

GETTING RAIL TRAILS ESTABLISHED IN QUEENSLAND

A TOOLKIT FOR USER
ASSOCIATIONS
AND COMMUNITY
ADVOCATES



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We also acknowledge the Somerset Regional Council for their dedication to enhancing bike riding infrastructure and for their invaluable role in co-hosting the Rail Trails and Tourism Conference. Their commitment to rail trail development is a testament to the economic and social benefits that well-managed trails bring to local communities.

A special thanks goes to the presenters and speakers who contributed their expertise and insights at the Rail Trails and Tourism Conference in November 2024. Their knowledge, experience, and passion for rail trails helped shape vital discussions on best practices, advocacy strategies, and long-term sustainability.

Most importantly, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to the countless community groups and volunteers including Bicycle User Groups (BUGs) and Rail Trail Users Associations working behind the scenes to turn rail trail visions into reality. Their passion, advocacy, and relentless dedication are the driving force behind many of the state's most successful trails. From securing funding and negotiating access to maintaining trails and organising events, these individuals and organisations embody the spirit of community-led progress.

Rail trails would not exist without the vision and perseverance of those who champion them. To everyone who has contributed—whether through policy, planning, advocacy, or hands-on work—we thank you. Your efforts continue to create spaces that connect people, communities, and landscapes, leaving a lasting legacy for future generations.

Alton Twine, CEO, Bicycle Queensland

February, 2025



*Proudly supported by the
Queensland Government*



Introduction

In November 2024, Bicycle Queensland and Somerset Regional Council, with support from the Queensland Government, convened industry experts from Queensland and Northern New South Wales for the Rail Trails and Tourism Conference. This forum facilitated the exchange of insights on the development and management of rail trails and the substantial economic benefits they deliver to regional communities across Australia.

This document highlights the significance of rail trails and their impact, providing a foundation for understanding their value before exploring the strategies for successful development. Established rail trails have become valued community assets, contributing to the well-documented economic and social advantages

- Public health and well-being by providing accessible, safe spaces for outdoor recreation.
- Family-friendly environments that support active lifestyles.
- The sustainability of local businesses and economic growth.
- The attraction of sporting, recreational, and corporate events.



Local and state governments increasingly recognise these benefits and support rail trail development, as it represents a cost-effective way to repurpose existing infrastructure.

The key components of this toolkit reflect presentations given by speakers at the Rail Trails and Tourism Conference 2024, who together represent a wealth and depth of knowledge that we are thrilled to have captured in a useful resource. Their presentations have been used to shape the structure of this toolkit and include:

- 1 Developing a vision ("You need a vision", Desley O'Grady, Boyne Burnett Inland Rail Trail)
- 2 Exploring feasibility
- 3 Securing access to the rail corridor ("Securing a corridor", Craig England – TMR Manager Rail Corridor Management)
- 4 Planning, design, and construction ("Planning", Ian Lonsdale – Tweed Shire Council)
- 5 Political engagement and staged development ("Politics and Staged Development", Paul Heymans – Patron BVRTUA)
- 6 Operational models/funding ("Models of Operation - Community or Council", Rowan Lamont – Blue Sky Trails and Andrew Demack – Bicycle Queensland)
- 7 Marketing and events ("Marketing and Events", Tiffany Stoddart – Tweed Shire Council and Mike Blewitt- Bicycle Queensland)

Throughout this document, some concepts have been adapted from the foundational work of Rail Trails Australia, particularly their Rail Trail Establishment Guidelines.

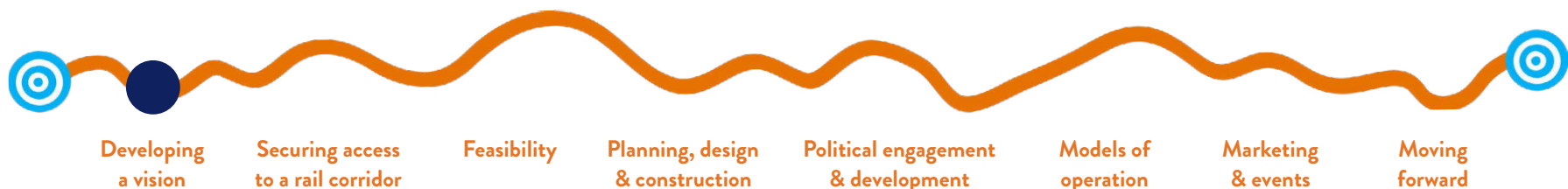
1 Developing a vision

A compelling vision is the foundation of any successful rail trail project. Most great initiatives begin with a clear and actionable idea, championed by individuals or groups with a shared goal. While broad community support is ideal, unanimous approval is rarely necessary at the outset—what matters is momentum and strategic positioning.

Rail trails in operation today have emerged through varied development models, including community-led initiatives, government-driven projects, and hybrid approaches. Regardless of the model, collaboration between community stakeholders and government bodies is essential for success.

1.1 Key steps in vision development:

- 1 Define the scope by outlining the intended extent of the proposed trail, acknowledging that full realisation may occur in stages (see section 7.1).
- 2 Assess economic linkages by identifying potential connections to the local economy, tourism, and other regional attractions.
- 3 Conduct an environmental scan to analyse competing interests within the corridor and broader regional investment trends.
- 4 Propose a management model by considering options such as community volunteer-led initiatives, council oversight, or hybrid approaches.
- 5 Seek government and community support by securing preliminary backing from local and state governments and gauging public sentiment.
- 6 Develop a roadmap to establish a structured plan guiding feasibility assessments and stakeholder engagement.



2 Securing access to a rail corridor for rail trail development

In Queensland, the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) holds perpetual lease rights over all rail corridors, including operational, non-operational, and closed corridors. To date, rail trails have only been developed within closed corridors, of which there are thousands of kilometres across the state.

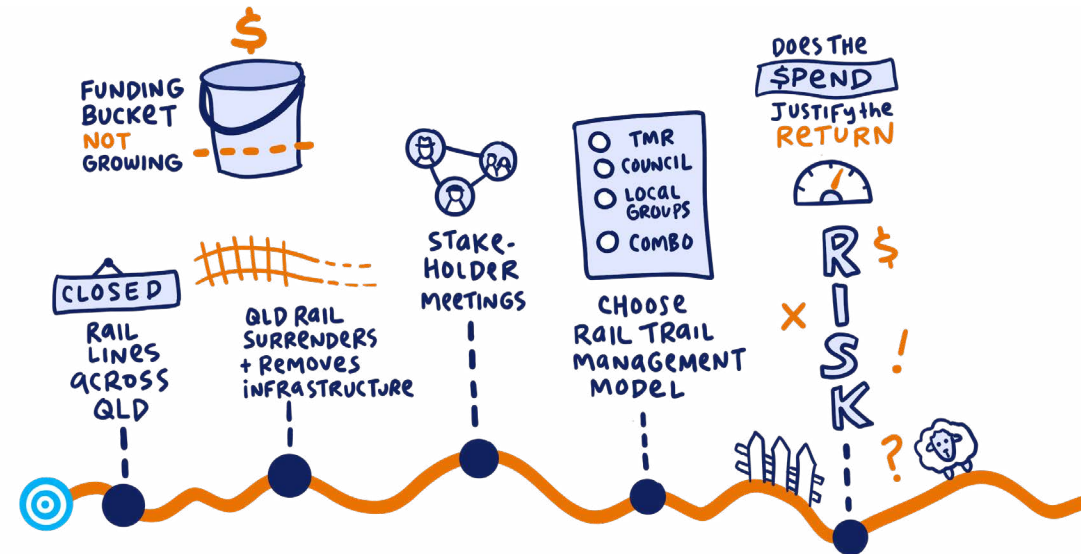
TMR plays a crucial role in facilitating the transition of disused rail corridors into rail trails, which begins with Queensland Rail relinquishing its interest and the removal of rail infrastructure. Community groups seeking to establish a rail trail must navigate government processes, address stakeholder concerns, and secure sustainable funding for long-term management.

