



Break O'Day Recreational Trails Strategy

Presented by Chris Halstead



A photograph of a wooden boardwalk with railings extending over a body of water. The boardwalk is made of dark wood and has a railing on both sides. The water is calm and reflects the sky. In the background, there are trees and a hazy horizon. The overall mood is peaceful and scenic.

The journey so far...

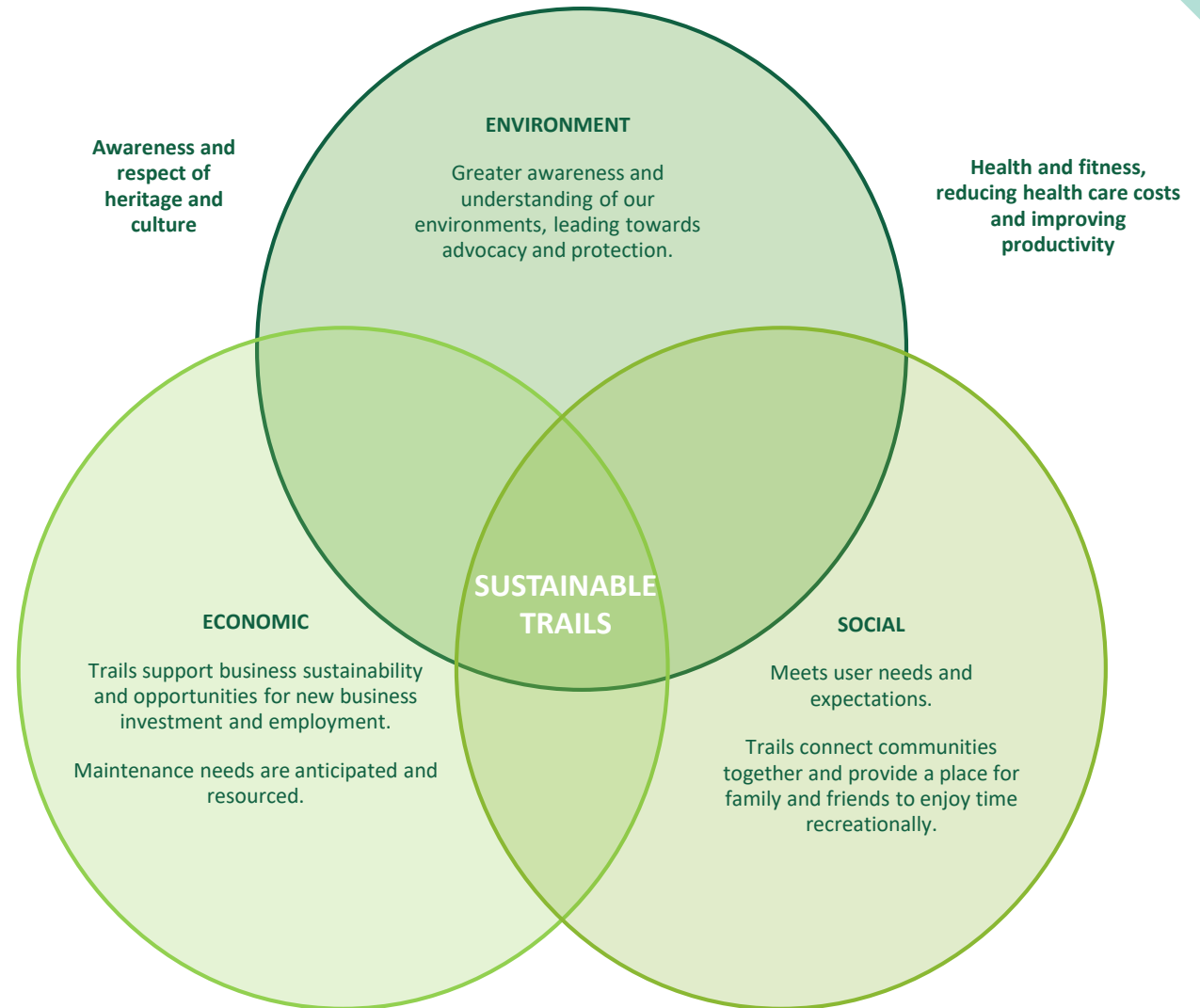
The Break O'Day Recreational Trails Strategy has been prepared to guide and plan for the future development and activation of a network of sustainable trails.

