Great Ocean Road

Regional Trail Strategy 2024-2034

GREAT OCEAN ROAD
COAST & PARKS AUTHORITY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge and respect the separate and distinct Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners of the Great Ocean Road's land, waters, seas and skies and acknowledge their cultural knowledge that has led to sustainable practices and has cared for Country over tens of thousands of years. We honour Elders past and present and express gratitude for their sharing of wisdom that has ensured the continuation of Culture and Traditional practices. We are committed to genuinely partner and meaningfully build relationships that reflect self-determination and enable us to work together with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices, and together deliver on their broader assertions in the 21st century and beyond.

COVER IMAGE CREDIT

Visit Victoria

The Great Ocean Road Regional Trail Strategy was prepared by TRC Tourism for Great Ocean Road Coast & Parks Authority, in consultation and collaboration with the following rights holders and agencies.

TRAIL DEFINITION

For this Strategy, the term 'trails' encompasses both single use trails (walking, hiking, cycling and mountain biking) and shared use (any combination of walking, hiking, cycling, water-based, horse riding and mountain biking). Several of the region's trails are multiple purpose where horse riders share the trails with walkers and, in some cases, cyclists. The terms 'tracks' and 'trails' are used interchangeably recognising that they might hold different meanings for different individuals.

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Executive Summary

The Great Ocean Road region has long been recognised as an exceptional destination for nature-based tourism, with its trails being a major attraction for visitors and an asset for residents. These trails offer opportunities for walking and cycling, providing access to areas of outstanding natural beauty, cultural landscapes and unique recreational experiences. They promote an active, outdoor lifestyle that enhances physical and spiritual well-being, offering spaces for families and friends to connect. The trails contribute significantly to residents' quality of life and the region's economic prosperity by generating income and jobs that sustain vibrant communities year-round.

Maximising the potential of the region's diverse and accessible landscapes, coupled with its extensive network of trails, provide an ideal platform from which to build stronger and more sustainable trails destination. With sufficient investment to improve the quality of trail experiences and associated products and services, the region has an opportunity to attract visitors, grow regional economies and create jobs, while also delivering social, environmental and cultural benefits for local communities.

The Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Strategy 2024-2034 provides a framework for co-ordinated planning, management and promotion of trails in the region. The Strategy applies to trails in the area from Torquay in the east to Port Fairy in the west, bound by the coast to the south and Colac and Camperdown to the north. The trails included in this Strategy are:

- Anglesea Mountain Bike Trail Network (including the Anglesea Bike Park)
- Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail
- Forrest Mountain Bike Network
- Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail
- Great Ocean Walk
- Otway Walks & Waterfalls
- Old Beechy Rail Trail
- Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail
- Otway Hinterland Horse Trail
- Surf Coast Walk
- Twelve Apostles Trail
- Warrnambool Foreshore Promenade.

Accompanying this Strategy are the Great Ocean Road Regional Trail Guidelines, offering guidance on trail planning, design, and management for stakeholders. Together the Strategy and Guidelines aim to support the many organisations and interests involved in the trail network. It presents a shared vision along with the principles, goals and actions required to achieve this vision over the next 10 years.

Our Vision

Our vision is for the region to be an outstanding trails destination renowned for its diverse, high-quality trail experiences that celebrate our unique natural and cultural landscapes, strengthen the economy and enhance community health and well-being.

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Goals

To achieve our vision, this Strategy contains six goals. Each goal has a set of priority actions.

Integrated Governance, Planning, and Management

We will adopt a strategic, coordinated approach to trail planning, management, and maintenance through stakeholder collaboration, prioritising investment and resource allocation.

Sustainable Funding Model & Investment Framework

We will source sustainable funding for trail development, maintenance, and management while providing guidance to organisations seeking investment.

Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Partnerships

We will partner with the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples to achieve joint objectives in land management and trail network development.

High Quality and Sustainable Trails

We will provide outstanding trail experiences that will protect the region's natural and cultural landscapes.

Information and Marketing

We will offer consistent, reliable trail information to highlight experiences and enable confident exploration.

Accessible and Inclusive Trails

We will ensure trails are inclusive, accessible, and support the needs of visitors and communities.

Prepared by the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (the Authority) in consultation with rightsholders, land managers and key stakeholders, the Authority will lead the implementation of the Strategy in collaboration with all involved agencies.

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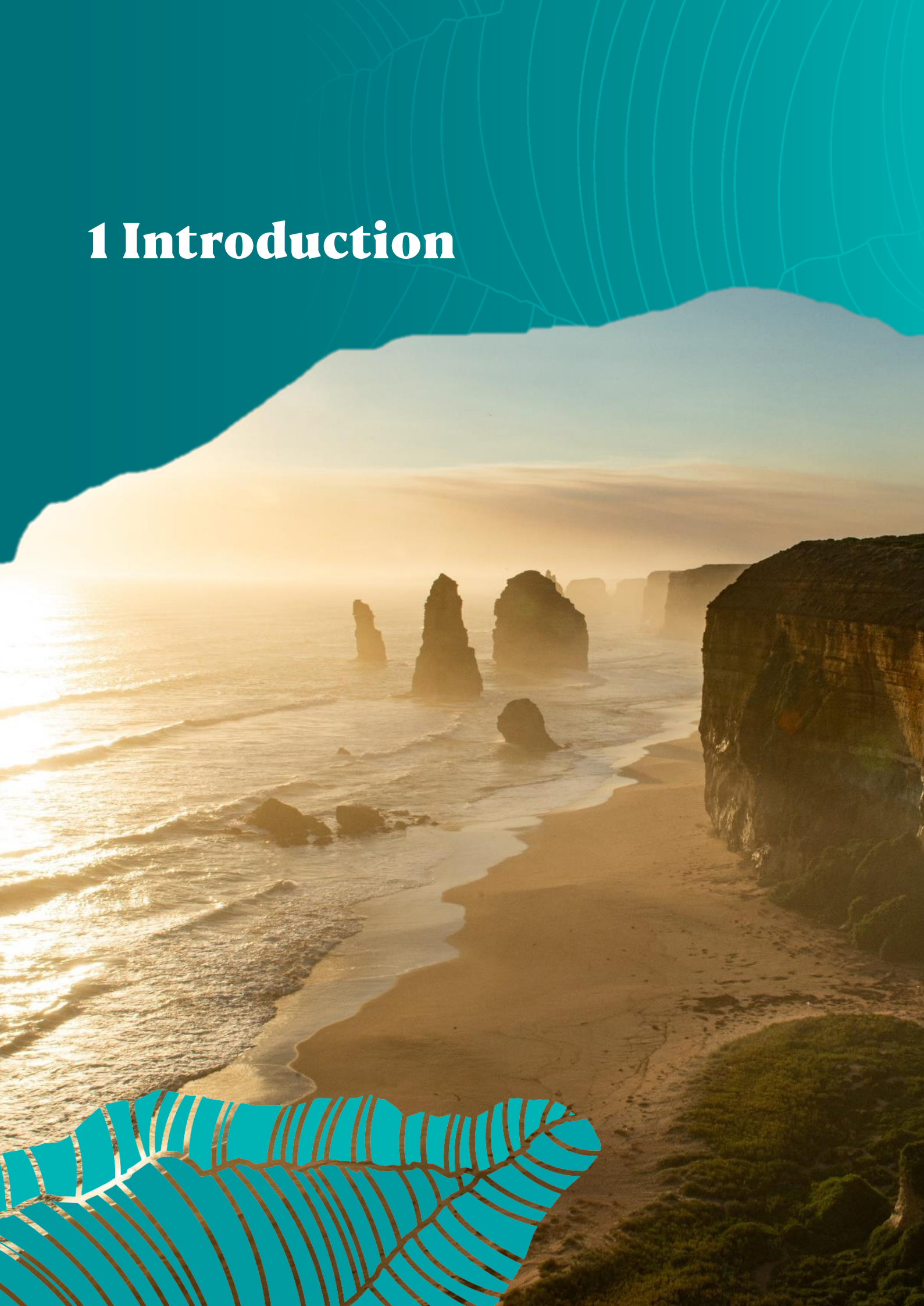
1 Introduction



The Great Ocean Road region's rich and varied landscape is crisscrossed by hundreds of kilometres of trails. Located on the lands of the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples, it is home to some of Australia's finest coastline, forests, national parks and marine sanctuaries. It boasts a network of trails that enable visitors and residents to experience these inspiring landscapes.

For this Strategy, the region is defined as the area from Torquay in the east to Port Fairy in the west, bound by the coast to the south and Colac and Camperdown to the north. This area encompasses those critical trails that contribute to the Great Ocean Road trail network.

The region has long been recognised as an exceptional destination for nature-based tourism. The region's trails are a major attraction for visitors and an asset for residents, offering opportunities for walking and cycling, and providing access to areas of outstanding natural beauty, cultural landmarks, and unique recreational experiences.

