



Newsletter December 2019

Our Mission Statement: We wish to put the disused Monaro rail way line to productive use as a recreational trail for cycling, walking and running and in doing so boost tourism, the economy and the wellbeing of the region. At the same time, we wish to preserve the old rail buildings, bridges and the Colinton tunnel that are part of the Monaro

Welcome to Monaro Rail Trail news

In our last newsletter we advised that the Snowy Monaro Regional Council had funded a detailed feasibility study of the MRT proposal. This followed on from the positive report by the initial scoping study crowd funded by MRT supporters in 2018.

This latest draft report from the SMRC funded study has been accepted by council and is now available for public comment and can be read in the document library at [Monaro Rail Trail report](#) .

As with the original scoping study the outcomes of this new report are very positive. Major recommendations are all favourable to a continued effort to further develop the proposal. The key factors that have given the consultants reason to confirm that the trail is feasible are;

- All of the rail corridor is still in public ownership
- It is scenic with plenty of historic rail infrastructure such as bridges, stations and rail yards.
- It is a multi-day ride of 3 to 5 days
- It is accessible to a large potential user markets of Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne
- Towns and villages to service the users are strategically located at the trail head and tail as well as along the corridor
- Users will bring an estimated \$25m per year into the Monaro economy and the build cost is between \$48m (unsealed surface) and \$63m (sealed surface). Trail maintenance costs may be high because of the many bridges and upkeep, the report estimates up to \$800k per year



Based on these findings the consultants have made 15 recommendations. The more significant are



- If a train is to return then a joint train/cycle corridor is not possible
- The Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council should be involved in planning as the trail head starts at Queanbeyan and new Queanbeyan suburbs are being built adjacent to the rail corridor
- Consultation with community groups is needed in early planning. Rail history groups with museums at Cooma and Bombala and an interest in retaining a section of the corridor for tourist train ventures are key stakeholders. Also recommended is consultation with adjoining landholders on one on one basis.
- The report also makes recommendations for a management committee

Our response

The MRT committee is preparing a response to forward to the council. Our position is that the report is well researched and that there are only a few areas that need addressing. One relates to selecting the trail starting point, logic says Queanbeyan but council politics may mean Michelago some 39km south of the Queanbeyan/Canberra centre. Another relates to the nature of the trail surface, how much should be sealed, if any? Construction costs can also be reduced if the major timber bridge at Chakola is bypassed rather than rebuilt at a cost of \$5m, but will this part of the trail suffer from loss of heritage appeal? We will also be exploring how maintenance costs can be reduced by looking for income to offset expenses and by getting community groups to be involved.

The issue of resuming a train service on the corridor is still unresolved. Although the original tender documents for the train feasibility study specified a completion date in June 2019 there has been no public release of the report. Reasons for the delay are not known but it does seem that with passing of time the chances of the public seeing the report become less and less.

What can you do?

The SMRC is calling for public comment on the rail trail feasibility report and comment closes on 22 January 2020. Have your say here [Comment on MRT feasibility study](#) If you represent a business with a interest in the rail trail your comments are particularly welcome. The NSW Government takes particular note of community support when assessing rail trail proposals comment and so we encourage you to comment.

In the mean-time take note of how businesses on NZ cycle trails make a point of welcoming cyclists.



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