- to realise maximum social, economic and health benefits for the Break O'Day region.
- for walking, trail running, mountain biking, gravel riding and aquatic trails

Economic and social benefits of trails – the value

Benefits associated with cycling, walking and running include:

- Health and physical activity (in terms of increased life expectancy and reduced risk of disease and illness)
- Increased tourism revenues and greater business investment
- Attracting and retaining people within communities, particularly youth
- Providing outdoor classrooms for physical activity, sport, nature, culture and history
- Enhanced environmental awareness, improved understanding of our natural heritage and stewardship for the environment
- Developing recognition and respect for Tasmanian Aboriginal culture and values
- Health system benefits (in terms of a reduction in costs borne by the health system as a result of physical inactivity)
- Research and Australia-wide examples indicate attracting mountain bikers to purpose-built locations can have significant economic benefit.
- Research by GHD and AusCycling estimate that people who mountain bike spend approximately \$27.10 per ride.



The strategic direction...

The Break O'Day Recreational Trails vision, strategic direction and future are guided by regional and state policy frameworks.

They include:

- East Coast Tasmania Destination Management Plan Draft July 2021
- T21 Action Plan Tasmanian Visitor Economy Strategy
- Break O'Day Strategic Plan 2017–2027.
- Trail use markets in Australia



A photograph of a paved trail leading into a forest. In the foreground, two people wearing helmets are on bicycles, facing away from the camera. Further down the path, other people are visible, some on bikes and some walking. A small white trailer or kiosk is parked on the right side of the path. The background is filled with tall, thin trees.

Trail trends...

Outdoor active recreation including trail running, walking, mountain biking and gravel riding have become increasingly popular.

- Trail running is one of the world's fastest growing sports.
- 1.3 million Australian adults (6.4% of the adult population) and 21,000 children participate in bushwalking activities annually, with 18% of participants undertaking bushwalking activities at least once per week
- 78% of Tasmania's East Coast visitors go bushwalking with 62% undertaking short walks of less than four hours
- Recent estimates on mountain bike participation suggest that around one million Australians engage in mountain biking activity, ranging from beginner through to competition level.
- Social changes including Covid influence outdoor recreational demand.



Heritage, cultural and environmental benefits

For Aboriginal Tasmanians, North East Tasmania is a highly significant cultural landscape where the community continues to demonstrate its living culture and connection to the land.

The Strategy has explored opportunities where Aboriginal Tasmanians, local people and visitors can experience the Aboriginal Culture and landscape.

Trails that are designed to highlight the natural landscape will contribute to greater awareness and understanding of our ecosystems and natural places, leading towards advocacy and protection.

Trails should be developed with minimal impact to the environment and, if developed effectively, can contribute to ecosystem health particularly when combined with species management, recovery plans and restoration projects.

The learnings from the St Helens MTB Trails project acknowledge best practice environmental initiatives and provide the opportunity to apply similar practices to new trail planning, construction and management projects.

The coast has many biodiversity values and challenges, and the Strategy recommends effective assessment of future trail experiences on the coast due to the potential impact on shore birds and Aboriginal cultural sites.

As many of the existing/established trails within Break O'Day are situated on Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) and Sustainable Timbers Tasmania (STT) land, the Council is working closely with these agencies in the development and future delivery of the recommendations of this Strategy.

Future activities on Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service lands

Reserve Activity Assessment

Visitor experiences proposed within the Break O'Day Recreational Trails Strategy have been selected for sustainability, low impact and value to the community and visitors.

The Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) assesses whether new or recurrent works or activities on PWS-managed lands are environmentally, socially and economically acceptable.

Activities on PWS lands may require additional activity assessment and documentation to:

- Ensure the activities comply with relevant statutes, policies and plans
- Assess environmental, social and economic benefits and impacts
- Establish further actions to be taken to maximise benefits and minimise impacts
- Ascertain whether a proposal is approved, approved with conditions or not approved
- Establish whether the activity, when completed, achieved its stated objectives.