The trails offer residents and visitors opportunities to engage in an active, outdoor lifestyle that promotes physical and spiritual wellbeing. They provide spaces for families and friends to be active together and to connect, enhancing the vibrancy and appeal of the region's communities. These trails contribute to the quality of life for residents and the economic prosperity of the region.

Trails also strengthen the visitor economy, generating income and jobs that sustain our vibrant communities year-round. For more detailed information on the regional context and significance of the region's trails, please refer to Appendix A.

The trails in the region are planned and managed by a combination of state and local government entities, and, in some cases, in partnership with the local community management committees. Considerable resources have been invested in strengthening the trail network in recent years.

1.1 THE REGIONAL STRATEGY

The Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Strategy (the Strategy) provides a framework to guide state and local government agencies in the development of trails in the region. It presents a shared vision along with the principles, goals and actions required to achieve this vision over the next 10 years. The Strategy aims to build on previous investments to establish the Great Ocean Road Region as one of Australia's premier trail destinations.

The Strategy sets the strategic direction for planning, developing, maintaining, managing, marketing, and utilising an integrated network of trails in the region over the next decade. Accompanying this Strategy are the Great Ocean Road Regional Trail Guidelines, which offer guidance on trail planning, design, and management for all stakeholders involved in trails across the region.

Both the Strategy and the Guidelines are designed to unify the diverse range of organisations and interests working independently on individual trails, bringing them together under a shared vision to develop and manage an outstanding network of trails across the region.

This Strategy has been prepared by the Authority in consultation with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, the local government areas of Colac Otway Shire, Corangamite Shire, Moyne Shire, Surf Coast Shire and Warrnambool City, State Government Departments and Agencies managing the region's land (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and Parks Victoria), and Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism.

As the lead agency, the Authority will work in consultation and collaboration with all involved agencies to realise the Strategy's vision and goals.

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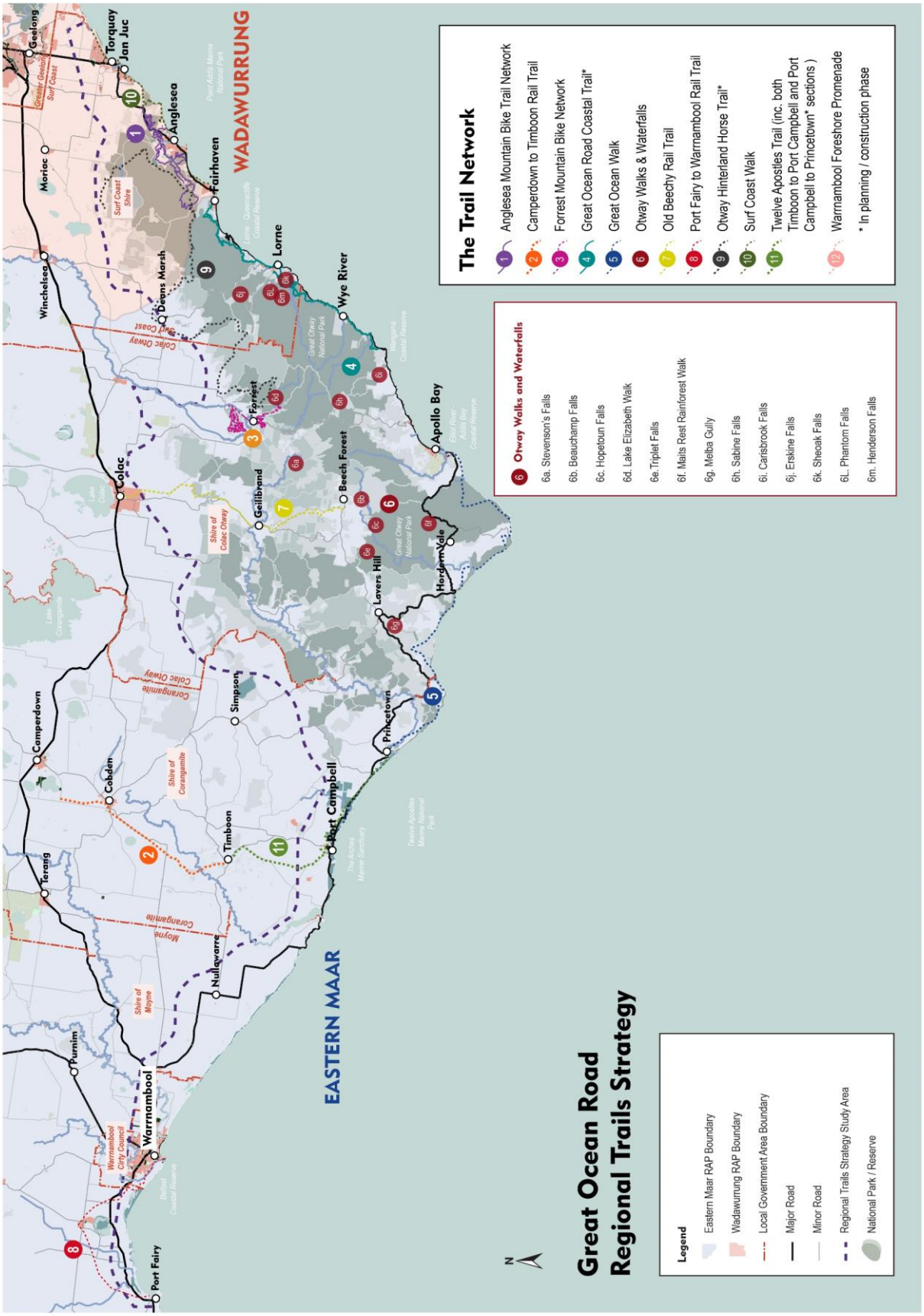
Figure 1 Great Ocean Road Regional Trail Strategy – Area of Focus



Source: TRC Tourism/Brave and Curious. 2024

Custodians of the lands and waters

The Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples are the custodians of the lands and waters encompassed by the Great Ocean Road region and have been for millennia.

Victoria's most popular destination outside of Melbourne

In 2022:

- Total Visitors: 6.2 million.
- Total Day Visitors: 3.7 million.
- Most visitors are from Victoria.

In 2033:

- Total Visitors: 9 million visitors (forecast).

121,640 residents*

Most residents live in Surf Coast Shire and Warrnambool City.

Outstanding Natural and Cultural Landscapes

2 national parks, 170,000 ha of Crown Land, 2 marine parks and 5 marine sanctuaries.

Multiple trails that showcase the region

Short Walks

- Otway Walks & Waterfalls.

Mountain Bike Trails

- Forrest Mountain Bike Network.
- Anglesea Mountain Bike Trail Network (including the Anglesea Bike Park).

Shared Use Trails

- Surf Coast Walk.
- Twelve Apostles Trail.
- Warrnambool Foreshore Promenade.

Rail and Horse Trails

- Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail.
- Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail.
- Old Beechy Rail Trail.
- Otway Hinterland Horse Trail (proposed).

Long Distance Walks

- Great Ocean Walk.
- Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail (proposed).

*http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/victorias-regions/Barwon

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2 The Existing Trail Network

2.1 THE EXISTING TRAIL NETWORK

The Great Ocean Road Region possesses a unique advantage. Our communities are surrounded by extensive public lands containing a network of exceptional trails that are used, valued and cared for by government agencies and local communities.

Across the region, there is growing recognition that the existing trail network present significant opportunities for enhancing the wellbeing of residents and the prosperity of communities.

Trails are integral to the landscape, fostering meaningful connections between people and nature. The region's extensive trail network currently offers:

- A good geographical spread of trails and connections to townships along the Great Ocean Road and its national parks.
- Access to a range of landscape settings, from urban to natural environments and from the coast through to the hinterland.
- A variety of trail types, including walking trails and multi-use trails for walking, cycling and horse riding.

Short Walks

The region has many high-quality short walks. Some occur in 'clusters', including walks in the Great Otway National Park. The walks traverse a range of high-quality natural areas.

Mountain Bike Trails

The region boasts several quality mountain bike trail networks at Forrest and Anglesea. These are generally managed in partnership between the land managers and local clubs affiliated with AusCycling.

Long Distance Walking Trails

The region has several significant long-distance walks, including the Surf Coast Walk and the Great Ocean Walk and the planned Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail.

Shared Use Trails

Several of the region's trails are multiple purpose with walkers and cyclists sharing the trail. This includes the recently constructed Twelve Apostles Trail (stage one).

Rail Trails

Rail trails are a feature of the region and include the Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail, Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail and the Old Beechy Rail Trail.

