



## NEW ENGLAND RAIL TRAIL COMMUNITY INFORMATION

The Great Northern Rail Line between Armidale and the Qld border has not operated for over 30 years. The existing 103km rail corridor is wasted infrastructure which is not contributing to the economies or the communities from Armidale to Glen Innes.

To repurpose this wasted asset and generate economic growth through increased tourism, Armidale Regional and Glen Innes Severn Councils are proposing to build a 103km rail trail between Armidale and Glen Innes at a cost of \$19.8M.

### FAST FACTS – ARMIDALE TO GLEN INNES

ARMIDALE TO GLEN INNES		KEY BENEFITS
LENGTH	103KM	The project satisfies the criteria and objectives of the Regional Growth Fund regarding economic growth, business attraction, job growth and diversifying regional economies.
COST	\$19.8 MILLION	
USAGE	Run, Ride, Hike, Explore	
NEW OVERNIGHT VISITORS	14,000 annually	When the health benefits are included in the benefit-cost analysis, and assuming only 25% of visitors to the trail are from outside NSW, the <b>project produces a BCR of 6.04.</b>
NEW DAY VISITORS	15,000 annually	
NEW VISITOR SPEND	>\$5.8 MILLION annually	
BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES	Accommodation, cafes, bike hire & repair, tour guides etc	
NEW LOCAL JOBS	26 during construction	
LOCAL USAGE	37,000 annually	
BENEFIT : COST RATIO	6.04	
WIDTH	2.5 METERS	The BCR of 6.04 includes the health benefits of cycling & walking, but only the expenditure of the visitors from outside NSW (assumed at 25%)
NPV	\$114.6 MILLION	Most of these benefits are health benefits (\$11.7M per annum), with additional visitor expenditure contributing \$5.8M per annum.

**Net present value (NPV)** is a method used to determine the current value of all future cash flows generated by a project, including the initial capital investment. It is widely used in capital budgeting to establish which projects are likely to turn the greatest profit.



GLEN INNES TO BEN LOMOND  
FUNDING THROUGH THE BUSHFIRE  
LOCAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY FUND  
PROVIDED BY NSW GOVERNMENT  
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## FAST FACTS – GLEN INNES TO BEN LOMOND

GLEN INNES TO BEN LOMOND (Stage 1)		KEY BENEFITS
LENGTH	35.5KM	<p>The project satisfies the criteria and objectives of the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund regarding economic growth, business attraction, job growth and diversifying regional economies.</p> <p>When the health benefits are included in the benefit-cost analysis, and assuming only 25% of visitors to the trail are from outside NSW, the <b>project produces a BCR of 1.42.</b></p>
COST	\$8.7 MILLION	
USAGE	Run, Ride, Hike, Explore	
NEW OVERNIGHT VISITORS	4,000 annually	
NEW DAY VISITORS	4,500 annually	
NEW VISITOR SPEND	>\$1.6 MILLION annually	
BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES	Accommodation, cafes, bike hire & repair, tour guides etc	
NEW LOCAL JOBS	8 during construction	
LOCAL USAGE	10,000 annually	
BENEFIT : COST RATIO	1.42	
ANNUAL MAINTENANCE COSTS	\$54,000	
WIDTH	2.5 METERS	
NPV	\$12 MILLION	

## KEY BENEFITS TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- ✚ Rail trails are safe off-road pathways for the whole family to ride bikes, run, walk and generally enjoy the outdoors improving 'liveability' for locals and contribute to attracting new visitors and residents.
- ✚ They promote active living transport routes for tourists and locals alike, encouraging nature and environmental appreciation and awareness.
- ✚ Rail Trails also preserve the rail corridor for all other future uses.
- ✚ Rail trails ensure the preservation of rail heritage assets including stations, sidings, bridges, tunnels, cuttings and signalling infrastructure.
- ✚ They attract high value visitors who will stay and spend tourist dollars with local businesses, thereby generating local jobs bringing significant economic and community benefits to regional areas.
- ✚ Cycling is now the 4<sup>th</sup> most popular physical activity for adult Australians



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- ✚ The Guyra Tourist Trike has been included in the Rail Trail Plan
- ✚ The rail trail will provide access to lost history and stories and the rail heritage assets will be preserved. Promoting the Aboriginal stories, flora, and fauna along the trail with tribal borders recognised.
- ✚ There are several small villages along the intended route who no longer have any viable retail businesses – the addition of rail trail visitors may reverse this situation
- ✚ All towns along the route from Armidale to Glen Innes are heavily reliant on agriculture, these economies would benefit from economic diversification.
- ✚ The quality of the railway stations is outstanding and provide a good opportunity for the development of trail-related businesses – café's, bike hire etc.
- ✚ Landholders along the trail can develop another income by offering a service or product such as Farm gate sales, accommodation (farm stays, cabins, B&B's), camping, meals, drinks, farm tours, cultural and experience tours etc.