A person wearing a helmet and a backpack is riding a mountain bike on a trail through a dense forest. The ground is covered with fallen logs and dry leaves. The trees are tall and thin, and the air is thick with mist or fog, creating a serene and somewhat mysterious atmosphere. The lighting is soft and diffused, typical of a foggy day.

Assessment of Break O' Day as a trails destination

Community views

A successful trail destination is more than its physical trails.

Success relies on a combination of factors, including reputation for quality and special experiences and, importantly, popular support and use by locals.

- *The views of stakeholders and the community were sought in the development of Break O' Day Recreational Trails Strategy.*
- *Community views from the Recreational Trails Survey, the St Helens Mountain Bike Trails - Rider Survey and Community Drop in Sessions are provided within this Strategy and are summarised in Appendix K.*

RECREATIONAL TRAILS SURVEY ANALYSIS

The survey attracted **158 RESPONSES.**

KEY THEMES:

- ongoing maintenance
- more walking trails
- more multi user trails
- problems with access to trails
- investment in the hinterland/valleys (not only the coastal areas and St Helens)
- trails for all abilities and ages
- need a aquatic centre / swimming pool
- walking trails in Fingal Valley
- dogs / leash free trails
- multi day walks
- equal emphasis on ALL trails
- interest in St Marys Fingal rail trail

THE SURVEY WAS OPEN

11th October 2021 to the 7th November 2021.

TRAIL ACTIVITIES TOP THREE

Bushwalking short and day walks

81%

Local walking for exercise and enjoyment

76%

Enjoying nature

69%



MOTIVATION TOP THREE

Nature and the environment

93%

Exercise

90%

Wellbeing

75%



ISSUES

FOR EXISTING TRAILS

- Need maintenance
- Too much focus on the St Helens area
- Not enough Parking (St Helens)
- Access



WHICH TRAILS

TOP KEY WORDS

WALKING TRAILS

ST HELENS

BLUE TIER

ST MARYS

MTB TRAILS

WHY THESE TRAILS

TOP KEY WORDS

NATURE

BEAUTIFUL

EXERCISE

NEED MORE

TOP KEY WORDS

SHORT WALKS

LONGER DAY WALKS

DOG FRIENDLY TRAILS

ACCESSIBLE TRAILS

MANY SURVEY RESPONDENTS ALSO SAID NONE, THERE WERE ALREADY ENOUGH TRAILS.

WHAT WOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO GET INVOLVED IN MORE TRAIL ACTIVITIES

Need trails closer to home

50%

Need more trails that suit my abilities or interests

50%



COMMON THEMES:

- better maintenance
- access
- signage
- an increase of walking trails

NEW OR UPGRADED TRAILS

WHERE?

- St Helens
- St Marys Fingal
- St Helens Binalong
- Binalong Bay
- Scamander



MTB SURVEY ANALYSIS

From 30th September to the 7th November the survey attracted

242 RESPONSES

RESIDENCY

- 83%** Tasmania
- 16%** Australia
- 1%** International

TRAVEL PARTY

- 45%** With my family
- 26%** With my partner
- 16%** As part of a group

AGE GROUP

- 39%** 36-45 age bracket
- 28%** 46-55 age bracket

84% Survey respondents staying in St Helens or surrounds

ESTIMATED SPEND PER DAY
excluding accommodation
\$134

staying
3 NIGHTS
average

SPEND ON ACCOMMODATION
average
\$93

THE PRIMARY REASON FOR TRAVELLING TO ST HELENS

62% Specially to ride the St Helens MTB trails

FREQUENCY OF MOUNTAIN BIKING

- 42%** Weekly
- 30%** More than once a week

MOUNTAIN BIKE SKILL LEVEL

- 48%** I'm OK – Intermediate
- 43%** I'm pretty good – Advanced

PLANS TO VISIT OTHER MTB NETWORKS IN THE NEXT MONTH?