2.1 Key considerations in securing a corridor

2.1.1 Government and stakeholder engagement

Engaging key stakeholders is fundamental to a successful rail trail project. This involves:

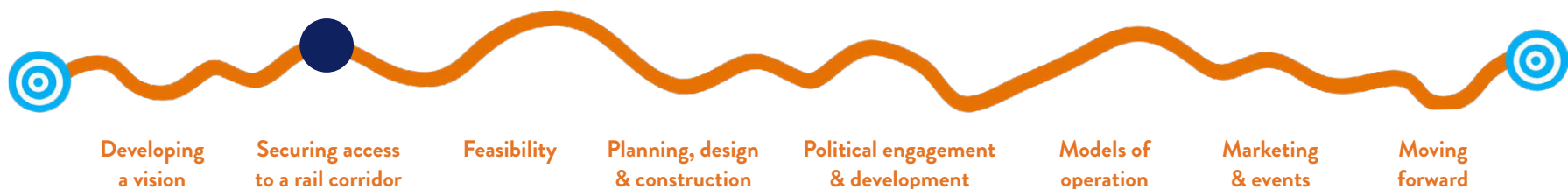
- Securing state and local government support, as council endorsement is typically required for management and funding.
- Seeking appropriate licences to use the rail trail corridor.
- Addressing concerns from adjoining landowners, particularly regarding access, fencing, and encroachment. Many landowners have had decades without immediate neighbours, so early dialogue is essential.
- Consulting with community groups, tourism operators, and industry partners to demonstrate broad support and potential economic benefits.



2.2 Risk mitigation

Understanding and addressing potential risks early in the process ensures a smoother transition from feasibility to implementation. Some key risks include:

- Competing land uses: Rail corridors may have existing commercial interests, including mining leases or alternative infrastructure projects.
- Oversaturation of rail trails: Assess the regional demand to ensure a new trail will be viable and not overshadowed by nearby existing trails.
- Financial sustainability: Establish how capital costs, feasibility studies, construction, and long-term maintenance will be funded.
- Encroachment: Some landowners may have extended private use into the corridor over time, requiring negotiations and formal boundary adjustments.





2.3 Management models

A successful rail trail requires a well-defined management structure. The most viable options include:

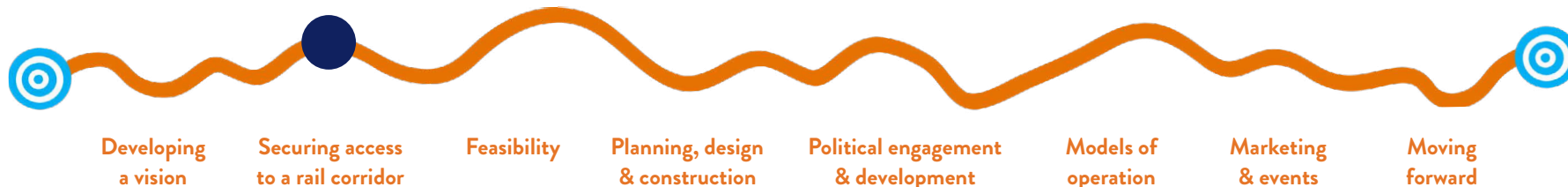
- Direct TMR oversight, where the department continues to manage the corridor.
- Local government administration, where councils take responsibility for maintenance and operational oversight.
- Community-led management, often driven by volunteers or incorporated groups responsible for day-to-day operations.
- Hybrid models, where councils, community groups, and state agencies collaborate on different aspects of funding, maintenance, and governance.

Each model has advantages and challenges, and a thorough assessment is needed to determine the most sustainable approach for a specific corridor.

2.4 Documentation of next steps

To maintain momentum and secure official backing, the following steps should be undertaken:

- Work with TMR and local councils to obtain 'in principle' support, acknowledging the proposed rail trail's value.
- Develop an action plan that outlines feasibility study requirements, funding applications, and a roadmap for transitioning from planning to construction.
- Address regulatory and legal requirements, ensuring all necessary approvals are obtained before formal development begins.



3 Feasibility

3.1 Do we need a feasibility study?

A feasibility study can determine whether a rail trail project is viable by assessing scope, costs, and potential staging for construction. It provides evidence to support grant applications and ensures informed decision-making. If there's strong community support for the rail trail, and conversations with landowners and government are underway, a feasibility study might be a useful next step – but can be expensive.

3.1.1 Funding for feasibility studies

Community organisations are encouraged to work with their council to explore regional development funding opportunities or look for grant opportunities through the Queensland Government's Grant Finder.

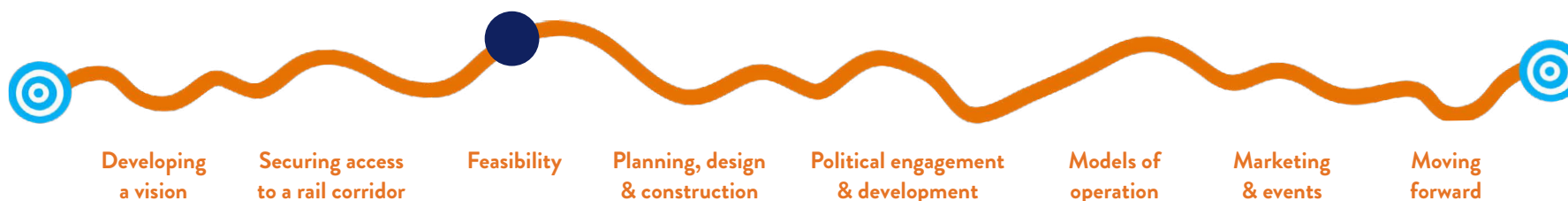
It is also advisable to contact TMR to investigate the possibility of securing a community licence to improve the corridor—though this should only be considered if the rail lines have already been removed—rather than starting your process with a feasibility study. A licence may allow you to get started and gain some momentum.

Feasibility studies can vary widely depending on the organisations involved and the level of investment being considered. Because these studies can be quite detailed and time-consuming, it's usually best to discuss options with Bicycle Queensland, who may be able to assist with connecting you with specialists or provide advice, as well as TMR. A feasibility study can investigate early priorities, such as identifying sections that can be developed at low cost while maximising user engagement, helping to prove the trail's value to sceptical stakeholders. It can provide invaluable data on the following key dimensions.

