



Review of Rails Trail Developments

Victoria and NSW

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This summary outlines the success of Rail Trails in Victoria and NSW. It has been prepared to encourage potential stakeholders in NSW to further progress proposals for new Rail Trails in that State.

Key Victorian Trails

In Australia, Victoria has led the way for 30 plus years in the development of Rail Trails with 48 operational trails listed on the Rail Trails Australia website. Twenty four of these trails are over 10km in length and most are in regional Victoria.

Over that thirty-year period there have been no closures of any trails, and new trails and trail extensions are continuing to be developed.

Table 1 below is a listing of some significant Victorian Rail Trails with some key attributes and some recent usage data.

Trail Name	Location	Length	Trail Manager	Annual usage	Comments
Murray to Mountains	Wangaratta to Bright with off shoot to Beechworth	97 km	Indigo, Wangaratta and Alpine Shire Councils	90,000 Data from Sept 2022	Recent extensions completed to Harrietville and Milawa. Sealed surface
Yarra Valley Stage 1	Lilydale to Warburton and Lilydale to Yering Station	40km 7.5km	Yarra Ranges Council	96,000 Data from Dec 2022	Gravel surface
Yarra Valley Stage 2	Yarra Glen to Tarrawarra		Yarra Ranges Shire Council		\$4.9M gravel trail Federal Govt funding Feb 2024
High Country	Wodonga to Tallangatta and beyond	80 km	Parklands Albury/Wodonga community organisation	30,000 Data from June 2023	Recent new asphalt surface Huon to Ludlow's reserve Plans to extend to Corryong
Great Victorian	Tallarook to Mansfield	134km	Shire Councils of Mansfield, Murrindindi and Mitchell.	36,000 Data from May 2023	Has an associated Art Trail with art works located along the RT. Gravel surface.
Port Fairy	Port Fairy to Warrnambool	38 km	Committee of Management-Moyne Shire Council and Warrnambool City Council	48,000 Data from to June 2023	New gravel surface in 2023.
Gippsland Plains	Traralgon to Stratford	62 km	Gippsland Plains Rail Trail Committee of Management	23,000 Data from June 2024	Gravel surface
Great Southern	Nyora to Port Welshpool	109 km	South Gippsland Shire Council		24km extension due to open June 2024. Gravel surface
O Keefe	Bendigo to Heathcote	50 km	City of Greater Bendigo	24,000 Data from Feb 2023	Gravel surface. Extensions planned to Kilmore
Rushworth to Campaspe		11km	Campaspe Shire Council		\$3M gravel trail Under construction May 2024

Table 1 - Some significant Rail Trails in Victoria.

Key NSW Trails

In contrast to the Victorian scene, NSW has presently only 3 operational Rail Trails, all developed since 2018. Below is a listing of these Trails with some key attributes noted.

Trail Name	Location	Length	Trail Manager	Annual usage	Comments
Tumbarumba to Rosewood	Tumbarumba	21 km	Snowy Valleys Council	14, 000 (data from Feb 2024)	Extensions to Wagga Wagga planned. Sealed surface
Northern Rivers	Stage 1 Murwillumbah to Crabbe's Creek	24 km	Tweed Shire Council	108, 000 visitors in first 6 months	Opened March 2023. Gravel surface
	Stage 2 Casino to Bentley	14 km	Richmond Valley Council	No data yet	Opened March 2024. Gravel surface
	Stage 3 Bentley to Lismore	16.3 km	Lismore City Council	TBA	Opening late 2024. Gravel surface
New England	Stage 1 Armidale to Dumaresque	10km	Armidale Regional Council	TBA	Both Funded and proceeding to construction
	Stage 2 Glenn Innes to Ben Lomond	36km	Glenn Innes Severn Council	TBA	