- 76%** Blue Derby
- 41%** Wild Mersey
- 34%** Maydena

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE ST HELENS MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS

- 45%** Social Media
- 36%** Friends/family

TO GET TO THE ST HELENS FLAGSTAFF TRAILS

- 48%** self-shuttling (car)
- 27%** riding
- 25%** using a shuttle service

TO GET TO THE BAY OF FIRES TRAILS

- 53%** self-shuttling (car)
- 47%** using a shuttle service

TRAIL CONDITION

- 49%** Good
- 38%** Excellent

SIGNAGE

- 75%** Easy to understand
- 20%** I had some trouble understanding

OTHER ACTIVITIES WHILE IN BREAK O'DAY COUNCIL REGION

- 76%** Relax
- 36%** Bushwalking
- 26%** Surfing

WHAT DO YOU THINK WE ARE DOING WELL

- Variety of trails
- Trail maintenance
- Facilities
- Family friendly
- Shuttle service
- Social media / advertising

WHAT COULD WE CONSIDER DOING DIFFERENTLY?

- Pump track
- Drinking water at trail head
- Shaded areas
- Better signage
- More food and drink options
- Improve the café at the trailhead (service and food quality)
- BBQs
- Toilets
- Showers
- Wash stations
- Additional parking
- More green and blue trails
- Better climbing trails
- Improve social media content
- Camping / caravan area
- Free or cheaper shuttles (or day passes or 10 passes)
- Events

WHAT ARE WE CURRENTLY NOT DOING AND SHOULD CONSIDER DOING?

- Green trails
- BBQ areas
- Showers
- Trail head signage should include ride times and distance
- More food facilities at trail heads, including vegan options
- Additional parking
- Pump track
- Skills park
- Play equipment
- Loyalty program
- Free or cheaper shuttles
- Tech trails, gravity trails, more flow and switchbacks
- Lit up night circuit
- Camping ground
- Bike wash
- Trail guides
- Trail maintenance
- Enduro events
- MTB parties
- Selling beer

GENERAL FEEDBACK

- Provide more overflow parking, especially for RVs
- Safety messaging on rider education (safe progression), trail network design
- Better maintenance of less used tracks
- More dog friendly accommodation in the area
- Water stations
- Free shuttles
- Lack of pump track or skills park
- Better signage
- More bench seating
- Music at trailhead



Classifying trails...

Trails can be classified by a hierarchy of offering, which can help define prioritisation for investment, management, maintenance and marketing.

SIGNATURE TRAILS

A small number of outstanding trail experiences that have the pulling power to persuade a visitor to come to the Break O'Day and generate the greatest economic and local benefit.

E.g. Bay of Fires Mountain Bike Trail; Bay of Fires Lodge Trail,
Blue Tier MTB Descent Trail

SUPPORTING TRAILS

A less prominent visitor offering but providing quality visitor and local experiences to support signature trails and hubs, and important recreational opportunities for local communities.

E.g. Blue Tier Forest Reserve walking trails; Apsley River Waterhole and Gorge,
Evercreech 'White Knights' walk and waterfall

LOCAL TRAILS

Important to the local community, often developed through local action.