3.2 Key feasibility dimensions

1. **Technical**– What infrastructure and works are required to complete the trail for use?
2. **Economic**– Will the trail be financially sustainable? Assess costs, potential returns, and funding sources.
3. **Operational**– How will the trail integrate with local governance and maintenance structures?
4. **Legal**– Does the project comply with relevant laws and regulations?
5. **Market**– What is the demand for the trail, and how does it impact tourism and local economies?
6. **Social**– Will the community support and benefit from the trail?
7. **Environmental**– What are the ecological impacts, and how can they be mitigated?
8. **Risk**– What are the potential risks, and how can they be managed?

By considering these dimensions, project feasibility can be comprehensively evaluated to determine whether a project is viable and worth pursuing. The feasibility study is the backbone of your business case (see 3.3) and the primary tool for political advocacy.



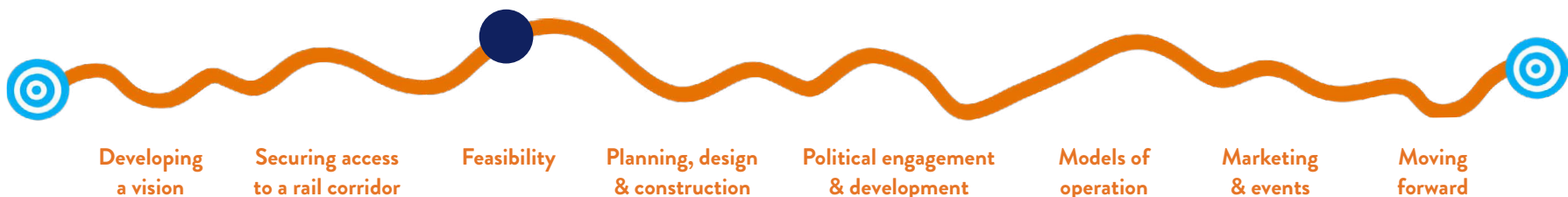


A feasibility study may be a complex step in the process, but it can be made easier with community, government, and Bicycle Queensland support. The steps many rail trails users associations have taken towards feasibility studies generally follow the same pattern:

- 1 Formalise a rail trail development group with representation from local and state government agencies.
- 2 Reach out to Bicycle Queensland for support and contacts.
- 3 Appoint a champion or spokesperson to advocate for the project.
- 4 Identify funding sources and establish a timeline for feasibility study activities.
- 5 Draft a feasibility study scope that addresses opportunities, constraints, competing interests, key stakeholders, political considerations, timelines, risks, and estimated costs.
- 6 Secure funding and conduct the feasibility study to validate the project's viability

3.3 Moving from feasibility to construction

- Engage experienced consultants for feasibility studies, seeking grants to cover costs.
- If a feasibility study can not be funded, explore the possibility of securing a licence to use the corridor through TMR (if the rail lines have been removed). This can provide an excellent starting point.
- Identify sections that can be developed cost-effectively to demonstrate value early.
- Develop a simple business case that outlines benefits, risks, and sustainability strategies.



4 Planning, design, and construction

4.1 Risk management in rail trail development

4.1.1 Big-picture risk factors

- Biosecurity – Managing the impact of trail development on local wildlife, livestock, and natural ecosystems.
- Infrastructure hazards – Consider station platform heights, tunnels, and road crossings.
- User safety and accessibility – Plan for surface selection (see section 7.2), signage, parking, litter management, and emergency access.
- Heritage protection – Ensure that historical sites are preserved and incorporated into the design.
- Trail maintenance and security – Address vandalism, trespassing, and unlawful occupation.

4.1.2 Risk mitigation strategies

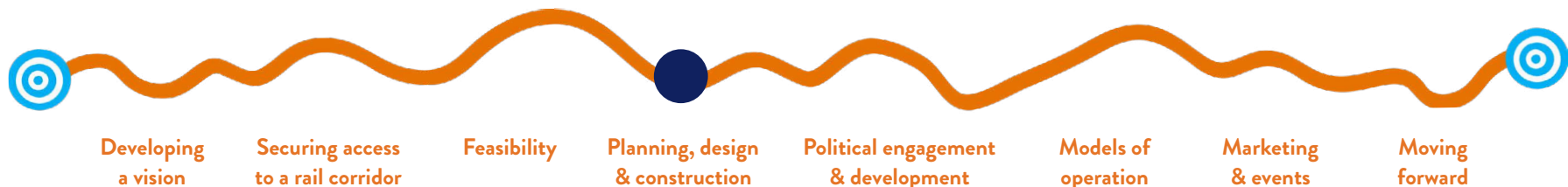
- Conduct environmental impact assessments early in the process.
- Engage with biosecurity experts to develop risk management strategies.
- Ensure user inclusivity with accessible infrastructure and wayfinding.
- Secure funding for ongoing maintenance to ensure long-term sustainability.



4.2 Design and construction considerations

4.2.1 User-centred design principles

- Select appropriate surfaces such as compacted gravel, asphalt, or concrete to ensure accessibility and durability.
- Maintain a consistent surface cross-fall to enhance safety.
- Provide clear wayfinding signage to guide users effectively.
- Design gates and barriers with universal access principles to accommodate all users.