## QUESTION & ANSWER

**ARC** = ARMIDALE REGIONAL COUNCIL **GISC** = GLEN INNES SEVERN COUNCIL

### CAN PASSENGER AND FREIGHT TRAINS BE RETURNED TO THE CORRIDOR?

- ✚ The NSW Government has no plans to return trains to this corridor. It is simply economically unfeasible.
- ✚ ARC conducted a study on the costs of refurbishing the line which demonstrated capital costs of \$2.5M per kilometre and annual maintenance costs of \$25,000 per kilometre. In contrast, the capital cost of the rail trail is \$192,000 per km and the annual maintenance cost \$1,500 per km.
- ✚ The limited number of carriages and passengers that travel by train to Armidale indicates the demand is simply not there to justify extending the line to Glen Innes and beyond.



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The Armidale and Glen Innes region produces minimal bulk freight that could move by train (e.g., grains, coal, cotton). Most agricultural production is livestock which can no longer be catered for by rail and is far more efficiently moved by road transport.

- ✚ Similarly, the Tomato Exchange in Guyra must move its highly perishable product by truck to specific distribution and retail locations.
- ✚ Rail is best suited to containerised freight, coal and grains which is bound directly for export. The Armidale/Glen Innes region produces virtually none of that type of freight.

### **WILL THE RAIL TRAIL BE A HUGE FINANCIAL BURDEN ON RATEPAYERS?**

- ✚ A detailed study of on-going maintenance costs estimates - the annual maintenance cost of the rail trail will be \$154,700 to be shared across Armidale Regional and Glen Innes Severn Councils. This compares to the following annual maintenance costs for other council facilities:
  - ✚ Sporting grounds \$5.2M (ARC);
  - ✚ Parks and gardens \$2.9M (ARC);
  - ✚ Libraries \$2.3M (ARC);
  - ✚ Swimming pool \$579,000 (GISC);
  - ✚ Library \$511,000 (GISC).
- ✚ The construction of the rail trail is unlikely to 'blow-out' capital costs given it's not a complex build.

### **WHY NOT SET UP A CYCLE TRAIL BESIDE THE CURRENT RAIL FORMATION?**

- ✚ The benefit from a rail trail comes from utilising the smooth grades offered by the rail formation.
- ✚ The alternative of setting up a separate cycle trail would mean the corridor is further impacted for landholder's ease of access,
- ✚ the cost of creation would be much higher due to a new formation having to be created including drainage.



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- ✦ The resultant trail would have variable steep short grades as the cut and fill rail formation is not available.
- ✦ The side-by-side trail would not appeal to most riders.
- ✦ The rail trail will not be open to horse riding in the first instance as this would potentially trigger biosecurity issues and additional maintenance costs.

### **IS THERE A BIOSECURITY RISK?**

- ✦ At the outset there was a concern raised by farmers regarding the Otago Central Rail Trail in NZ. That trail has operated for almost a decade without any biosecurity incidents.
- ✦ A biosecurity plan has been developed for the New England Rail Trail, with input from Local Land Services. The very nature of the trail means that biosecurity hazards from users are minimal as it would be entirely on a Crown Lands corridor.
- ✦ The rail corridor is on average 30 metres wide and the rail trail will be 6m wide, with a 2.5m pavement width and fenced along its entirety.
- ✦ The only time users would leave the trail is to visit public facilities along the way – food, accommodation, and other tourist services.
- ✦ Users do not enter private farmland.
- ✦ The 2.5m wide trail is enclosed with fencing producing a 6m corridor. The excess areas can be negotiated to be used by landholders for grazing stock. Grazier's access rights and lease arrangements are maintained.
- ✦ Crossings are provided as needed for livestock and farm vehicles to cross the trail where land is held on both sides of the rail trail.



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## IS IT ONLY LYCRA-CLAD CYCLISTS WHO WILL USE THE RAIL TRAIL?

- ✚ Rail trails are very rarely utilised by serious cyclists. They are less suited to competition training/racing.
- ✚ They are used by tourists including family groups who want a safe and easy place to ride and are seeking a more scenic and energetic way of travelling through a region rather than by road transport.
- ✚ Typical users are highly educated, high income earners who will spend more than the average tourist in towns along the route.

## CAN'T THE CORRIDOR BE USED FOR A HERITAGE/TOURIST TRAIN?

- ✚ This would involve a much larger capital cost as the tracks would have to be re-laid.
- ✚ The business case or such an activity has never been presented. Carriages scheduled to be refurbished for this purpose at Armidale Railway Station have sat idle for over (2 decades), indicating the proposal does not appear to have merit.
- ✚ The more feasible option for a heritage rail experience is to run it south from Armidale to Werris Creek on a line that is already operational and does not require \$258M to re-build.

## WILL THE RAIL TRAIL DESTROY IMPORTANT RAIL HERITAGE?

- ✚ Quite the opposite is true.
- ✚ The detailed capital costing for the Armidale to Glen Innes rail trail has documented every single rail artifact along the entire 103km route and has budgeted for its restoration and preservation.
- ✚ Historical rail structures and signs are a critical part of the rail trail experience for users.
- ✚ There are 5 bridges along the Armidale to Ben Lomond route. Most of these are in the Glen Innes LGA. The bridges will be retained (with upgrades) or replaced with prefabricated bridges.