E.g. Winifred Curtis Reserve Walks, Kings Park St Helens



Requirements for great trail destinations

Analysis of the potential and opportunity for Trail Development

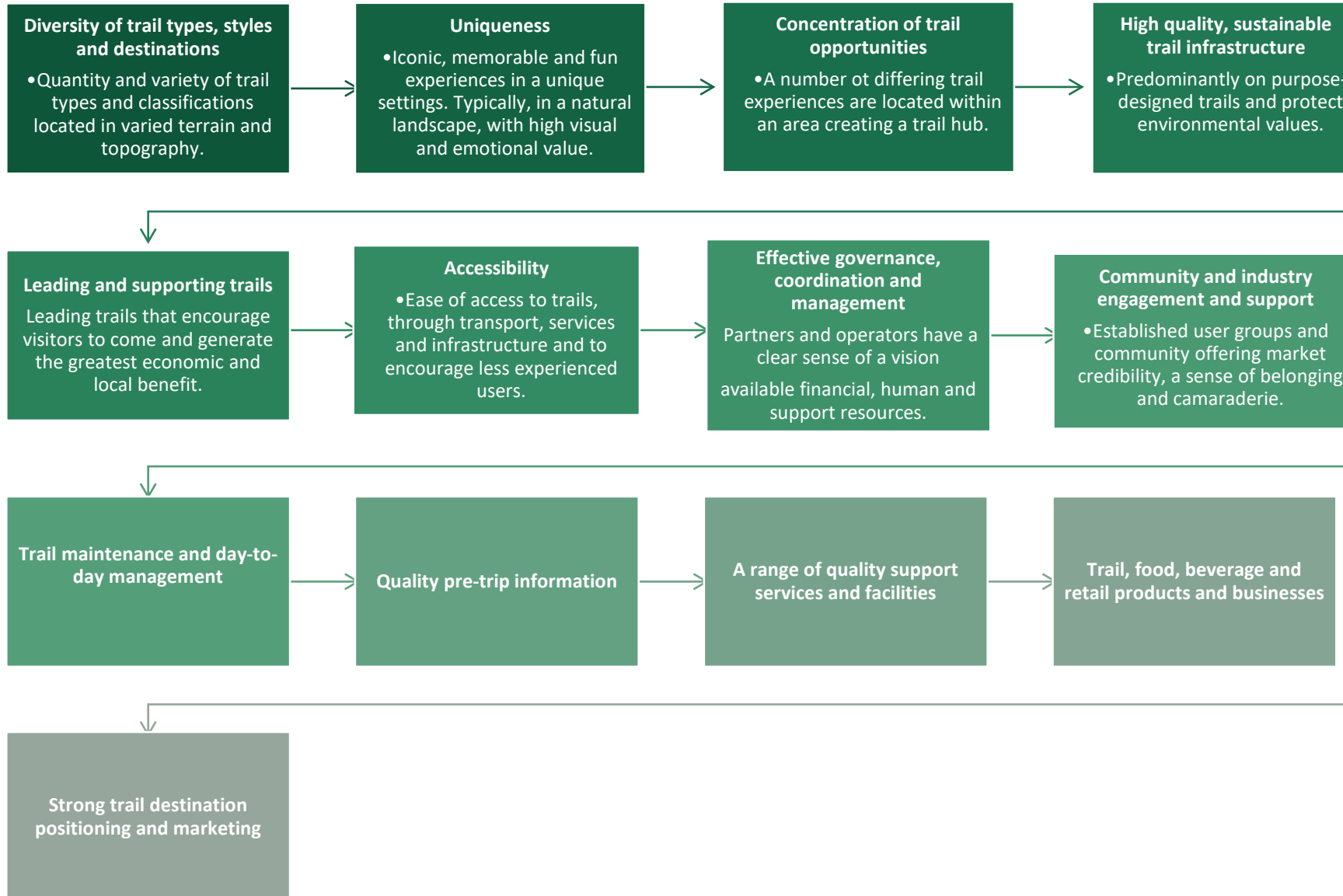
Analysis was based on factors that create great trails destinations (see next slide)

Identified how Break O' Day performs as a trail destination

Analysis provided suggested improvements

A summarised report is included in the Strategy and a full analysis is included in Appendix





VISION

Break O'Day connects the special values of the ranges, river valleys and coastal landscapes through extraordinary trail and adventure experiences that link communities, locals and visitors and are supported by strong environmental protections, sustainability and innovative trail experience providers.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of The Break O' Day Recreational Trails Strategy are:

1. Develop Bay of Fires and St Helens as a Signature mountain bike hub in Tasmania's North East.
2. Deliver trail and adventure experiences and services to meet the needs of the local community and the visitor market and encourage people to visit and stay.
3. Diversify sustainable trail experiences that provide economic benefit and encourage use by local people generating wellbeing and community health benefits.
4. Further develop partnerships with land managers and private land owners and find innovative ways to ensure a sustainable range of trail infrastructure that connects the extraordinary ranges and the coast.
5. Secure public and private sector investment to ensure maintenance of current trails and development of future trails are resourced whilst minimising impact on rate payers.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES & Strategic Priorities

HIGH QUALITY AND DIVERSE TRAIL NETWORK

Trail infrastructure purpose built in exciting places for a range of users and to a high quality. Trails link the mountains to the sea and communities together.

SUSTAINABLE TRAILS INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Trails are financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable. Trails have minimal environmental impact and contribute to regional biodiversity. Trails are supported by the local community.

INCLUSIVE USER EXPERIENCE

Trails have broad appeal for a diverse range of people of different capacities and abilities. Trails provide greater recognition and opportunity for Tasmanian Aboriginal Traditional Owners to engage with their land and living places.