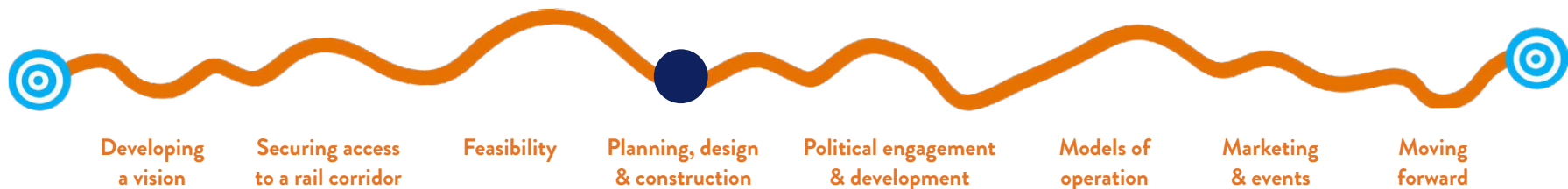
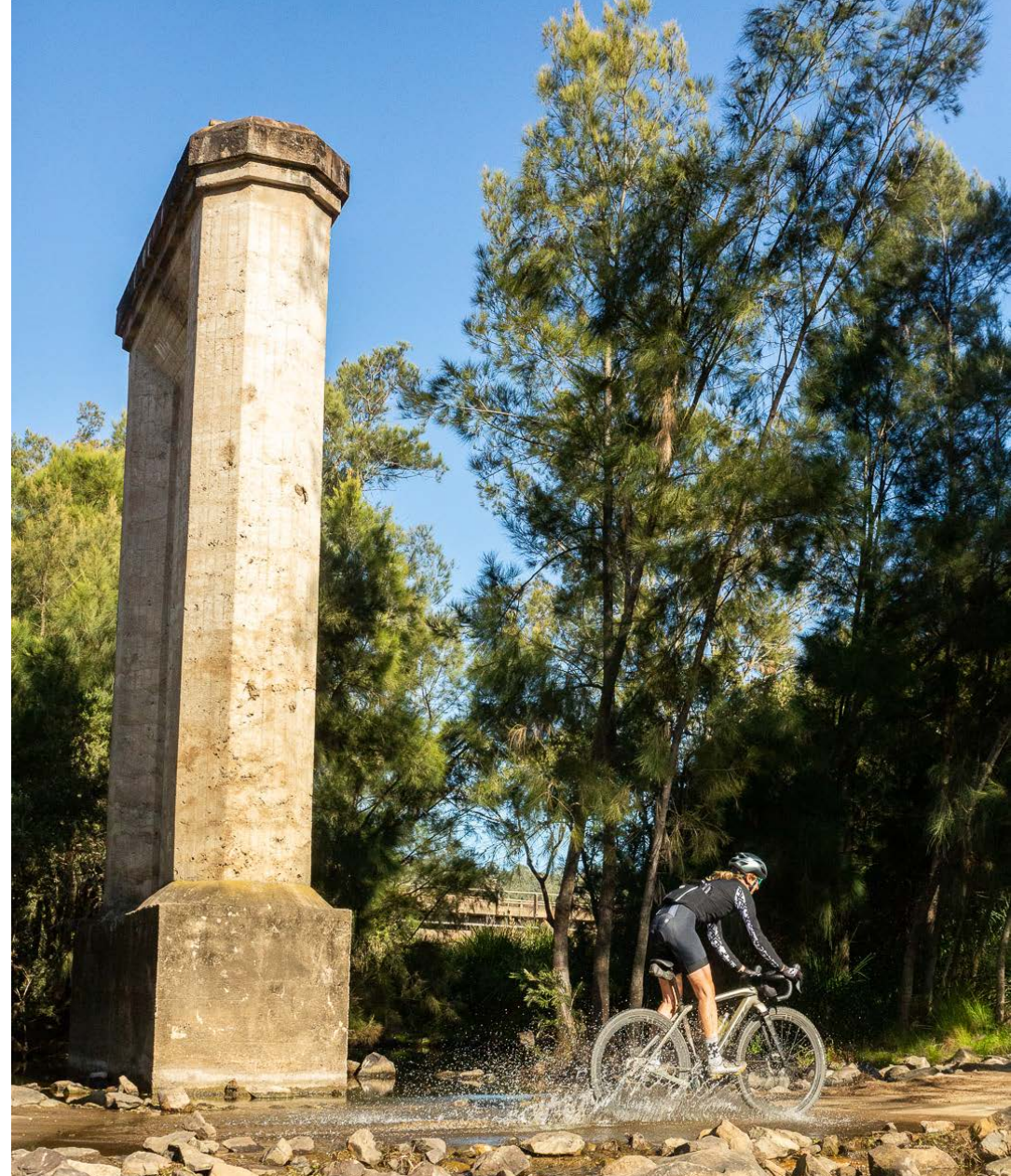
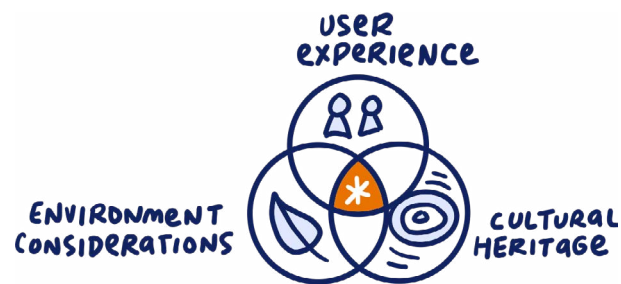


4.2.2 Environmental and heritage considerations

- Preserve native landscapes and undertake restoration efforts where needed.
- Integrate heritage elements into the trail design to enhance cultural value.
- Implement sustainable landscaping that complements the existing environment.

4.2.3 Phases of trail construction

- Site preparation – Clearing vegetation, stabilising the soil, and assessing drainage requirements.
- Pathway construction – Laying down surfaces, ensuring proper grading, and integrating safety features.
- Infrastructure development – Installing bridges, tunnels, rest areas, and water stations.
- Landscaping and restoration – Enhancing aesthetics with native vegetation and erosion control measures.



5 Political engagement and staged development

Rail trail projects require strong political engagement and a phased approach to development to overcome challenges and secure sustained funding. While their benefits to tourism, recreation, and local economies are well-documented, their success often depends on effective advocacy, securing government support, and maintaining momentum through incremental progress.

5.1 Political engagement in rail trail development

5.1.1 Securing government support

Government backing is critical for rail trail projects, as significant funding and policy decisions often rest with local, state, and federal authorities. Political engagement should begin early and align the project's goals with broader government priorities.

Key strategies

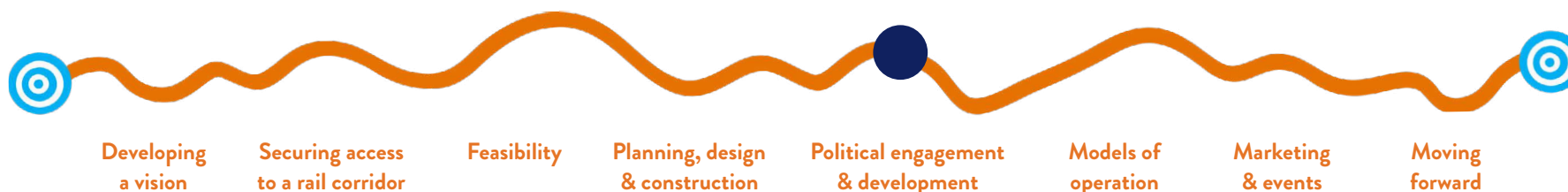
- Aligning proposals with government objectives, such as boosting regional tourism, improving public health, or promoting sustainable transport
- Engaging directly with elected representatives, policy advisors, and government committees
- Demonstrating clear community support through public petitions, surveys, and local business endorsements
- Using media channels to maintain visibility and put pressure on decision-makers

5.1.2 Navigating local government

Access to disused railway corridors is often governed by local councils, who must balance a range of considerations, including cost, landholder interests, and long-term maintenance. While differing perspectives may arise from councillors, landowners, or community members, these conversations also present valuable opportunities to build broad-based support through strategic engagement and evidence-based planning.

Building support

- Commissioning feasibility studies that demonstrate the potential economic uplift, including increased tourism and local business activity
- Positioning the project as a catalyst for regional economic development and community revitalisation
- Engaging with the democratic process by supporting candidates who recognise the value of rail trails for community wellbeing and economic resilience
- Initiating pilot projects to showcase early success, generate community enthusiasm, and foster momentum for further development



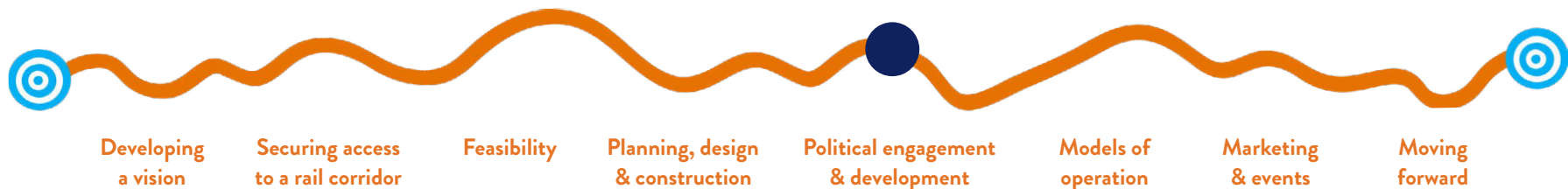


5.1.3 Leveraging state and federal election cycles

Election periods offer opportunities to secure commitments from political candidates. Advocacy groups can use election cycles to push for funding pledges or policy changes from parties and independent candidates.