2.2 TRAILS INCLUDED IN THIS STRATEGY

The trails included in this Strategy are presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3 and include:

- Anglesea Mountain Bike Trail Network (including the Anglesea Bike Park)*
- Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail
- Forrest Mountain Bike Network
- Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail*
- Great Ocean Walk
- Otway Walks & Waterfalls
- Old Beechy Rail Trail
- Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail
- Otway Hinterland Horse Trail*
- Surf Coast Walk
- Twelve Apostles Trail**
- Warrnambool Foreshore Promenade.

**In planning/construction phase*

***includes the Twelve Apostles Trail Stage 2 (Port Campbell to Princetown via Twelve Apostles Visitor Centre).*

For a comprehensive overview and assessment of the existing trail network and an assessment of each individual trail including recommended actions, please refer to Appendix B.

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2.3 TRAIL MANAGEMENT

More than 14 public entities are responsible for trail development, infrastructure delivery, asset maintenance, emergency management, destination promotion, and the management of biocultural landscapes across the region. Appendix B provides a summary of the land managers responsible for each trail.

Each entity must comply with the State's legislative and policy framework, as well as strategic planning guidelines. Appendix A provides a summary of the legislation, plans, and strategies relevant to the development of trails across the region.

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority

The Authority is an independent statutory authority established on 1 December 2020 to enhance the protection and management of Victoria's iconic Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

In partnership with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation and the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, the Authority's purpose is to care for, protect, and manage the coast and parks along the Great Ocean Road, ensuring they can be enjoyed by all, now and for generations to come. The Authority's ambition is for the Great Ocean Road to thrive environmentally, economically, socially, and culturally as an integrated, living entity.

Before the Authority's establishment, thirty organisations held responsibilities along the Great Ocean Road. This fragmented management model created barriers to coordinated future planning and delivery, a key challenge identified by stakeholders.

The role of the Authority is to streamline the fragmented and conflicting management of public land within the Great Ocean Road coast and parks, and to deliver on a shared vision for the region's future.

This includes:

- Guiding sustainable tourism, supporting local employment, and enhancing the visitor experience
- Strengthening the protection of land and seascapes from the impacts of climate change
- Improving economic development to create a prosperous and liveable region.

Management responsibility for an estimated 150,000 hectares of parks and public land within the Great Ocean Road Region is being progressively transferred to the Authority, with completion expected by 1 November 2025. This area of land, referred to in this Strategy as the Authority's service area, may include some of the trails covered by this Strategy. Appendix B lists the respective land managers for each trail and identifies those that might be transferred to the Authority.

The transfer of land will not alter the existing management tenure or conservation objectives of the land under the Authority's control. The land management objectives and obligations are defined by the reservation purpose under the Crown (Land) Reserves Act and other statutory requirements, such as land management plans approved by the Minister for Environment and State policies. These objectives and obligations will remain unchanged.

The Authority is required to reinvest all revenue generated from the land it manages back into the protection and enhancement of the Great Ocean Road coast and parks, ensuring their enjoyment and appreciation by current and future generations. This includes improvements in environmental education, conservation, visitor services, and the management and maintenance of the trail network.

Other Agencies

Several trails are located outside of the Authority's service area (Figure 1). These trails are managed by stakeholders involved in the development of this Strategy, including Parks Victoria, DEECA, and the five local governments. Some stakeholders, such as Parks Victoria, have documents (standards, guidelines, etc.)

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that guide the management of their trail networks. The vision, principles, and actions identified in this Strategy, along with the Great Ocean Road Regional Trail Guidelines, are designed to align with each agency's guidelines and standards. Together, these documents will provide trail managers, organisations, and other interest groups with readily available, current, and relevant guidance for trail development and management.

Committees of Management and Clubs

Several Committees of Management have been established to manage assets on behalf of the relevant local Council, including assets owned by the Council or Crown Land for which the Council is the Committee of Management. These committees consist of volunteers who contribute significantly to trail management, construction, and use. Examples of volunteer groups involved in the trail network include the Friends of Old Beechy Rail Trail and the Surf Coast Mountain Bike Club.

The Eastern Maar and the Wadawurrung Peoples

There are two recognised Registered Aboriginal Parties on the region this Strategy encompasses, the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC) and the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC). Refer to figures 2 and 3.

The Eastern Maar are the Traditional Owners of south-western Victoria. Through their Country Plan, the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation asserts to be the public land manager for trails on their country.

The Wadawurrung People are the Traditional Owners of the land and waters that run from the Great Dividing Range in the north to the coast in the south, from Werribee River in the east to along the Surf Coast.

The intended aim is to ensure that First Nations people and their representative bodies are engaged in all elements of trail management and will have co-design and co-management principles applied to their partnership with land managers.

Trail Related Businesses

Business groups with an interest in trails and trail management extend throughout the region. These groups include bike servicing, repair and rental businesses, event management and ownership groups, accommodation providers, transport services, and food businesses linked to trail use. Many of these businesses are connected to the trail network through clubs, chambers of commerce, and peak bodies representing industry and business regionally.

The Authority is committed to working in consultation, collaboration, and partnership with all agencies involved in the development of this Strategy to realise the vision.

This Strategy is intended to serve as the hub of a wheel, connecting the broad range of organisations and initiatives that have historically worked independently. By drawing them together under a shared vision, the Strategy aims to establish the region as an outstanding trails destination.

