and trails throughout the municipality.
- Distribute the Planning Guidelines contained within the Appendix to Local Government Authorities, public land managers and other track / trail designers and builders in the Hume region and where possible, incorporate this information into Local Government design guidelines.
- Encourage Local and State Government agencies to ensure that track / trail designers and builders are adhering to relevant Australian Standards, industry guidelines, best practice and universal design principles prior to issuing planning permits.
- Facilitate a series of training opportunities for track / trail designers, builders and managers relating to track / trail planning, design and development.
- Advocate to Tourism Victoria to establish a centralised knowledge hub for the sharing of information and best practice examples of all types of tracks / trails, potentially in partnership with Bicycle Network Victoria, Bushwalking Victoria, International Mountain Biking Association (Australia) and Australian Trail Horse Riders Association.
Visitor Experience

- Provide local businesses and regionally significant track / trail managers with information about how to create positive visitor experiences and the benefits that such experiences can make locally.

Events

- Regionally significant track / trail managers consider developing suitable infrastructure during the design stage to accommodate future events.
- Regionally significant track / trail managers develop events policies so that processes, expectations, roles and responsibilities of all parties are clearly defined.
- Support the establishment of events using regionally significant tracks / trails in the Hume region as per locally developed event policies.
- Develop an events calendar (advertised through facebook, emails and relevant websites) to avoid potential clashes between events and to inform potential participants of opportunities available.

Public Transport Access

- Advocate to Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure and V/Line to retrofit existing trains to allow for additional bicycles to be carried.
- Advocate to Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure and V/Line to purchase new train carriages (when required) that have a greater carrying capacity of bicycles.
- Advocate to V/Line to establish a bicycle booking service for trains and buses.
- Advocate to V/Line to provide linkages from its website to private shuttle buses in the Hume region that are capable of carrying riders and their bikes.
- Advocate to Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure and V/Line to install a bicycle carriage rack on the front of buses in high trail use areas (subject to feasibility).
- Advocate to Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure and V/Line to provide a car and trailer at Southern Cross Railway Station on Friday evenings and /or Saturday mornings to transport bicycles to trail heads when it is not possible to secure a D Van attached to the rear of a train, returning on Sunday evenings.
- Regionally significant track / trail managers design tracks / trails so that they connect to transportation hubs wherever possible.
- Regionally significant track / trail managers and tourism bodies work in partnership with airlines to create all inclusive track / trail related packages.
**Universal Design**

- Facilitate training to regionally significant track / trail managers in relation to universal design principles.
- Regionally significant track / trail managers use universal design principles in the design phase of tracks / trails.

**Research and Data Collection**

- Managers responsible for regional tracks / trails undertake regular, if not permanent, counts of trail users.
- Managers responsible for regional tracks / trails undertake regular evaluations of the satisfaction levels of existing track / trail users.
- Advocate for improved track / trail data collection and distribution of this information by Australian Sports Commission, Australian Bureau of Statistics and Tourism Research Australia.
- Advocate for the development of tools to assist track / trail builders and managers to estimate potential usage and economic benefits of tracks / trails.

**New Opportunities**

- Local indigenous communities and regional track / trail managers to work together to create opportunities for indigenous tourism and interpretation on tracks / trails.
Key Investments

Key investments likely to make a difference to the utilisation of tracks / trails and enhanced visitor experience and spend in the Hume region are:

- Tracks / trails developed in unique and attractive places where cyclists, walkers and horse riders want to walk, ride and explore.
- Quality, well designed and maintained track / trail surfaces.
- Well signed tracks / trails.
- Suitable promotional materials including the ability to book all aspects of the trip online and fully integrated and fully mobile marketing resources.
- Suitable private sector business development to support trails (e.g. accommodation, shuttle services along and between tracks / trails, cafes, etc.)
- A high standard of customer service levels of businesses within towns and cities supporting tracks / trails.
- Ability to transport track / trail users and bicycles to, and particularly within, the region on public or private transportation.
- Tracks / trails that connect to key focal points of towns and cities, e.g. railway stations and Visitor Information Centres.
- Tracks / trails that provide options for a variety of experiences, such as self-contained loops and options for different skill levels (especially for mountain bike trails).
- Tracks / trails that provide opportunities for events.
- Supporting infrastructure such as bike parks, seating, etc along trails and at key destinations.
- Tracks / trails that help people connect to the history, stories, culture and natural environment of a location through interpretive opportunities.

Further Information / Feedback

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