Strategies for election engagement

- Identifying and engaging with candidates who may support rail trail development
- Presenting clear, data-backed proposals that outline economic and social benefits
- Organising community-led petitions, media campaigns, and public forums to make the issue visible
- Holding candidates accountable post-election to ensure promises are followed through



5.2 Staged development as a strategy

5.2.1 Initial development and pilot sections

Full-scale rail trail development can require substantial investment, making it difficult to secure funding in a single allocation. A staged development approach allows for incremental progress, building support and funding over time.

Benefits of staged development

- Allows for early demonstration of benefits, increasing public and political support
- Provides opportunities to apply for multiple rounds of funding rather than relying on a single large grant
- Reduces financial risk by testing sections before committing to full development

5.2.2 Expanding momentum through incremental funding

Once initial sections of a rail trail are successfully developed, momentum can be leveraged to secure further funding. Each completed segment serves as proof of concept, strengthening applications for additional grants.

Strategies for securing incremental funding

- Applying for staged government grants rather than waiting for a single major allocation
- Engaging local businesses and tourism operators to co-invest in infrastructure
- Using completed sections as case studies to demonstrate economic impact and secure further investment
- Encouraging state and federal governments to include rail trails in broader infrastructure or recreation funding programs

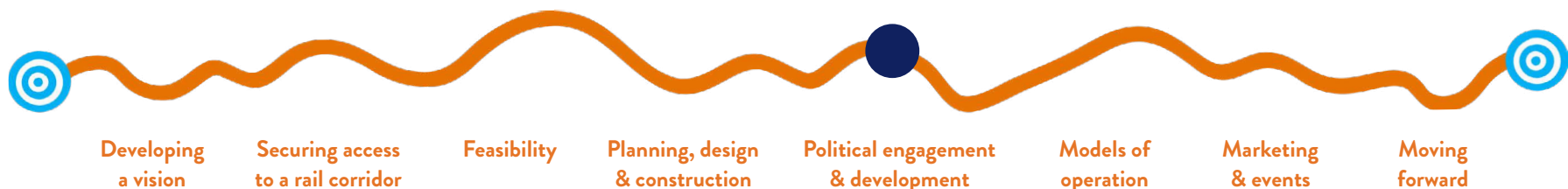


5.2.3 Using temporary solutions to maintain progress

Funding and political delays can stall rail trail projects. In such cases, temporary solutions can keep users engaged and maintain momentum while awaiting full funding.

Common temporary solutions

- Mapping and signposting alternative routes on minor roads to connect incomplete sections
- Using low-cost surface treatments or basic infrastructure until permanent solutions are viable
- Hosting community events or guided rides to promote existing sections and build public interest
- Installing temporary safety measures, such as removable fencing, to address concerns from local landowners



6 Models of Operation

Selecting the optimal model of operation for a rail trail is a complex decision that must balance sustainability, financial viability, community engagement, and quality of experience. Publicly managed trails ensure accountability, while private or hybrid models can introduce efficiency and innovation.

6.1 Trail governance and legislative framework

6.1.1 National and state-level governance

Rail trail operations are governed by a combination of national, state, and local regulations, ensuring compliance with environmental, cultural, and land management laws. Some of the key legislative and policy frameworks include:

- Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act – protects national heritage sites and ecological sustainability.
- Cultural Heritage Acts – ensures protection of Indigenous and historical sites along rail corridors.
- Conservation and Land Management Acts – regulates land use, conservation efforts, and management strategies.
- State government policies – departments such as TMR and environmental agencies provide strategic guidance.
- Local government planning schemes – policies, zoning regulations, and development strategies directly influence trail development and use.

6.1.2 Industry and trail standards

- AusCycling – Australian Mountain Bike Trail Guidelines (2019) – governs best practices for mountain biking trails, including those intersecting rail trails.

- TDRS AS2156.1 and AS 2156.2 Walking Track Standards – establishes guidelines for track construction, surface quality, and accessibility.
- Queensland Mountain Biking Strategy – specific to trail networks incorporating mountain biking infrastructure.
- Trail and vehicle counts – data collection mechanisms for tracking trail usage, vehicle access, and maintenance needs.

Understanding these frameworks is crucial for selecting an appropriate operational model that aligns with legal and strategic requirements.

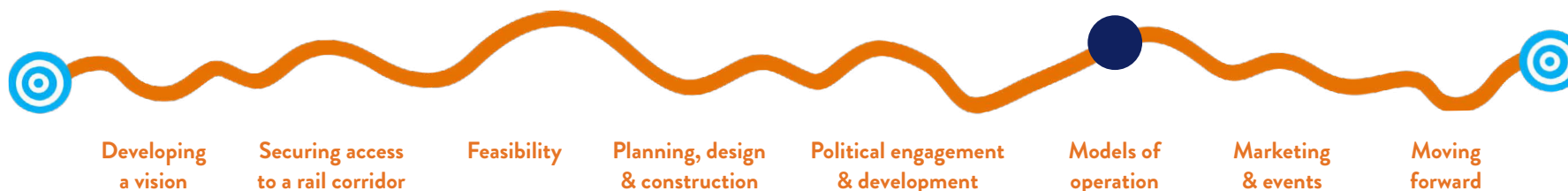
6.2 Models of operation for rail trails

6.2.1 Publicly owned and operated by the land manager

Under this model, the land manager (e.g., local or state government, national parks authority) retains full control over the rail trail, including funding, maintenance, and risk management.

Key features

- Land manager owns and is fully responsible for operations, maintenance, and compliance.
- Trail risk is managed by the government agency.
- Inspections and audits are conducted regularly by government staff or contracted professionals.
- Funding comes from government budgets, grants, and infrastructure funding.
- Benefits
- High-quality maintenance standards ensured.
- Centralised control over conservation and public safety.



- Consistent compliance with legislation and accessibility standards.
- Challenges
- High operational costs for government agencies.
- Complex delays in decision-making and improvements.
- Potential for underfunding if government priorities shift.