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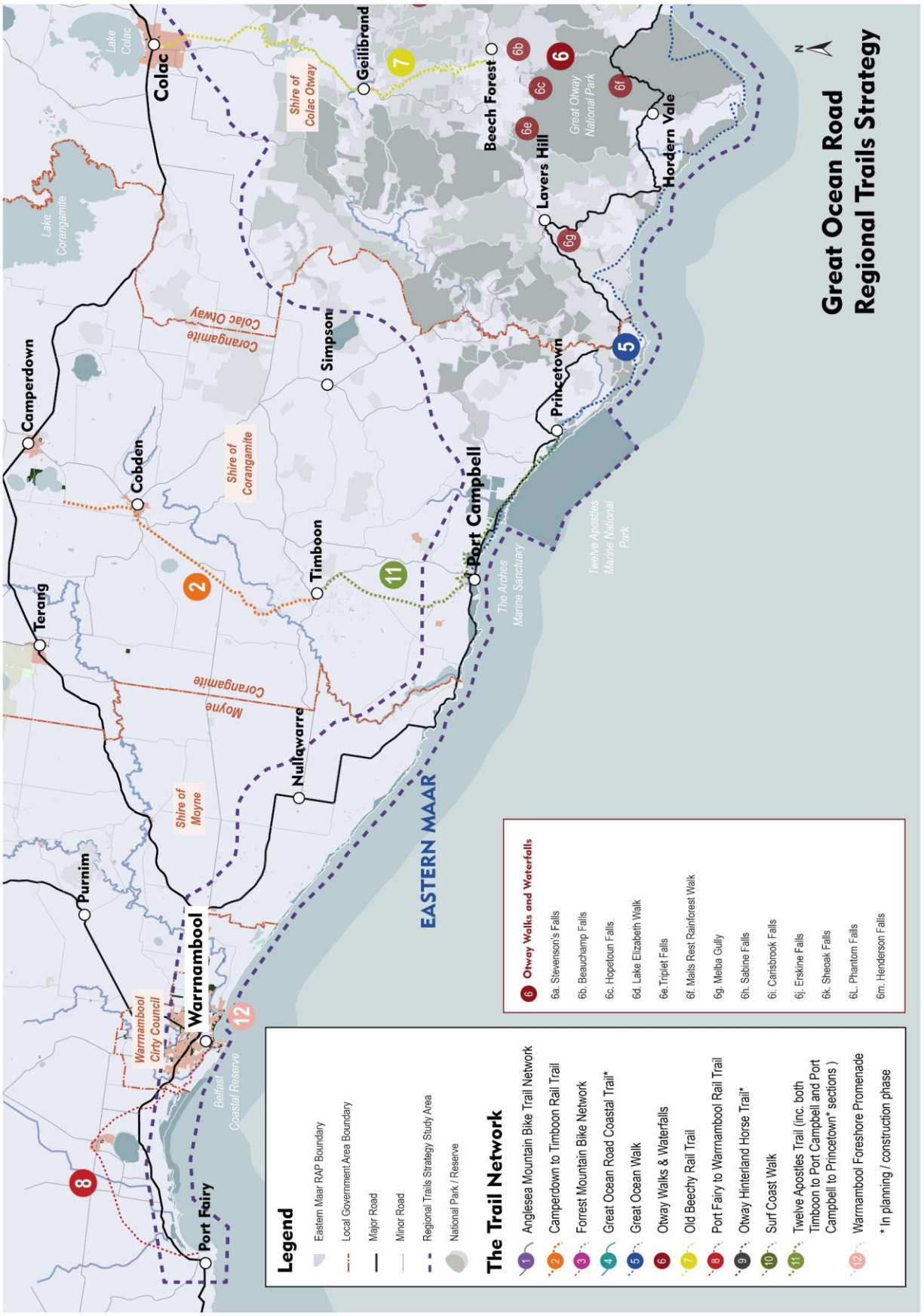
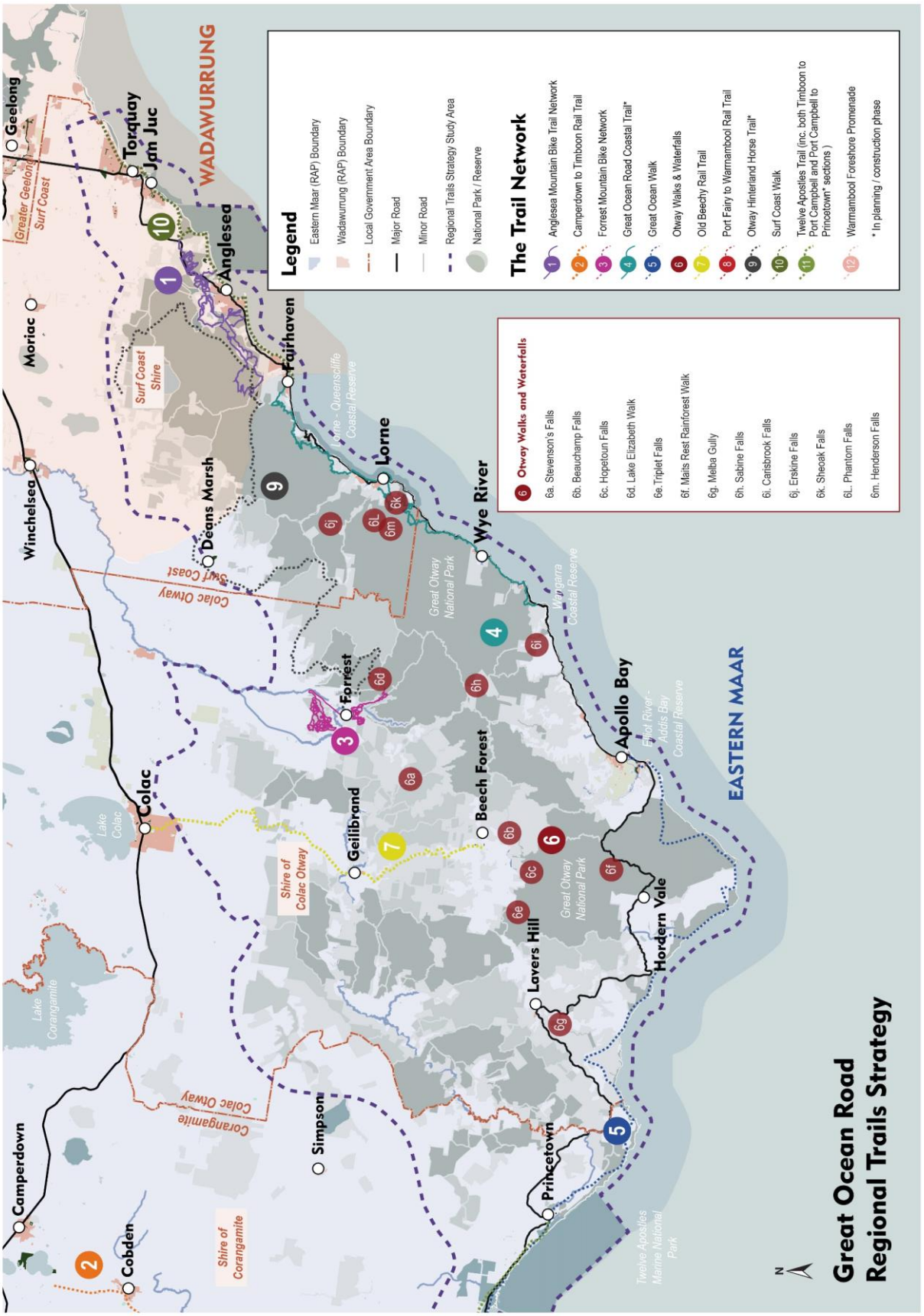
Figure 2 Great Ocean Road West



Source: TRC Tourism/Brave and Curious. 2024

Figure 3 Great Ocean Road East



Source: TRC Tourism/Brave and Curious. 2024

3 Characteristics of Outstanding Trail Destinations

3.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF OUTSTANDING TRAILS DESTINATIONS

An outstanding trails destination features a series of exceptional trails designed to showcase the natural and cultural landscapes of the area and meet the needs of target markets. It also offers a range of trail-related services to enhance the user experience for both residents and visitors.

The following factors characterise outstanding trails destinations:

Diversity of Trail Types

A diversity of trails can be achieved in several ways, catering to various trail markets such as walking, hiking, multi-use, cycling, and mountain biking. In addition to offering different types of trails, they should also accommodate people with varying fitness levels, skill levels, and equipment needs. This diversity may include:

Degree of Difficulty: Trails with varying levels of challenge to suit beginners, intermediate, and advanced users.

Trail Length: Options ranging from short, easy walks to longer, more demanding hikes or rides.

Rest Points: Multiple locations along the trails where users can stop to rest.

Technical Features: Trails designed with specific technical challenges for those with advanced equipment or skills, such as mountain biking trails with jumps and obstacles.

By offering a variety of trails, the region can ensure an inclusive and enjoyable experience for all visitors.

Concentration of Trail Opportunities

Transport between trails can be a barrier for visitors seeking a multi-day trail experience in a region. Ideally, trails should be close to a trailhead or an area that provides accommodation and a service hub.

In cases where trails are not in close proximity, good transport connections are essential to enable visitors to enjoy the area without having to travel long distances to begin their experiences. Ideally, trails should lead from a well-designed trailhead, ensuring convenience and accessibility for all users.

High Quality Design and Infrastructure

Trails and their infrastructure should be designed and managed to ensure safety for all proposed uses, including shared-use trails. There should be clear, accessible information on orientation and wayfinding, trail standards, difficulty ratings, appropriate user behaviour, and journey length, available on physical signs as well as online.

High-quality design also includes considerations of Universal Design Principles, gender impact, and accessibility requirements. Additionally, it should accommodate residents and visitors for whom English is a second language. This ensures that trails are inclusive and accessible to a diverse range of users.

Trails should be designed to be sustainable and harmoniously fit into their surrounding landscapes. Modern trail construction methods and new trail-building guidelines emphasise good design, sustainability and user experience. Accordingly, trail design and infrastructure should be fit for purpose and climate resilient.

Supporting infrastructure includes trailheads, toilets, information boards, car parks, and other amenities. For example, hinterland trails may require significantly less infrastructure compared to high-volume short walking tracks in coastal areas.

Suitable Access

Trails need to provide appropriate access to their relevant target market. For instance, constructing a high-quality day walk trail is of little use if there is no access for day users. Transport and access must align with the markets using the trail.

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Key considerations include:

Suitable Road Access: Ensuring that there is convenient road access to the trailhead.

Public Transport: Providing public transport options to and from the trailhead.

All-Ability Access: Designing trails and infrastructure to be accessible to people of all abilities where possible, encouraging use across all sectors of the community.

By aligning transport and access with the needs of trail users, we can ensure that trails are utilised and enjoyed by a diverse range of people.

Respect for Cultural Landscapes

Trails often traverse cultural landscapes and sites of cultural significance. Outstanding trail destinations provide high-quality interpretation and storytelling for trail users, offering insights into these cultural landscapes. This helps build understanding of their significance and underscores the need for their protection.

Outstanding Natural Landscapes

The setting in which a trail is located is crucial for attracting visitors. Outstanding trail destinations leverage the natural landscape, showcasing breathtaking views and key features, while providing quality interpretation along the trail. Trails are designed and constructed to minimise negative environmental impacts from both construction and ongoing use.

Quality Pre-trip Information

Increasingly, visitors independently research their trips based on online content, which can be formally curated by responsible organisations (such as tourism boards, land managers, or councils) or user-generated content found on mapping and outdoor activity portals, online media, blogs, and social media. Some of this content may lack quality control for accuracy and appropriateness of pre-trip information.

Quality pre-trip information, including accurate trail maps, is essential to provide prospective visitors with the details they need to choose their trail destinations. A "one-stop shop" website would be ideal, allowing visitors to research accommodation, transport, maps, digital navigation files, and more. Other sites can then be used for verification.

Range of Quality Support Services

Successful trail destinations provide a range of services that meet the needs of diverse trail users, ensuring they can access and enjoy the trails seamlessly. These services handle the logistics of accessing trails, transporting people and equipment, and finding accommodation, recognising the special needs of trail visitors.