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT COOPERATION

Land manager partners, private landowners and community work together to build an accessible trail future across the landscape.

COORDINATED MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Trail marketing and promotion activities are coordinated across the region to optimise visitor awareness of the trail network.

SIGNATURE TRAILS

- Georges Bay including St Helens Foreshore Trail
- Bay of Fires Lodge Walk
- Wukalina Walk – Traditional Owners
- Bay of Fires and St Helens MTB Trails
- St Patricks Head
- St Columba Falls

SUPPORTING TRAILS

- Swimcart to Binalong to St Helens
- Moulting Bay or Clerk Point - Traditional Owner Living Place Trail
- Nicholas Range Adventure Trail
- Blue Tier Forest Reserve Walk Trails
- Douglas Apsley Multi Day Walk
- Tasmania's 60 Great Short Walks

LOCAL TRAILS

- St Marys to Cornwall Rail Trail
- Fingal Valley Explorer Trail
- Kings Park St Helens
- Town walking and cycling
- Local guiding for difficult to access trails
- Winifred Curtis Reserve





Analysis of the economic benefits

Two types of analysis were undertaken

Estimates of the number of trail users (mountain bikers and walkers) and development of 10-year projections (based on growth in user markets and the extended/improved trails) and the total benefits to the region

Benefit-cost analysis

- estimation of the growth in trail users over this period to measure benefits compared with the proposed capital spending (\$3.665 million) on new trails and trail improvements
- included health/cost benefits associated with increased exercise

A decorative graphic in the top-left corner consisting of a teal circle and a teal line forming a partial square. Another teal line forms a partial square in the bottom-left corner. In the bottom-center, there are several teal curved lines and a green circle.

Benefit/cost analysis

- Total trail users were estimated to increase by around 77,100 over the 10-year period.
- The benefit/cost analysis shows yields a positive BCR of 1.7.
- The estimates and projections indicate that trails (walking and mountain biking) are significant part of the visitor market in Break O'Day and adjacent areas and generate jobs in local industries.
- A total of 22.0 FTE jobs (18.3 direct jobs and 3.7 indirect/induced jobs) would be generated during the construction period.
- Trail users were estimated to generate a total of around 200 jobs in year 10.
- The jobs generated are mainly in recreation services (e.g., support – shuttles, guides, bike hire etc., and other activities), accommodation, food service transport and retail.