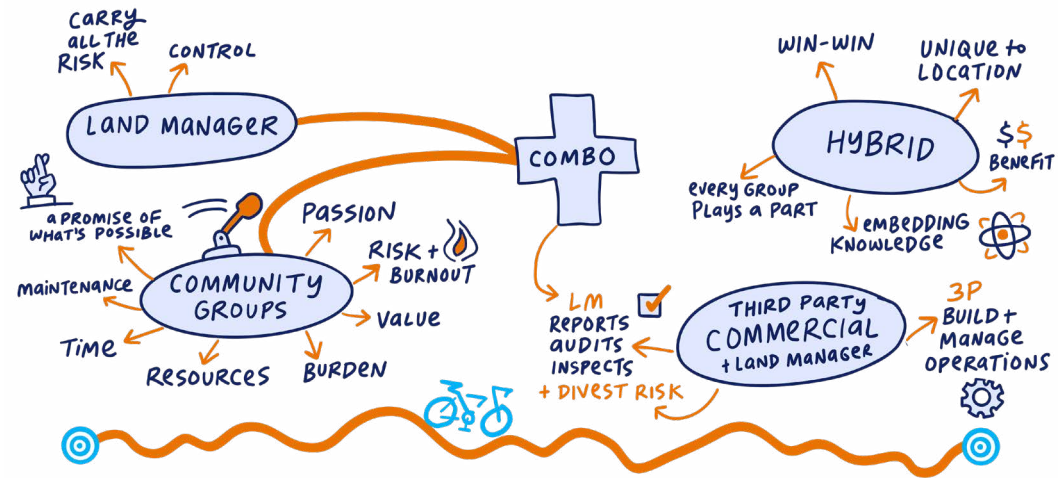
Example: Many national parks and state-managed trail networks are operated under this model. The BVRT is the only rail trail to operate under this model.

6.2.2 Community volunteer group or club management

In this model, a community-based organisation (such as a bicycle user group, bushwalking club, or local trail association) enters into an agreement with the land manager to take responsibility for maintaining the rail trail.

Key features

- Land remains under government ownership.
- Volunteer groups handle maintenance, reporting, and minor repairs.
- Land manager retains liability but oversees performance through audits.
- Funding often comes from community grants, sponsorships, and donations.
- Benefits
- Engages local community and fosters stewardship.
- Lower operational costs for government agencies.
- Can create stronger advocacy for trail improvements and funding.



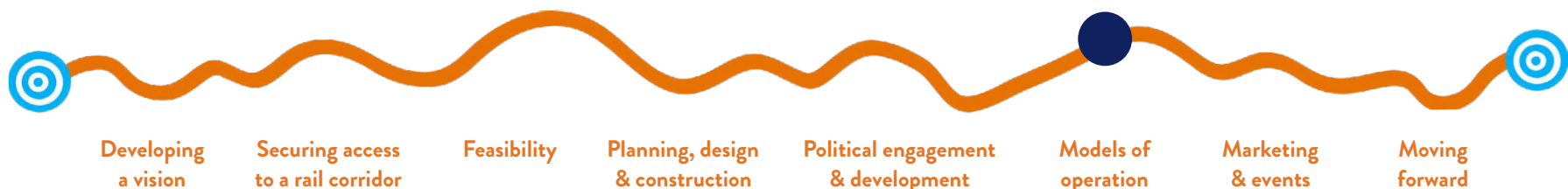
Challenges

- Reliance on volunteer availability and skill levels.
- Potential inconsistency in maintenance.
- Difficulty in securing long-term funding.

Example: The Otago Central Rail Trail in New Zealand benefits from strong community engagement, with volunteers assisting in trail maintenance and events.

6.2.3 Privately owned and commercially operated

In this model, a private entity or corporation assumes responsibility for developing, maintaining, and operating the trail network under a commercial agreement with the landowner.



Key features

- The third party (private company or nonprofit) builds and manages the trail under strict permit conditions.
- Responsibility for maintenance, operations, and insurance lies with the private operator.
- The land manager monitors performance through audits and reporting.
- The private operator may monetise the trail through entry fees, tourism activities, or concession businesses.
- Benefits
- Potential for high-quality maintenance and services.
- Can attract private investment and commercial tourism growth.
- Reduces financial burden on government agencies.

Challenges

- Public access may be restricted or require payment.
- Profit-driven focus may deprioritise conservation goals.
- Risk of conflicts between public and private interests.

Example: Privately operated trail systems exist in regions with significant tourism demand, such as some segments of the Great Victorian Rail Trail in Australia.

6.2.4 Hybrid models: shared responsibility

A hybrid model combines elements of public ownership, private investment, and community volunteer engagement to optimise rail trail management.

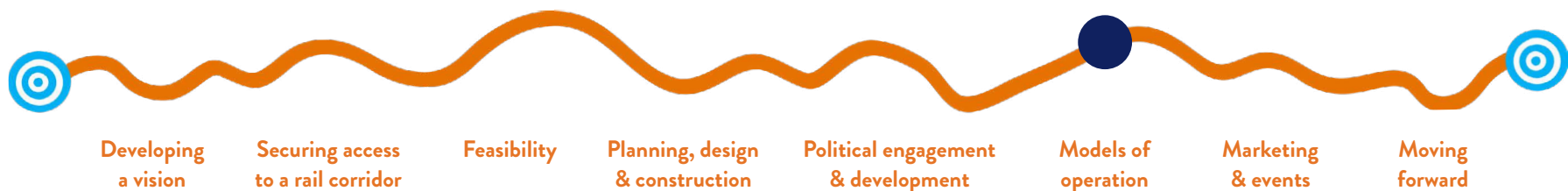
Key features

- Public authorities manage overarching governance, risk, and major infrastructure repairs.
- Volunteers contribute to basic maintenance and user engagement.
- Contractors are hired for specialised work (e.g., resurfacing, structural repairs).
- Some sections may be leased to private operators for commercial opportunities (e.g., bike rentals, guided tours).
- Benefits
- Balances cost-effectiveness with quality assurance.
- Encourages volunteer participation without overwhelming responsibility.
- Flexible approach tailored to local community strengths.

Challenges

- Requires careful coordination and agreement among stakeholders.
- Risk of inefficiencies if responsibilities are not clearly defined.

Example: The Murray to Mountains Rail Trail in Victoria utilises a hybrid approach, combining local government oversight with private enterprise involvement in trail services.



6.3 Selecting the right model for your rail trail

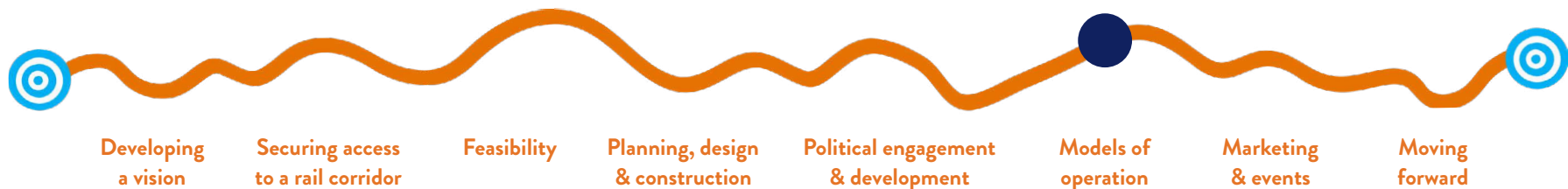
When determining the best operational model, key considerations include:

- Trail purpose and user demographics – is the trail primarily for recreation, tourism, transport, or conservation?
- Available funding and revenue sources – can the government sustain it, or is private investment needed?
- Community engagement levels – is there strong volunteer or advocacy group support?
- Legal and environmental constraints – what regulations influence operational models?
- Desired user experience and economic outcomes – what benefits can be maximised under each model?