Many trail destinations now provide walker or bike-friendly schemes where service and accommodation providers offer products and packages tailored to trail users. This includes secure bike and equipment storage, clothes and equipment washing, packed lunches, and convenient opening hours. Many European walks and rides exemplify this model.

Typical trail destination support services include:

- **Transport Services**: Providing transport for people, equipment, and luggage to and from trailheads and accommodation.
- **Guided and Self-Guided Tours**: Offering a range of tour options for trail users.
- **Equipment Services**: Offering bike hire, repair, and retail services for hiking and other needs.
- **Car Rental Services**: Facilitating the transport of equipment and bikes.
- **Long-Stay Parking**: Providing long-stay car parking at or near trailheads.
- **Trail-Friendly Accommodation**: Offering accommodations that cater specifically to walkers and riders.

By providing these support services, the region can enhance the overall experience for visitors, making it easier and more enjoyable for them to explore and appreciate the trails.

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Strong positioning and marketing

Strong marketing is essential for a trails destination to stand out in an increasingly crowded marketplace. Each destination must effectively position itself by aligning its core strengths and experiences with the market and promoting them accordingly.

Consistent application of a brand across the destination and among all partners involved is critical to avoid mixed signals and inconsistent messaging. This ensures a unified and clear identity that resonates with the target audience.

Strong planning and collaboration between partners, land managers, businesses, and the broader tourism industry are vital to successful marketing and positioning. By working together, these stakeholders can create and deliver compelling marketing strategies that highlight the unique attributes of the trail destination.

Strong Governance and Sustainable Funding

Good governance is crucial for making well-informed, evidence-based decisions in a collaborative manner, all aligned with a strong vision and long-term planning. An effective governance structure and mechanism tailored to each destination is essential. Key elements of a good governance model include:

Clear Vision: Partners and operators share a clear vision for the destination.

Defined Roles and Accountabilities: Partners understand their roles and responsibilities and work collaboratively within this framework.

Skilled Teams: Teams possess the right skills and experience to drive desired outcomes.

Resource Access: Ensuring there is adequate financial, human and support resources allocated for destination development.

Many trail destinations in Australia face challenges in securing ongoing maintenance funding. This is partly because many trails are on land managed by National Park and/or Forest Authorities, whose business models typically do not include service fees that directly contribute to trail maintenance.

New models are being developed across Australia to ensure strong financial security for trail developments. Examples include the Three Capes Walk in Tasmania, the Red Centre Adventure Ride in the Northern Territory, and Mystic Park in Bright, Victoria. These models are relevant to the Great Ocean Road Region and could be considered to support trail maintenance and infrastructure development.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

Engaging with local communities about plans, issues, and opportunities is critical to ensure that the destination's trail experiences are effectively delivered by land managers, businesses, and the community together. Community engagement also ensures that local needs are considered in trail management, development, and planning.

A Vibrant Events Calendar

A robust events calendar can invigorate a trail destination, generate significant economic benefits, and raise marketplace awareness, particularly during shoulder and off-seasons. Events attract time-specific visitors during the event period and encourage extended visits as attendees often return to the region after being exposed to it through the event or its coverage. This, in turn, boosts trail-related businesses and provides income stability within the region. Additionally, events positively impact the local community by stimulating activity, promoting health and wellbeing, enhancing lifestyle quality, and improving overall regional liveability.

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3.2 REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

Appendix C presents an assessment of the region's trail network against the characteristics of outstanding trail destinations. The main issues and opportunities are summarised below.

Issues

Lack of Consistent Standards and Limited Resources: Absence of uniform standards and adequate resources hampers the development and maintenance of a high-quality trail network. There is minimal revenue return from use of the trail network.

Trail Maintenance: Many existing trails suffer from inadequate maintenance due to rising costs, an increase in extreme weather events and limited human and financial resources.

Complex Regulatory Framework and Multiple Entities Involved in Management: The involvement of numerous entities and a complex regulatory framework complicates efficient trail management and development.

Insufficient Data on Trail Use: Limited data collection leads to underestimation of the trails' values, threats and usage, affecting decision-making and resource allocation.

Inadequate Trail and Transport Connections: Poor connections between trails and transport networks, particularly for bikes, limit the seamless trail experience.

Governance: Absence of regional governance over the trail network.

Unmapped Existing Trails: Numerous trails are not properly mapped, making them difficult for users to navigate and enjoy.

Lack of a Single Information Source: The absence of a centralised information hub creates confusion for users seeking trail-related information.

Opportunities:

Partner with Traditional Owners: Collaborate with EMAC and WTOAC to incorporate their knowledge, cultures, and values into trail management, and create economic opportunities for their organisations.

Develop Sustainable Funding Models: Explore funding mechanisms, grants, sponsorship and partnerships to ensure consistent financial support for trail development and maintenance.

Implement a Climate Adaptation Strategy for Trails: Develop and apply strategies to enhance the resilience of trails against climate change impacts, ensuring long-term sustainability and usability.

Focus Investment on Improving the Standard of Existing Trails: Prioritise improving the quality and appeal of all trails and elevating the commercial opportunities for a select number of key trails.

Foster a Collaborative Trail Community for Resource Coordination: Unite trail managers, users, and stakeholders to share resources and knowledge, enhancing the overall effectiveness and efficiency of trail management.

Enhance Capacity Building and Resource Support for Volunteers: Provide training, tools, and resources to support and empower volunteers, ensuring their efforts are sustainable and impactful.

Improve Linkages Between Existing Products, Infrastructure, and Trails: Strengthen connections within the trail network and related amenities, promoting a cohesive and integrated experience for users with connections to public transport throughout the region.

Quantify the Economic Benefit of Trails: To assist in understanding the value of your trail system to local regions and communities.

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4 Vision, Principles & Goals

OUR VISION

To be an outstanding trails destination renowned for its diverse, high-quality trail experiences that celebrate our unique natural and cultural landscapes, strengthen the economy and enhance community health and well-being.

OUR PRINCIPLES

- Eastern Maar Partnership
- Wadawurrung Partnership
- Sustainable, High Quality and Diverse Trails
- A Connected Trail Network
- Protect and Respect for Nature and Culture
- Regional Collaboration
- A Thriving Trail Economy

OUR GOALS

- Integrated Governance, Planning and Management
- Sustainable Funding and Investment Framework
- Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Partnerships
- High Quality and Sustainable Trails
- Information and Marketing
- Accessible and Inclusive Trails

WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFULL WHEN

- The region is recognised nationally as an outstanding trails destination with high quality, diverse and sustainable trails.
- Quality trail experiences are enhancing the wellbeing and economic prosperity of our communities.
- EMAC and WTOAC are involved in trail planning and management. across the region.
- Trail users respect and care for our natural and cultural landscapes.
- Agencies, organisations and community groups are working collaboratively to achieve our shared vision.

4.1 OUR VISION

To be an outstanding trails destination renowned for its diverse, high-quality trail experiences that celebrate our unique natural and cultural landscapes, strengthen the economy and enhance community health and well-being

Our vision is based upon a foundation of sustainability that aligns with the Authority's founding principles - General and Economic, Aboriginal Inclusion, Environmental and Social Benefits. This means:

- Inclusive Trail Management: The Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples are involved in all aspects of trail management.
- Community Vibrancy and Prosperity: Trails are contributing to the vibrancy, prosperity, and connectivity of communities.
- Economic Prosperity: Quality trail experiences are enhancing the regional economy.
- Sustainable and Valued Trail Network: The network of trails is varied, valued, and sustainable over the long term.
- Knowledge and Appreciation of Natural and Cultural Values: Trails are advancing knowledge, appreciation, and care of the region's natural and cultural values.
- Aligned and Collaborative Trail Community: Agencies, organisations, and community groups involved with trails are more aligned with their vision and support knowledge sharing and collaboration.

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4.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles are intrinsic to achieving this vision. They will guide decision-making for trail planning, development, and management, and help authorities take a collective and consistent approach to future investment in trails across the region. A commitment to them by all agencies and organisations involved in trails will facilitate progress toward an outstanding trails destination.

Eastern Maar Partnership & Wadawurrung Partnership

The intrinsic connection of EMAC and WTOAC to Country is acknowledged through partnerships and involvement in planning, construction and management of the trail network.

Resilient, High Quality and Diverse Trails

Our trails and associated infrastructure support a range of users and abilities in a safe and risk-managed environment. The design and construction of the trail network will be consistent with Australian standards for walking tracks and mountain bike trails and aim to be low impact, low maintenance and resilient to the effects of a changing climate.

A Connected Trail Network

Our trail network connects people and places to support active dispersal and increase yield and length of stay throughout the region. We provide outstanding experiences by immersing people in the natural and cultural landscape.

Protect and Respect for Nature and Culture

Our trail network presents opportunities to build greater awareness and understanding of our natural and cultural landscapes, leading towards advocacy, protection and respect.