Strategic Priorities and Actions

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	ACTIONS
<p>^① Trail infrastructure purpose built in exciting places for a range of users and to a high quality.</p> <p>Trails link the mountains to the sea and communities together.</p> <p>Trails have broad appeal for a diverse range of people of different capacities and abilities.</p>	<p>1.1 Prioritise investment, management, maintenance and marketing through the Proposed and Existing Trails Hierarchy (presented in Appendix D and map figure 2).</p> <p>1.2 Establish a range of trails suitable for local people to walk, run or ride close to or within towns for enjoyment and to contribute to community health and wellbeing.</p> <p>1.3 Provide improved trail attractions within the Fingal Valley to attract visitors and for enjoyment of local people, including liaising with Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service, and seek funding to upgrade the popular St Patricks Head Walking Trail.</p> <p>1.4 Seek continuous improvement to the Bay of Fires, Blue Tier and St Helens MTB experience including recognition as International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) Epic Trail and Mountain Bike Town to contribute to the North East becoming recognised as the iconic MTB destination in Tasmania and an IMBA trail hub.</p> <p>1.5 Improve visitor access to trails including encouraging safe off-road cycling and take-up of shuttle services to reduce congestion and improve safety.</p> <p>1.6 Break O’Day Council together with land managers will provide where possible access-friendly trail experiences for a broad range of people, including mobility impaired visitors, to enable them to enjoy the Break O’Day landscapes independently or with assistance. Trails will be provided that consider the mobility impaired, vision impaired, elderly, infirm, and people with prams.</p>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	ACTIONS
<p>② Trails are financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable.</p> <p>Trails have minimal environmental impact and contribute to regional biodiversity.</p> <p>Trails are supported by the local community.</p>	<p>2.1 Continue to monitor the views and feelings of the broader community including MTB riders, walkers, trail runners and local community members and encourage a shared partnership approach across the community (e.g., through open days where local people can walk and explore the MTB trails).</p> <p>2.2 Continue strong partnerships between the Council, Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service and Sustainable Timber Tasmania and develop partnerships with landowners to ensure the future of a successful Break O’ Day trail mix.</p> <p>2.3. Ensure detailed environmental investigations are undertaken very early in the planning and development process and contribute to regional biodiversity through restoration of new and existing trail corridors.</p> <p>2.3 Ensure trails are financially, socially and environmentally sustainable to ensure long-term viability with a strong focus on good trail design and sustainability of the assets to reduce costly maintenance of trails and risk.</p> <p>2.4 Leverage existing location and mountain biking, events and adventure sports to encourage the development of St Helens and North East Tasmania as a centre for sport development and expertise.</p> <p>2.5 Seek funding through grant opportunities and sponsorship for tourism infrastructure and community health to support the development and maintenance of the Break O’ Day Council trail network.</p> <p>2.6 Seek Federal and/or State Government contribution towards maintenance of priority trails to assist in ensuring that these premium products are maintained to the highest level, reflecting that the whole state benefits from the trails not just the local community.</p>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY		ACTIONS
③	Trails provide greater recognition and opportunity for Tasmanian Aboriginal Traditional Owners to engage with their land and living places.	<p>3.1 Explore opportunities with Tasmanian Aboriginal Traditional Owners to further connect to the land and sea and provide opportunities where Aboriginal People are able to visit sites and have access regardless of age or ability.</p> <p>3.2 Seek ways for the Tasmanian Aboriginal community to continue to demonstrate their living culture and impart their knowledge to local people and visitors.</p> <p>3.3 Break O’Day Council to continue to work with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Traditional Owners to ensure connection and protection of the land, sea and sites through consultation, planning and seeking permission and approvals to undertake appropriate future trail development work.</p>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	ACTIONS
<p>④ Land manager partners, private landowners and the community work together to build an accessible trail future across the landscape.</p>	<p>4.1 Progress the Trails Collective Governance model and arrangements, and seek to secure additional public and private resources to uphold service standards and maintain and develop the St Helens MTB Network and priority walking, running and shared-use trails identified within this strategy.</p> <p>4.2 Work with landowners to support long-term sustainable trail access arrangements across their lands for priority trails identified within this strategy.</p> <p>4.3 Encourage greater involvement of the broader community in the Trails Collective Governance arrangements while continuing the strong links to businesses and individual supporters.</p> <p>4.4 Continue monitoring trail use to measure user satisfaction, trail experiences, return on investment, environmental considerations and to plan for future investment.</p>

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	ACTIONS
<p>⑤</p> <p>Trail marketing and promotion activities are coordinated across the region to optimise visitor awareness of the trail network</p>	<p>5.1 Investigate future air access to St Helens via the existing air strip which would provide a significant fly-in, fly-out opportunity for trail users.</p> <p>5.2 Continue to provide pre-visit and on-site trail visitor information to ensure enjoyment, safety and comfort of visitors for priority trails, and contribute to visitors' and locals' understanding of the limitations and challenges in accessing some hard-to-get-to trails. Strengthen land manager partnerships' approaches to trail marketing, visitor information and standardised trailheads and waymarking signage.</p> <p>5.3 Promote North East Tasmania and the Break O' Day Council area as the place of mild winters (Tasmania's warmest winter days), with less rain providing the opportunity for more trail use, including walking, in the shoulder seasons and during winter.</p> <p>5.4 Continue positioning, promoting and marketing the mountain bike experience. Encourage appropriate use of the St Helens Mountain Bike Trails and the Bay of Fires Trails through online channels and provide up-to-date information for riders and the community. The information centres at St Helens and within the Fingal Valley continue to provide visitors and the community with excellent pre-visit information.</p> <p>5.5 The Great Eastern Drive between Orford and St Helens is a popular route for visitors and should strongly connect with new and existing short walks and MTB opportunities identified within the Strategy.</p> <p>5.6 Leverage existing successful MTB-specific and other events to encourage new trail events including popular trail running.</p>



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