6.4 Future trends in rail trail management

The evolution of rail trails is influenced by:

- Digital trail monitoring – use of data analytics, trail counters, and mobile apps to track usage.
- Sustainable funding strategies – leveraging philanthropy, sponsorships, and eco-tourism.
- Adaptive governance – blended management models that incorporate shared responsibilities.
- Climate resilience measures – designing trails with erosion control, sustainable surfaces, and biodiversity conservation.

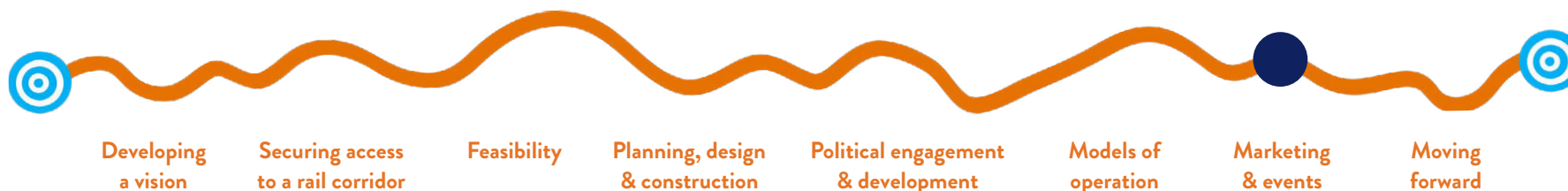
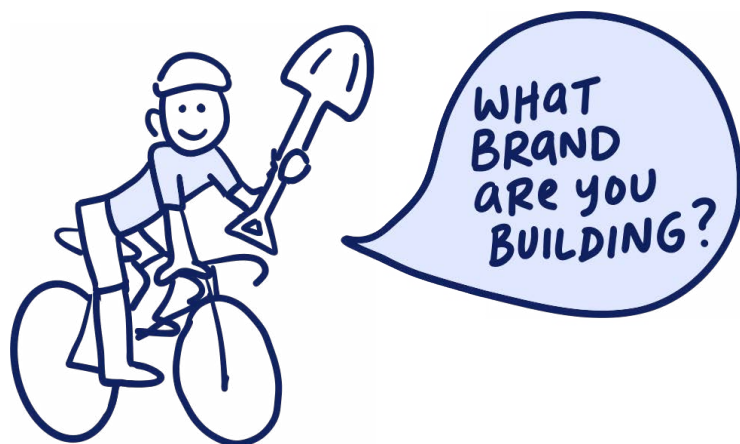


7 Marketing and Events

Marketing and events play a crucial role in the success of a rail trail, shaping its identity, attracting users, and fostering community engagement. A well-designed marketing strategy ensures that the trail is positioned effectively to reach key target audiences, while events serve as a means of generating interest, encouraging participation, and providing economic benefits to surrounding communities. Drawing from best practices in tourism and recreation promotion, rail trail marketing should:

- Emphasise unique environmental and heritage features.
- Engage local businesses to create visitor-friendly packages.
- Leverage social media and digital platforms to broaden reach.

The following steps will help organisations tailor appropriate events and marketing strategies for their rail trail offering.



7.1 Understanding the rail trail offering

The first step in marketing a rail trail is defining its core characteristics. The nature of the trail dictates its appeal, target market, and promotional strategies. Key considerations include:

- Trail surface and quality – Is it a rugged, natural path or a well-maintained gravel or paved trail?
- Amenities and services – Are there towns along the route with facilities such as accommodation, food, and bike hire, or is it a more remote experience?
- Accessibility – How do users get to and from the trail? What transport options exist?
- Trail length and staging – Is the entire rail trail open, or will it be developed in phases?
- Do different sections offer varying experiences?

7.2 Identifying target users

7.2.1 Who will use the rail trail?

Understanding the potential user base helps shape marketing and event strategies. Common user groups include:

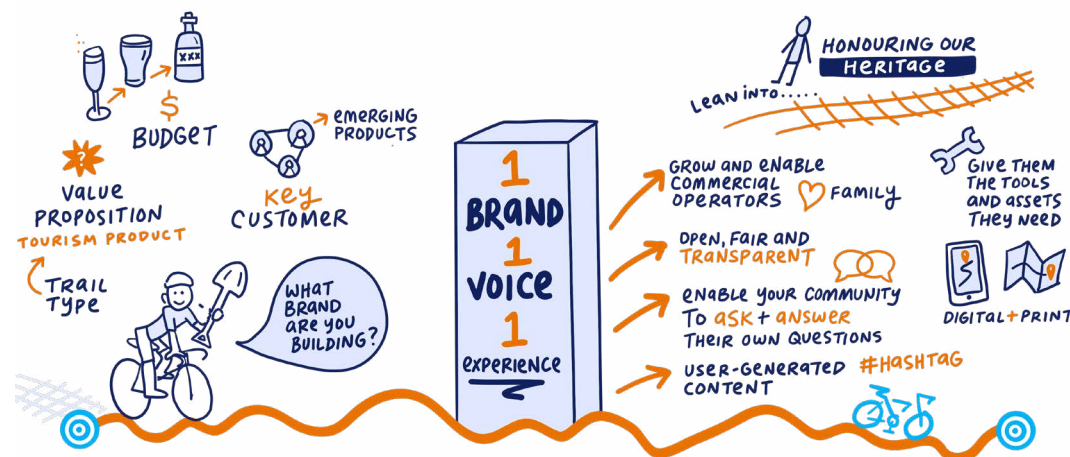
- Grey nomads are retirees and long-term travellers who enjoy scenic and leisurely bike riding and walking experiences, often exploring at a relaxed pace and appreciating the natural beauty and cultural history along the rail trail.
- Organised tour groups include specialist bike riding and adventure tours that incorporate the rail trail into curated itineraries, often with guided experiences focusing on history, nature, or multi-day adventures.

- Long-distance cyclists, such as bikepackers and touring bike riders, seek extended trail experiences that allow for multi-day rides, valuing well-maintained routes, reliable facilities, and the opportunity to explore diverse landscapes.
- School groups participate in educational and outdoor programs that engage young riders through bike riding skills development, environmental education, and hands-on learning in a structured setting.
- Families use the rail trail for recreational bike riding and walking, prioritising accessibility and child-friendly sections, with safe, enjoyable routes where parents and children can ride together and explore parks, picnic areas, and points of interest.
- Clubs and athletes include competitive and fitness-focused riders, such as cycling clubs, horse riders, hikers and endurance athletes, who use the trail for training, group rides, and events, taking advantage of long stretches of uninterrupted bike riding and challenging terrain.

7.2.2 Defining the target market

Once the key user groups are identified, marketing efforts should focus on:

- Their interests and motivations – Are they looking for adventure, relaxation, social experiences, or fitness opportunities?
- Required services and amenities – What facilities enhance their experience?
- Information channels – Where do they seek travel and bike riding-related information?
- Regional appeal – What complementary activities, attractions, and businesses can enhance their visit?