Regional Collaboration

By developing regional partnerships through an effective governance model, we can maximise access to resources, increase efficiency and scale our efforts to provide our vision of outstanding trail opportunities.

A Thriving Trail Economy

Our trail network is a significant regional asset that supports a prosperous visitor economy, contributes to the health, wellbeing, and quality of life of our communities, provides direct opportunities for Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples and for investment by the private sector.

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4.3 OUR GOALS

This Strategy is based on six goals. Each goal has several actions to ensure the growth and success of the trail network.

Integrated Governance, Planning and Management

We will adopt a strategic and coordinated approach to trail planning, management and maintenance through stakeholder collaboration with prioritised investment and appropriate allocation of resources across the region.

A Sustainable Funding Model and Investment Framework

We will source sustainable funding for the development, maintenance and management of the region's trails and provide guidance and support to organisations to seek investment in existing and future trails.

Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Partnerships

We will partner with the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples and prioritise resources to achieving joint objectives that enable their assertions about land management and the trail network.

High Quality and Sustainable Trails

Together we will provide outstanding trail experiences that ensure the safety of trail users and the protection of the region's natural and cultural landscapes.

Information and Marketing

We will work together to provide consistent and reliable trail information that highlights the outstanding experiences on offer and enable users to confidently explore the region.

Accessible and Inclusive Trails

We will strive to ensure our trails are inclusive and accessible and support the needs of our visitors and communities.

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4.4 GOALS AND PRIORITY ACTIONS

Each goal has several recommended actions which have been defined by their priority as follows:

- **High** – as resources allow, undertaken during the first one to five years of the Strategy.
- **Medium** –should be undertaken during years five to ten of the Strategy but may start as resources allow.

Where relevant, actions have also been identified as:

- **Foundational** – underpin most of the Strategy's actions and strategic directions.
- **Enabling** – is fundamental to supporting other actions that will be delivered.
- **Ongoing** – may be considered business as usual but is important enough to be listed in this Strategy.

This Strategy will be used to guide and coordinate action across the region, with the delivery of some actions subject to grants and external funding. Trails located outside the Authority's service area and their associated actions are the responsibility of respective land managers.

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Goal: Integrated Governance, Planning and Management

OUR AIM

We will adopt a strategic and coordinated approach to trail planning, management and maintenance through stakeholder collaboration with prioritised investment and appropriate allocation of resources across the region.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

To harness the immense potential for trails and related tourism products, the region requires an agreed framework to guide a whole -of-government approach to trail planning, development and management. This is particularly important considering:

- The Great Ocean Road region is subject to land transitions between the Authority and stakeholders, which may include some of the trails within this Strategy. Multi agency co-ordination to deliver the vision and goals of the Strategy is needed given the large number of stakeholders in the Great Ocean Road region.
- The EMAC and WTOAC have assertions involving all aspect of trail management.
- Other stakeholders with an interest in the trail network include the Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Board (GORRT), community groups, first responder emergency services, transport agencies and volunteers.
- The Great Ocean Road Visitor Economy Master Plan[1] identifies nature based and trail tourism as a key pillar of the region's tourism offering. It recognises that the trail network is a competitive advantage when compared to other Victorian and interstate regions.
- There are currently low levels of coordination across the region between the key stakeholders with an interest in the trail network and those responsible for their management.
- Considering the competitive pressure from other regions within Victoria, across Australia, and from our international neighbours like New Zealand, it is essential to enhance trail coordination (governance) from a regional perspective.
- A sustainable trail network requires coordinated government action at the state and local level to direct investment to priority areas so that the region can sustainably manage growth and benefit from it.
- There is a shortage of data and information on trail usage, which is crucial for guiding investment and decision-making, as well as for measuring the satisfaction of residents and tourists.
- A region wide trail monitoring system that generates reliable, standardised and pertinent information on trail use is critical to sustainable trail planning and management.

[1] https://greatoceanroadtourism.org.au/strategies/visitor-economy-master-plan/

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A REGIONAL TRAILS FORUM

The aim of establishing the Great Occean Road Regional Trails Forum (GORRTF) is to provide a co-ordinated response to many of the actions contained in this Strategy and to collectively advocate for resources to advance the regional trail network. The focus of the regional coordinating structure will be on the national and regional trails identified in the Strategy.

The following set of principles are recommended for inclusion in the terms of reference for the Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Forum:

- Provide advice and assistance in obtaining funds and investment for national and regional trail development and centralised management of funds for these priority trails.
- Improve maintenance of all trails across the region through the implementation and alignment of the Regional Trail Guidelines with each stakeholder and their respective trail management guidelines, where applicable.
- Provide advice and assistance in building the capacity of trail stakeholders and partners to implement trail and experience improvements.
- Work with GORRT on the development and implementation of a Regional Trails Marketing Strategy (as recommended in this Strategy).
- Respect the role and accountabilities under legislation and policy of land managers and trail managers.
- Respect the democratic functions, in local and State Government, that impact resource allocation and decisions.
- Encourage communication, information sharing, learnings and trail intelligence, in addition to collectively engage with industry, GORRT and other trail partners as necessary.

Other amendments and monitoring the implementation of this Strategy would also fall into the terms of reference.

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TABLE 1: ACTIONS FOR INTERGRATED GOVERNANCE, PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

ACTION NO	ACTION	PRIORITY	WHO
Action 1.1	**Coordinating Body:** Formalise the structure of the Regional Trails Forum and include regional representation as well as community organisations that support the trails sector across the region. Establish the Terms of Reference and embed the implementation of the Regional Trails Strategy as the key role of the Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Forum (GORRTF) under the leadership of the Authority.	High Foundational	The Authority in collaboration with EMAC, WTOAC, LGAs, Trail and Land Managers and GORRT
Action 1.2	**Strategy Implementation**: Establish and implement regular reporting of progress in the implementation of the Strategy and provide feedback to stakeholder organisations at agreed times.	High	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 1.3	**Trail Stewardship** Host, on an as-needs base, a regional trails forum that includes industry and community groups to discuss and enable implementation of elements of the Strategy.	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 1.4	**Trail Capacity** To enable coordinated implementation of the Great Ocean Road Regional Trail Guidelines, develop and present trail design, construction, visitor risk management and maintenance workshops to trail management organisations and user groups across the different types of trails and uses.	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 1.5	**Integrated Planning:** Embed the vision and goals of the Strategy into broader regional planning and budget processes (e.g. tourism plans/destination management plans, strategic plans, development plans, open space plans, transport plans).	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 1.6	**Monitoring and Evaluation**: Establish a region wide monitoring and evaluation system to measure the success of the trails network through usage monitoring (i.e. observations, trail counters), user experience surveys and assessment of the achievement of trail management objectives.	High	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF

Goal: Sustainable Funding Model & Investment Framework

OUR AIM

We will source and create sustainable funding models for the development, maintenance and management of the region's trails and provide guidance and support to organisations to seek investment in existing and future trails.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Resourcing and funding for planning, development and maintenance of trails is a major impediment to the management of existing trails within the region. To create sustainable trails, better models of funding and cost recovery must be employed.

Most of the current funding for trail development comes from state and local government budgets or grants awarded on a project-by-project basis.

However, funding programs are a finite resource with many competing applicants. Additionally, once trails are developed there are often limited ongoing resources for trails maintenance and organisational support. Trails management organisations in other places (such as Trails Trusts in New Zealand) have been able to diversify funding sources and utilise partnerships to obtain resources for development and management of high-quality trails.

The Authority was established to be a self-funded entity and the enabling legislation provides an opportunity to raise, retain and reinvest funds across the land it manages.

To ensure the development of high-quality trails it is important that the region has an agreed framework for prioritising trail investment and maintenance.

A consistent approach to the assessment of trail developments will be achieved through the:

- Classification of trails and trail networks according to their significance at national, regional and local level as presented in Table 2. This classification is subject to change, pending changes to investment in individual trails and other variables.
- Application of criteria to assess the feasibility of trail developments (for existing and proposed trails) and prioritise them for investment.

An investment framework will also facilitate:

- The self-determination assertions of the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples.
- Advocacy for resources by the public and private sectors at a regional level. Noting that at times trail managers are competing for the same resources to develop new or improve existing trails.
- The opportunity to promote the economic benefits of the regional trail network making investment decisions easier.
- Improved understanding of the economic benefits of the trail network to encourage engagement and investment in trails by the public and private sectors.
- Strategic planning for necessary resources to address climate change impacts on the trail network and likely increases in maintenance costs, trail closures and longer recovery periods.
- Investment in high quality trails that can compete with other national and international trail-based tourism destinations.
- A better experience for all trail users.