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## WILL THE RAIL CORRIDOR CLOSE FOR FUTURE TRAINS AND BE OPEN TO PRIVATE SALE?

- ✚ An Act of Parliament will need to occur for the re-purpose of the disused rail corridor.
- ✚ The corridor is likely to stay in the ownership of Transport for NSW and the rail trail section leased to Council. These options are being considered by State Government who will advise of the preferred ownership/governance model.
- ✚ Either way the corridor remains state owned and therefore cannot be sold to private investors or lost as a public asset.
- ✚ The creation of a rail trail does not prevent opening of a rail line at any time in the future.
- ✚ The rail trail will once again utilise this corridor to the general public as a continuous corridor that is preserved and valued.

## ACCESS TO DETAILED DOCUMENTS

The following documents are available on the Glen Innes Severn and Armidale Regional Council Websites:

- ✚ New England Rail Trail Biosecurity Risk Assessment and Biosecurity Implementation Plan
- ✚ Business Case New England Rail Trail
- ✚ Rail Trail Plan

## STAY CONNECTED TO THE CONVERSATION

GLEN INNES SEVERN COUNCIL:

<https://www.gisc.nsw.gov.au/economic-development/key-economic-development-projects>

OFFICIAL NEW ENGLAND RAIL TRAIL FACEBOOK PAGE:

<https://www.facebook.com/newenglandrailtrailnsw>



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## COMPLETE THE ONLINE SURVEY

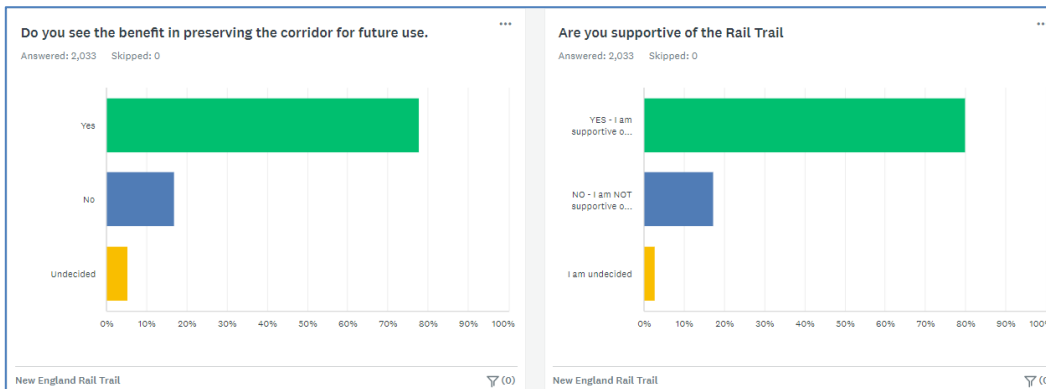
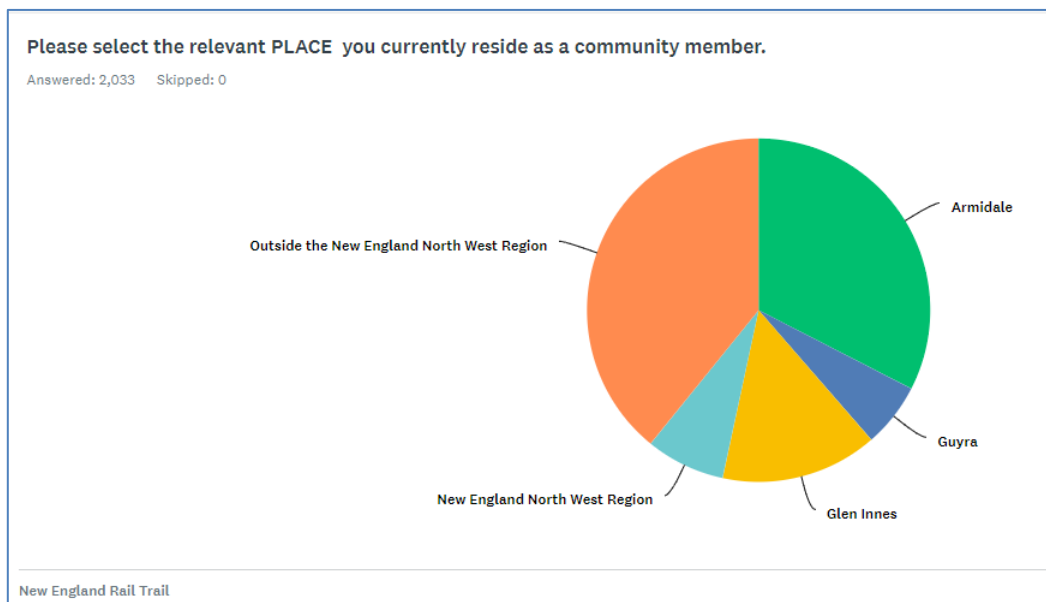
There is an online survey that is available to the community to register their support for the rail trail. The survey can be accessed via the below link or QR code.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5FFXLTW>



## SURVEY RESULTS TO 30.11.2021

2,033 respondents



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