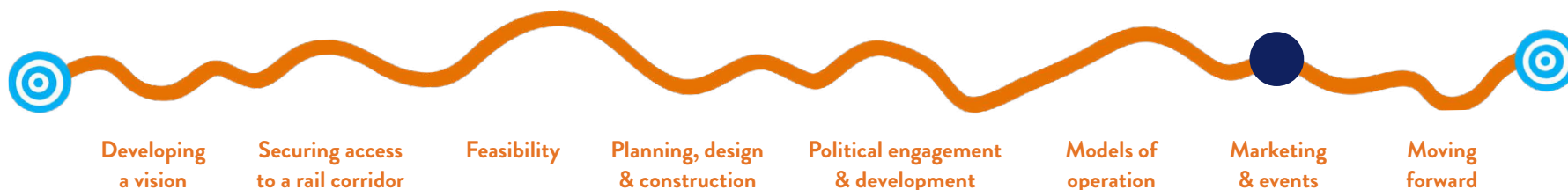


7.3 Developing a marketing campaign

7.3.1 Creating a brand

A strong brand identity helps differentiate the rail trail and build a community of users. Key elements include:

- Establishing and protecting the brand involves creating a clear visual identity, including a distinctive logo and consistent messaging, to differentiate the rail trail and ensure strong recognition.
- Building community engagement encourages user interaction through social media, forums, and local partnerships, fostering a sense of connection and shared ownership among trail users.
- Leveraging user-generated content involves encouraging trail users to share photos, videos, and personal experiences, helping to promote the trail organically and showcase its appeal through authentic stories.



7.3.2 Marketing collateral

Marketing materials should be tailored to specific audiences and communication channels. Considerations include:

- FOMO (fear of missing out) – Generating excitement, even during construction phases.
- High-impact early promotion – Creating buzz before the trail opens.
- Paid editorial content – Engaging media partners for articles and features.
- Follow-up campaigns – Targeting niche user groups with specific messages.
- General marketing materials – Ensuring broad accessibility and appeal.

7.4 Events as a promotional tool

Events provide an opportunity to attract new users, showcase the trail, and generate media attention. They can serve as:

- A mechanism for expanding reach beyond the core market.
- A means of enhancing community involvement and engagement.
- A way to create word-of-mouth promotion through participants' experiences.



Bicycle Queensland works alongside rail trail organisations to support the development of well-utilised and sustainable trails through events that encourage community participation and regional engagement. By helping to activate rail trails with well-planned events, we assist in demonstrating their value as recreational and

economic assets, contributing to stronger advocacy for infrastructure investment and long-term maintenance. Our experience in event coordination allows us to provide practical advice on planning and delivering successful activities that suit a range of users and local contexts. If you are looking to organise an event that supports the growth and use of a rail trail, please reach out and we will discuss how we can assist you.

7.4.1 Types of events

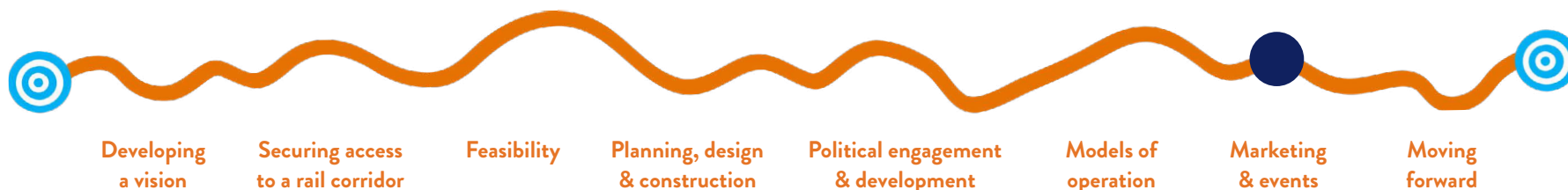
The type of event should align with the trail's characteristics and the needs of local communities. Event options include:

- Competitive events – Races, time trials, and endurance challenges.
- Challenge-focused rides – Non-competitive, long-distance or themed rides.
- Community-based events – Social rides, charity rides, and casual activations.
- Regular activities – Park Runs, social bike riding groups horse riding groups, or guided rides.

7.4.2 Event organisation and promotion

Successful events require clear planning and organisation. Considerations include:

- Promoters – Events may be organised by local councils, private operators, commercial operators, fundraising, charity or community groups.
- Suitability to the trail – Ensuring event logistics align with the trail's capacity and infrastructure.
- Marketing events effectively – Leveraging partnerships, social media, and traditional media channels to maximise participation.



8 Moving forward: Bringing rail trails to life

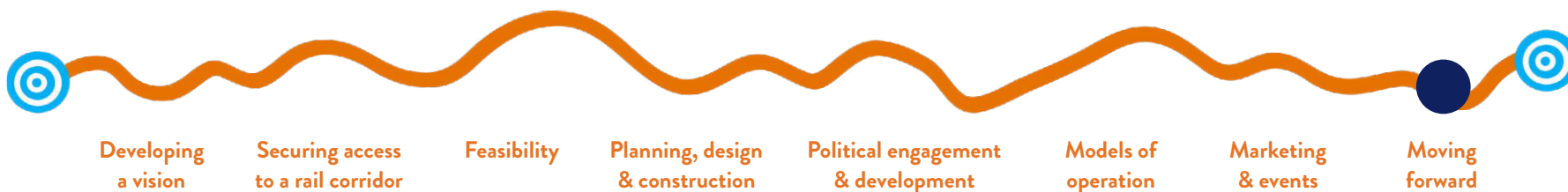
BQ are here to help you with the development of a successful rail trail, a journey that requires clear vision, careful planning, and strong collaboration between communities, government agencies, and advocacy organisations. As this toolkit outlines, key steps include assessing feasibility, securing access, engaging stakeholders, and establishing sustainable funding and management models. Each stage of development plays a crucial role in ensuring that rail trails are not only created but maintained as valuable long-term assets for communities.

When planned and implemented effectively, rail trails become far more than just recreational pathways. They serve as economic drivers, attracting tourism and supporting local businesses, while also fostering social connection and healthier, more active lifestyles. They provide safe and accessible spaces for walking, running, bike riding, horse riding, and community events, helping to build a culture of outdoor activity. Their environmental benefits are equally significant, repurposing disused rail corridors into green transport corridors that promote sustainable travel and habitat conservation.

For communities and organisations looking to develop a rail trail, the next steps will depend on where you are in the process. Some groups may be at the early stages, building advocacy and community support, while others may be working through feasibility studies or securing access to a corridor. Others still may be focused on activating an existing trail through events and tourism initiatives. Wherever you are in this journey, Bicycle Queensland is here to support you.

Here at BQ, our team has extensive experience in rail trail advocacy, funding applications, operational planning, and event activation. We can provide guidance on overcoming challenges, building political and community support, and ensuring that your rail trail reaches its full potential. Whether you need strategic advice, practical resources, or connections with industry experts, we are ready to help.

If you are considering the next steps for your rail trail project, we encourage you to reach out reach out to Bicycle Queensland. By working together, we can help create a stronger, more connected bike riding network, revitalise regional communities, and expand the opportunities for people to experience Queensland's incredible landscapes on two wheels.



Developing
a vision

Securing access
to a rail corridor

Feasibility

Planning, design
& construction

Political engagement
& development

Models of
operation

Marketing
& events

Moving
forward