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TABLE 2: TRAIL CATEGORISATION – GREAT OCEAN ROAD REGION

Trail Category	Attributes	Recommended Trails
State and Nationally Significant Trails	A trail that is of sufficient quality, showcasing the natural and cultural landscapes of Victoria with appropriate facilities, products and services to be recognised beyond the State and to attract visitors to Victoria. Criteria includes: • Exemplars of the competitive strengths of Victoria and Australia as a trail destination. • Uniquely representative of Victoria's natural and cultural landscape values. • High priority government support at the State level for trail development and management and listed as a priority within State plans and strategies. • Support viable high yield trail-based accommodation and associated products and services. • Directly and indirectly provide economic benefits to the region and the State.	Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Great Ocean Walk
Regionally Significant Trails	A major trail or trail network that services a population centre or large regional community, with facilities and services of a standard and appeal that could attract visitors from outside the region. Criteria includes: • Representative of the region's natural and cultural landscapes. • Government support at a regional level within regional plans and strategies. • Support viable trail-based and associated regional tourism products, services, and events. • Directly or indirectly provide economic benefits to the region.	Forrest MTB Trails Otway Waterfall Walks Surf Coast Walk Anglesea MTB Trail Network (proposed) Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail Old Beechy Rail Trail Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail Twelve Apostles Trail
Locally Significant Trails	A trail that services the local community and provides facilities suited to local use. Some local trail may have potential for development to regional status. Criteria includes: • Many are located within proximity to residential areas and are often connected to community services and open space areas. • Representative of the region's natural and cultural landscapes. • Provide access to a diversity of trails of varying difficulty, length, and type. • Provide opportunities for different trail-user groups for active recreation, health, and wellbeing. • Recognised by residents as a popular trail and/or trail network and frequented by people from the surrounding region.	Warrnambool Foreshore Promenade Otway Hinterland Horse Trail (proposed)

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TABLE 3: ACTIONS TO ESTABLISH A SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODEL & INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

ACTION NO.	ACTION	PRIORITY	WHO
Action 2.1	**Funding Model:** Institute a funding model that: • Reflects the many benefits of trails and their role in advancing the objectives and priorities of government. • Provides dedicated sources of funding, allocating them based on clear criteria that are consistent with the goals of the Strategy. • Ongoing management including maintenance, long term sustainability and the promotion of trails. • Responds to the need for large infrastructure projects. • Is administered through a single portal and uses an efficient application process.	High Enabling	The Authority in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.2	**Cost/Benefit Analysis:** Undertake a cost benefit analysis of trails to further develop advocacy material for the reinvestment of funds trail development and maintenance.	High Enabling	The Authority in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.3	**Advocacy Platform:** From the analysis produce a advocacy document that succinctly and powerfully, informs decision makers of the evidence-based case for public support of trails development and maintenance. It should describe the economic, environmental, community, health and cultural benefits of supporting a varied and quality trails network.	High Enabling	The Authority in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.4	**Prioritisation of Investment:** Implement the region wide trail categorisation system for trails to define their relative state and regional significance and broad developmental needs.	High	The Authority in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.5	**Investment Partnerships:** Assist trails organisations and managers to identify appropriate partnerships for trail development, experiences, maintenance and management.	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.6	**Investment Support:** Provide trails organisations with access to a centralised pool of research and information to assist in the assessment of trails development needs, the preparation of funding applications and seeking investment partners.	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.7	**Trail Categorisation Review**: Ensure that the Regional Trails Strategy recognises and integrates new trails and GORRTF revises the trail categorisation as required.	Ongoing	The Authority in collaboration with the GORRTF
Action 2.8	**Volunteer Programs**: Develop and support programs for community and user group involvement in trail development, maintenance and management.	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with the GORRTF

Goal: Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Partnerships

OUR AIM

We will partner with the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Peoples and prioritise resources to achieving joint objectives that enable their assertions about land management and the trail network.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation and the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Corporation are the custodians of the lands and waters encompassed by the Great Ocean Road region and have been for millennia.

Both EMAC and WTOAC have assertions outlined in Wadawurrung's Healthy Country Plan (Paleert Tjaara Dja) and Eastern Maar's Country Plan (Meerreengeeye Ngakeepoorryeey).

These assertions relate to the management of the cultural landscape which includes the trail network, and the development of tourism businesses that generate revenue and employment, respect and healing for Country.

Improving our understanding of the threats to Country in the context of the trail network and the opportunity to partner with the Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung people will help to strengthen the health of country, people and cultures.

Together with land managers, EMAC and WTOAC can implement strategies to protect and conserve Aboriginal cultural heritage across the trail network.

The trail network presents an opportunity to promote Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung cultures to visitors through interpretation and storytelling across the cultural landscape.

Eastern Maar

The Eastern Maar are the Traditional Owners of south-western Victoria. The Eastern Maar People have looked after these places for tens of thousands of years. Eastern Maar First Nations people are represented by the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC).

Through their Country Plan, the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation has assertions to be the public land manager for trails.

Wadawurrung

The Wadawurrung People are the Traditional Owners of the land and waters that run from the Great Dividing Range in the north to the coast in the south, from Werribee River in the east to along the Surf Coast. WTOAC is the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the area. They have statutory authority for the management of Aboriginal heritage values and culture, under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

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TABLE 4: ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE EASTERN MAAR AND WADAWURRUNG PARTNERSHIP

ACTION NO.	ACTION	PRIORITY	WHO
Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC)			
Action 3.1	**GORRTF**: Ensure EMAC are a partner in the Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Forum (GORRTF).	High Enabling	EMAC supported by the Authority and GORRTF
Action 3.2	**Tourism Operations**: Seek to work with EMAC on the development of tourism operations according to their assertions.	Medium Enabling	EMAC supported by the Authority and GORRTF
Action 3.3	**Storytelling:** Establish EMAC priorities for helping visitors understand Country through interpretation and storytelling and implement actions.	High Enabling	EMAC supported by the Authority and GORRTF
Action 3.4	**Cultural Sensitivity**: Build a joint understanding of where trails may be impacting Country or places of significance for EMAC and remove the threats wherever possible.	High Enabling	EMAC supported by the Authority and GORRTF
Action 3.5	**Direct Involvement and Capacity Building:** Seek opportunities for involving EMAC in all aspects of trail planning and management and build capacity together.	High Enabling	EMAC supported by the Authority and GORRTF
Wadawarrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC)			
Action 3.6	**GORRTF**: Ensure WTOAC are a partner in the Great Ocean Road Regional Trails Forum (GORRTF).	High Enabling	WTOAC supported by the Authority and GORRTF
Action 3.7	**Tourism Operations**: Work with WTOAC on the development of tourism operations according to their assertions.	Medium Enabling	WTOAC supported by the Authority and GORRTF
Action 3.8	**Storytelling:** Establish WTOAC priorities for helping visitors understand Country through interpretation and storytelling and implement actions together.	High Enabling	WTOAC supported by the Authority and GORRTF
Action 3.9	**Cultural Sensitivity**: Build a joint understanding of where trails may be impacting Country or places of significance for WTOAC and remove the threats wherever possible.	High Enabling	WTOAC supported by the Authority and GORRTF
Action 3.10	**Direct Involvement and Capacity Building:** Seek opportunities for involving WTOAC in all aspects of trail planning and management and build capacity together.	High Enabling	WTOAC supported by the Authority and GORRTF

Goal: High Quality and Sustainable Trails

OUR AIM

Together we will provide outstanding trail experiences that ensure the safety of trail users and the protection of the region's natural and cultural landscapes.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A fundamental aspect of a sustainable trail system is to ensure that trails are constructed and maintained to national and international standards. This includes avoiding, minimising and/or mitigating adverse impacts to, sensitive ecosystems, species at risk, soils, water, wildlife and native vegetation. An ongoing issue and critical risk is the plant pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomi* which causes dieback in susceptible native plants. The pathogen and the disease it causes are recognised as one of the key threatening processes to Australia's biodiversity and is one of the highest environmental risks for trails in the region. The potential to spread the pathogen to other uninfested areas locally, and in Victoria from trail use and construction is high.

Appropriate and sustainable trail maintenance and monitoring is required to ensure continued environmental and social sustainability of the trail network. This includes designing and maintaining all trails to ensure the protection of the region's natural and cultural landscapes and supporting community involvement and the work of volunteer trail groups in maintaining these standards. It involves:

- Enabling a regional approach to implementing Australian Standards for Walking Tracks (Standards Australia AS 2156) and the Mountain Bike Technical Difficulty Rating System and Australian Mountain Bike Guidelines through implementation of the *Great Ocean Road Region Guidelines for Trail Planning, Design and Management.*
- Educational efforts focusing on responsible trail development and use, supported by compliance and enforcement programs assist in ensuring unapproved trail construction is reduced.
- Assisting trail organisations and groups to build their capacity to plan and maintain trails. Such support will create longevity and sustainability in trail organisations, empower community and volunteer groups and encourage better resourcing around trails management.
- Reducing the impact of emergencies and number of incidents for trail users by designing and managing trails in accordance with the trail standards and regional guidelines.