Table 2 - Some significant Rail Trails in NSW

Some Southern NSW proposals

Table 3 below lists some active proposals for new Trails in Southern NSW

Trail Name	Location	Length	Comments
Monaro	Queanbeyan to Bombala	213 km	\$1m secured for 5km from Bombala Priority to build Queanbeyan to Michelago (49 km)
Molonglo	Bungendore to Captains Flat	36 km	Delayed due to soil contamination issues from the Captains Flat mine
Goulburn	Goulburn to Graywood Siding	25 km	Development Plan and Business Plan completed Funding being sought
Gundagai	Coolac to Tumblong	37 km	2018 Development Plan being updated
Boorowa to Galong	Boorowa	27km	Development Plan Completed Funding being sought
Tumut to Batlow	Batlow	32 km	Snowy Valleys Council is supporting the first proposed section from Batlow to Wybalena and is seeking a lease on rail line

Rail Trails in NSW

Until 2017 the development of Rail Trails in NSW was virtually impossible, as it needed an Act of Parliament to close each railway line. That requirement has now been overcome. In 2018-9 two Pilot projects were approved and funded.

- Tumbarumba to Rosewood – opened in 2020
- Northern Rivers – first stage opened in April 2023

Data from Tumbarumba to Rosewood Rail Trail

This was the first pilot project funded by NSW government. It is a 21km long bitumen surfaced trail from Tumbarumba to Rosewood in southern NSW. It opened in April 2020 and due to Covid 19 restrictions through 2020 and 2021, it had a gala opening 12 months later in April 2021. Electronic counters have been installed at both ends of the Trail to count users. In the 12 months to February 2024 there have been over 14 000 individual users.

The table below is an estimate of the economic impact of this RT on the local region over the 12 months to Feb 2024.

Type of user	Annual use of Tumba RT	Ave daily spend \$	Total economic benefit
Locals (20%)	2800	20	\$56 000
Day Trippers (15%)	2100	50	\$105,000
Overnight stays (65%) (Ave 2 nights)	9100	170 x 2 nights	\$3,094,000
Total	14 000		\$3 255 000

Since the Tumbarumba to Rosewood RT opened, new businesses have opened in Tumbarumba and are thriving.

Both Rosewood & Tumbarumba continue to be busy with a regular influx of visitors. Many people have come back several times. The Rosewood café has been refurbished to become Rosewood Rail Trail Cafe with bike hire and is enjoying brisk trading. A new Ride Tumba bike shop has opened and a local nursery (now Bikes & Blooms) is very busy with e-bike hire. Several new Airbnb type accommodation options have opened. All other businesses especially cafes, pubs and accommodation, have increased their trade.

Northern Rivers Rail Trail

- 4 local council areas
- Tweed section - Opened March 2023
- The 24km stage connects Murwillumbah with the villages of Stokers Siding, Burringbar, Mooball and Crabbes Creek.

- The section between Casino and Bentley opened in March 2024 and South Lismore to Bentley will open in late 2024
- The final stage would link Lismore to Eltham, Bangalow, Byron Bay, Mullumbimby and Yelgun.
- Byron Council has approved this and development studies are under way.

Tweed Section – the first 6 months of use



What do the numbers mean?

- 108 000 visitors in first 6 months
- Close to Gold Coast
- Close to Brisbane
- Lots of Day Trippers
- But many overnigheters
- \$10m into local economy in 6 months

Economic Benefits of Rail Trails

The benefits of Rail Trails to their local communities have been well documented, especially in Victoria, which has a large number of popular trails. Benefits extend across several key areas including:

- Economic
 - Tourism
 - Business
 - Regional and Local Residents

- Employment
- Health
 - For locals – safe outdoor exercise, walking, bike riding, horses.
- Environment
 - Access for landcare, fire control and conservation works
 - Nature enhancement and appreciation

The economic benefits of Rail Trails largely derive from tourists who travel to a region specifically to use the Rail Trail. There have been several studies that have identified the spending patterns of these tourists. A study of some 200 cycle tourists in the ACT (Puniard, 2009) identified the average daily spend per person as in the table below.

Item	Amount
Accommodation	\$65
Food and Beverage	\$50
Fuel and Transport	\$27
Bike related	\$15
Souvenirs	\$9
Other	\$5
Total	\$171

Studies in other regions have indicated higher numbers especially where there is a strong food and wine culture.