



## **Bicycle Queensland response to the draft Strategic Plan for the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail.**

First, before all else, Bicycle Queensland applauds the detailed work which has gone into this strategic plan.

It's a very comprehensive look at the current state of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail, and the extensive inquiry into its history, limitations, and current operation. By any measure, this is a very thorough analysis, and we are grateful to those who commissioned it, those who did the research and the writing, and all who contributed through the workshop and feedback process.

Bicycle Queensland (BQ) **generally agrees with the direction outlined** by the draft strategic plan. **BQ especially endorses the concept of an advisory board** to report back to DTMR as the trail owner and a steering committee to provide the advisory board with local feedback and external expertise.

### **The importance and uniqueness of rail trails**

BQ believes we should acknowledge that **rail trails are an unusual type of state asset**, and it is difficult for the State Government to work out how they will best be administered.

Our view is that the best analogy for **rail trails is that they are like linear parks**. Although they exist on a corridor that was once used for transport, the important change that happens in their transition to a rail trail is that **the primary purpose is no longer transport, but recreation**. BQ is not denying that there are people using this rail trail for transport, but the main purpose, the reason for spending the money to develop this asset, is for recreational tourism. And as the rail trail grows in popularity, it grows as a tourism asset, rather than a transport corridor.

So the placement of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail, and other rail trails, with the Department for Transport and Main Roads, needs to be questioned on a regular basis. Is DTMR the best steward of this tourism asset? Does DTMR have the right mix of funding and capabilities to maximise the number of recreational users who visit the trail?

Linked to this question is the overarching question of strategic development of rail trails across the state. As can clearly be seen in the strategic plan, there are competitors in the tourism market for those High Value people who we want to come visit and enjoy the

recreational opportunities in Queensland. At the moment, they are mostly going to Victoria and Otago.

So it would be great if this BVRT Strategic Plan related to an overall strategic plan for rail trails in Queensland. Bicycle Queensland would love to see strategic plans for the development of all the existing and proposed rail trails across the state. Some of them might (eventually) be as great as the BVRT!

But all are held back at present by what we might call the rail trail conundrum: towns or regions which once were prosperous enough to have a railway run through them, are likely once the railway line has left, to not be prosperous enough to develop a tourism trail in the space left behind, without significant support from beyond their region.

So an overall state-wide plan, and a state-sponsored strategy, is necessary to develop all of our rail trails. So although this is not “in scope” for this document, we nonetheless need to provide it as feedback to this document.

**In response to the four strategic outcome areas, Bicycle Queensland’s view is that the integrated governance and management of the asset (Outcome B) is the key to ensuring that all of the outcomes are met. It is also our view that because of the uncertainty of “fit” of rail trails within the DTMR structure, that the issue of funding will always continue to be a problem, because rail trails are essentially not about transport, but tourism and recreation.**

### **Strategic Outcome A. Infrastructure upgrades.**

Bicycle Queensland supports all the actions proposed in A1, A2, A3, and A5.

In the A2 section, BQ would add that the surface **improvements** (not merely repairs) across the whole trail should continue until the whole trail reaches the standard of the recently completed Moore to Toogoolawah section. Providing a trail surface that makes the trail accessible to casual bike riders is of vital importance if we are to have a world-class rail trail to market to the High Value tourist. The variation in surface quality that characterises the BVRT at present is not a feature, it is a limitation. Surface variations are an impediment to enjoyment of the trail by the casual visitor.

So the sections named in A2 are great candidates for surface improvements, and we support those planned works. But we also would like to see surface improvements between Esk and Coominya, and Yarraman and Blackbutt.

We support the A3 section whole-heartedly, and applaud recent works with grids, and removing gates.

We would add to the A5 section our view that a long-term strategic link to the Kilkivan to Kingaroy Rail Trail is important. Linking the two trails gives a week-long rail trail experience

that is surely appealing to the sort of adventure tourist who presently travels to the Mawson Trail in South Australia or the Munda Biddi Trail in WA.

We also note that the question of developing the infrastructure and wayfinding of the BVRT through the towns is raised in the plan, but not reflected in these infrastructure action outcomes. We would like to see a plan in place for improving the trail's legibility and safety through the towns. We are thinking especially of Esk and Lowood, but also to a lesser extent Toogoolawah and even Fernvale.

The BVRT does not get the prominence through these towns that a significant tourism asset deserves. The BVRT intersects on several occasions with another of DTMR's assets, the Brisbane Valley Highway. BQ's view is that the BVRT should receive a higher priority for the in-town crossing of the Brisbane Valley Highway in the middle of Esk, and we would encourage the incoming advisory board to look at this.

### **Strategic Outcome B. Governance.**

Bicycle Queensland supports all the outcomes listed in section B, having noted our earlier comments about whether rail trails properly belong with DTMR. Within the current ownership structure, we see these strategic outcomes as a massive step forward, and we will support them in any way open to us.

### **Strategic Outcome C. Marketing.**

Bicycle Queensland also supports the outcomes listed in section C 100%, and will pledge to do our bit towards encouraging use of the BVRT and all the other great Queensland rail trails that get developed further in the next few years.

How great would it be to have visitors to the state experience not just one, but four or five memorable rail trails ... from the Brisbane Valley and the South Burnett, through to the amazing tunnels between Many Peaks and Kalpowar on the Boyne-Burnett inland trail, and the sensational countryside between Atherton and Herberton on the Tablelands trail.

After the establishment of the Advisory Board in section B, Bicycle Queensland puts Action C1.1 as our highest priority in this plan, and we encourage DTMR and the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, and indeed the Palaszczuk Government to not just develop a marketing plan, but fund it generously.

### **Strategic Outcome D, Economic and Community Development.**

Bicycle Queensland has a track record of running excellent events on the BVRT, and we hope to continue to run end-to-end weekends, and day events. We do not support racing events on the trail, and regard ultra-endurance events with an amount of suspicion. Mixing an increasing number of tourist visitors on the trail with endurance events which look like races is inappropriate and counter-productive in our view.

So with the exception of the word 'racing', Bicycle Queensland supports the action outcomes listed for strategic outcome D.

### **Conclusion**

Bicycle Queensland has supported the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail through events and advocacy since very soon after its inception, and we are greatly encouraged by the steps forward that this draft Strategic Plan represents. We encourage DTMR as the Trail's owner to adopt the plan, and begin its implementation. We look forward to continuing to collaborate and offering our support on the development of the trail, and its successful marketing within Queensland and across Australia and around the world.

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