

HEALTHY AND ACTIVE TRANSPORT PROGRAM – Sample Project

Molonglo Recreational Trail, NSW & ACT

Palarang Council, Queanbeyan City Council, NSW
Territory and Municipal Services, ACT

Federal electorates: Eden Monaro, NSW, Fraser, ACT

Description of the Project

A 90km recreational trail for walkers and cyclists along the Molonglo River valley from Captains Flat to the junction of the Molonglo and Murrumbidgee Rivers near Uriarra Crossing in the ACT. A proposal for the Upper Molonglo Rail Trail (Bungendore to Captains Flat) has been expanded to include a recreational trail linking Bungendore, Queanbeyan and Canberra with a continuous trail from Captains Flat, through Hoskinstown to Bungendore, and then linking with the new Defence Joint Operations Centre site to reach Queanbeyan and Canberra.

The reasons for extension of the project are :

- a trail linking the ACT via Queanbeyan and Bungendore through to Captains Flat is a much more useful and attractive facility.
- Defence, Queanbeyan Council and the ACT Government have indicated support, particularly for the Queanbeyan and Canberra links.

The Benefits

This project would be a significant undertaking in the local area with positive economic and community benefits. International research has demonstrated clear economic and tourism benefits of such developments as well as their obvious benefits to local residents.

Recreational trails are now well established elsewhere in Australia and in many overseas destinations. Rail trails form a significant proportion of these facilities. Their attraction in regional and rural areas is significant as they take people away from motorised traffic dominant in cities and usually link rural cities and towns through scenic countryside. The major users of these trails are local and visiting recreational cyclists.

Cycle tourism is an expanding tourism sector. A recent survey of Cycle Tourism in Australia has outlined how this sector is growing as a significant contributor to regional and rural tourism.

The Molonglo Recreational Trail will provide visitors to the Capital Region with access to a unique range of tourism experiences:

- visiting the National Capital with its many attractions that can be enjoyed in a safe cycling environment
- exploring the different environments of a large rural NSW town, Queanbeyan, a rural village, Bungendore, and the historic mining town of Captain's Flat
- traversing the scenic rural countryside of the Molonglo and Murrumbidgee Rivers.

There is no equivalent experience available at present in Australia.

A conservative estimate of economic impact would be an annual visitation rate of around 5000 visitors per annum who would spend 3-4 days in the region and spend around \$150 per day on average. This would mean an annual injection of some \$2m into the regional economy, mostly in the accommodation and food sectors.

The trail would provide a valuable recreational resource for the residents of the towns along the route and would assist commuters riding to work, particular workers at the Defence Joint Operations Centre who could avoid the busy narrow Kings Highway.

Status of the Project

Over the past 2 years the steering committee has conducted extensive investigations and community consultation. They have completed a scoping and feasibility study for the project and now need professional input to take it to the next stage, a development plan for the trail.

Palerang Council at a full council meeting in April 2007 committed to take the lead in the project, however they are unable to support the project financially at this time. A project plan and budget for a development study has been developed, the key partners have signed up and funding is now being sought to take the project through to the construction phase of the project's first stage within 12 months.

Support for the Project

The Rail Trail steering committee is the present proponent of the proposal. This committee is lead by the Immediate Past President of the Rotary Club of Bungendore and has representatives of the Captains Flat Community Association, Hoskinstown Community Association, Palerang Council, Bungendore Tourist Information Centre, and a Bungendore and Hoskinstown residents.

To date there has been considerable community consultation and publicity for the rail trail proposal through the local media with generally strong community support, especially from the groups represented on the steering committee.

Responses from Defence, ACT Government and Queanbeyan City Council have been most enthusiastic and they have now committed in writing to be involved in the next phase of the project and to provide considerable in kind support. In addition letters of support have been received from the Capital Region Area Consultative Committee (CRAAC), Capital Region Development Board (CRDB) and Capital Region Tourism.

Costing

The full development study has been costed at \$160 000. The full construction costs are estimated at \$2-3m but this could be done in several phases.

None of the partners are in a position to provide significant cash funding for the project.

Thanks go to the Molonglo Recreational Trail Committee for this HEAT example

