



DISCUSSION PAPER

Social, economic, amenity and land use

Yarra Ranges Council has commenced a comprehensive and transparent planning, consultation and assessment process for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination through an Environment Effects Statement (EES).

Delivering a world-class mountain bike destination in the heart of the Yarra Ranges would generate tourism, economic and jobs growth and provide a positive community connection with the significant environmental and heritage values in the region.

Protecting the area's natural and cultural environment and minimising potential impacts is central to the project's development.

The EES for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination will assess the project's environmental effects in four key areas, including social, economic, amenity and land use.

The EES Scoping Requirements sets the following evaluation objective:

Minimise potential adverse social, economic, amenity and land use effects at local and regional scales.



Work to date to understand social and economic effects

The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination has been in development since it was first raised in 2010 by local riders.

Over several years and stages of investigations and design, Council has undertaken a feasibility study, detailed planning work, extensive technical investigations and community consultation to inform the project's design and Master Plan.

The following assessments of the project's economic and social potential and effects have been prepared since 2013 to help guide the project's development and have been publicly available for consultation:

- Economic impact assessment
- Economic health benefits assessment
- Landscape and visual impact assessment
- Air quality assessment
- Local movement and transport report
- Traffic impact assessment
- Qualitative road traffic noise assessment
- Social impact assessment
- Bushfire management statement and plan (draft)
- Construction Environment Management Plan (draft)

Further work is now being undertaken to inform the project's EES.

Community and stakeholder perspectives

The project is being developed in partnership with Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and with input from the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Melbourne Water and the Upper Yarra Community Enterprise.

Since 2016, each of these organisations and other key stakeholders have provided direct input to the development of the project, identified sensitive areas through a step-by-step design process and advised on field studies and other technical investigations.

Community feedback gathered through consultation in 2013, 2016 and 2018 has also tapped into extensive local knowledge and needs which has informed changes to the design to avoid or minimise impacts.

Feedback from mountain bike and cycling communities reinforces the project's potential to attract significant new visitation, which is supported by local businesses and potential investors.

Economic and community potential

The local regional economy is characterised by sustained unemployment and limited job opportunities.

The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination has the potential to revitalise Warburton, encourage new business, attract tourism and attract a diverse range of visitors including families and groups.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused global shifts which are being felt locally and provide important context for the project's development:

- Rising unemployment and economic pressures
- A resurgence in domestic tourism
- Renewed focus on health and wellbeing
- A strong desire to reconnect with nature.

Carefully developed to preserve amenity for the community, as well as significant environmental and cultural values, Warburton Mountain Bike Destination taps directly into these shifts.

It would attract a wide range of visitors looking to stay active, connect with nature and spend time with family and friends.

When fully developed in 2031, the project is expected to attract 128,000 new visitors who would participate in 222,000 rides per year. This would generate 77,000 overnight stays in the region, create 159 jobs and stimulate a \$31.2 million spend in the local economy.

The EES will assess the expected positive and adverse socio-economic effects potentially generated by the project, including impacts on the capacity of community infrastructure.

AMENITY FOR COMMUNITIES AND NEARBY RESIDENTS

Regular consultation and discussion with stakeholders and residents has helped the project team better understand the local context and priorities, particularly regarding Warburton's natural surroundings.

Noise, air quality and visual impacts have been raised as concerns during consultation. The project team initiated assessments of these impacts to inform the project's development.

Other concerns included the proximity of trails to some properties in Old Warburton and Merlino Avenue, which led to a modification to move trails further away from homes in these areas.

The EES will include a range of assessments related to amenity, including changes in traffic and potential related effects, impacts on visual and landscape values and investigation of any potential safety hazards, including bushfires.



EES assessment of social, economic, amenity and land use effects

The study of the project's social, economic, amenity and land use effects will be conducted by specialists in regional economies and social impact assessment, using research, inputs from traffic, noise and air quality specialists, community interviews and consultation with stakeholders.

The study and information in the EES will include a description of the area's demographic and social character, existing and potential land uses, dwellings and other sensitive uses, and identify implications for communities, current land uses and businesses and immediately foreseeable changes in land use.



Traffic, parking and noise

Understanding how the project would work and interact with the existing road network and traffic has been a key consideration, with a focus on ensuring transport and amenity needs are protected.

Consultation feedback identified concerns about potential traffic congestion, noise and air quality impacts, and the ability of existing roads and parking to cope with increased traffic.

A local movement and transport report prepared in 2019 identified:

- There is sufficient capacity across the road network to accommodate the forecast growth in traffic
- The growth in tourist volumes is expected to place pressure on existing parking infrastructure in Warburton. A Main Trail Head with car parking for a potential 180 cars, is proposed at the Warburton Golf Course.
- Improvements to signage, wayfinding and parking restriction compliance would increase utilisation of existing parking spaces.

Assessments of noise and air quality impacts found that traffic increases generated by the project would be low and are not expected to result in significant air quality or noise impacts for nearby communities.

The EES will include a description of:

- proposed transport routes during construction and operation, including their ability to accommodate traffic changes
- any works required to address changes in traffic
- assessment of any potential project effects on the structure conditions of public roads.

It will also identify mitigation measures where required to avoid or minimise potential impacts on amenity values.

More information on the approach to assessment of social, economic, amenity and land use effects is available in the EES Scoping Requirements.

www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/warburton-mountain-bike-destination

Find out more and stay involved

Community input is an important part of the EES process and the project's continued development.

- 🌐 Sign up for project updates, find the latest information or ask a question on our website rideyarraranges.com.au
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NOVEMBER 2020