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TABLE 5: ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE HIGH QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE TRAILS

ACTION NO.	ACTION	PRIORITY	WHO
Action 4.1	**Implement Priority Actions:** For individual trails (Appendix B) as resources allow.	High	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.2	**Trail Audits**: Conduct regular trail audits to determine the physical condition and maintenance issues across the regional trail network.	High Enabling	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.3	**Regional Trail Guidelines:** Implement the Great Ocean Road Trail Management Guidelines and the Wild Otways guidelines for Phytophthora Management for trail design, construction management and maintenance of trails across the region (where existing guidelines do not apply).	High	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.4	**Capacity Building:** Ensure that information and training on the regional guidelines and best practice sustainable trail design, construction and maintenance is available to current and potential trail developers, managers and organisations.	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.5	**Maintenance and management program:** Identify funding opportunities for ongoing maintenance budget allocations and advocate where required.	High	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.6	**Trail Maintenance Sub Committee**: Establish a Trails Maintenance subcommittee from the GORRTF to address and trail maintenance actions and issues.	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.7	**Trail Condition Reporting:** Investigate and, as appropriate, implement trail user/community social media 'app' or mechanism (such as snap send solve) for reporting trail conditions and issues (risks).	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.8	**Trail Safety and Risk Management**: Ensure that safety signage is installed at hazardous locations along recreational trails and that trail infrastructure aligns with AS2156.2	High	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Acton 4.9	**Safey Information**: Engage trail users and the community through regular trail 'bulletins' and media informing people of planned actions, risks, issues and opportunities for volunteerism	High Enabling	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.10	**Emergency Planning:** Seek to better utilise the existing Emergency Management Planning Committees at a Regional and Municipal level for planning for emergency response, including trigger level standardisation.	High	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF

Action 4.11	**Trigger Points:** Through the existing emergency planning forums, coordinate and standardise trigger points for public land closures and trail-use restrictions across all LGAs and public land managers.	High	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.12	**MTB Safety**: Continue to improve MTB safety through skills development in skills parks, and by good trail design, including trail filters near the beginning of trails.	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.13	**Unplanned Trails:** Reduce the number of unplanned trails and work with MTB groups to stop the development of, and to decommission, unplanned MTB trails.	High	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.14	**Compliance and Enforcement:** Develop a compliance approach to stop illegal trail creation in protected areas including National Parks.	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 4.15	**Visitor Safety Information:** Ensure that visitor risk information relevant to the safe use of trails is provided in communications that are accessible to all trail users including non-English speaking visitors.	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF

Goal: Information and Marketing

OUR AIM

We will work together to provide consistent and reliable trail information that highlights the outstanding experiences on offer and enable users to confidently explore the region.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Marketing of trails requires targeting different markets, use of content and messages appropriate to markets, multiple communication methods and the cooperation of the different agencies and trail partners. Effective marketing requires a more consistent and collaborative approach.

As a focus of visitor activity, trails provide opportunities to develop knowledge and respect for both the trail itself and the natural and cultural environments through which it passes.

This can be done using information messages, interpretation and community education programs. Trails events are also an opportunity to communicate with trail users.

Improving access, signage, trailhead facilities and ways of telling the stories of the places and people through which trails pass will provide a more appealing experience for existing users and to attract new users.

This will involve:

- Positioning the region as a quality trails destination with a sustainable tourism offering.
- Developing a single point of information that visitors and residents can use to understand, find and access the trail network and ensure they are doing their part to protect it.
- Encouraging greater use of trails in the shoulder seasons to maximise the benefits and reduce crowding.
- Providing quality interpretation and story telling about the region's natural and cultural landscapes.
- Supporting ongoing development of the region's trail economy and associated businesses.

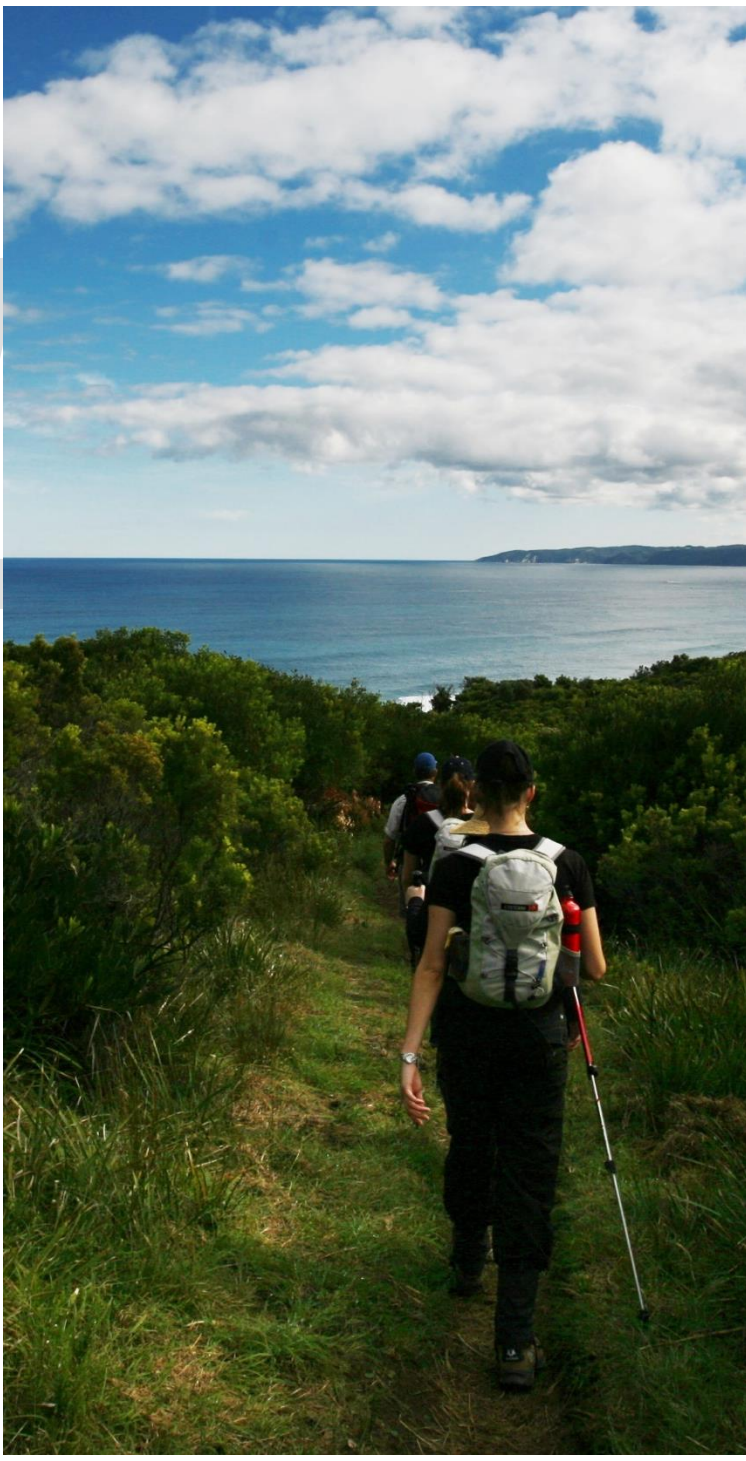

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TABLE 6: ACTIONS FOR INFORMATION AND MARKETING

ACTION NO.	ACTION	PRIORITY	WHO
Action 5.1	**Regional marketing:** Include regional trails as part of the region's tourism offering and include in regional marketing initiatives.	High Enabling	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.2	**Consumer Website:** Include as part of the existing consumer website information about trail opportunities across the region. Consideration to be given to the development of downloadable resources, interactive mapping and access via mobile apps.	High	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.3	**Digital Maps/Information:** Develop and maintain a contemporary trail resource which details the trail network in line with the region's branding. Include clearly articulated trail information (including maps and safety advice).	Medium	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.4	**Third-party Information Platforms:** Where possible work with third-party information platforms (e.g. Strava, Trailforks, Maps. Google Maps) to ensure consistent factual information on the current status of all trails. Regularly assess relevance and reliability of information provided by users, and engage with new and emerging platforms as appropriate.	Medium	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.5	**Trail Related Businesses:** Develop a 'trail friendly business program' with industry, including presentation of commercial opportunities around the continued development of trails-related businesses.	High	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.6	**Trail-related Programs and Events:** Support service providers and the community to consistently manage the range of trail-related programs and events offered across the region (e.g. parkrun, charity events, fun runs, programs promoting walking/cycling/trail running etc.).	Medium	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.7	**EMAC Business Enablement** Support and partner where appropriate the EMAC in developing tourism offerings on and around the trail network.	High	EMAC in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 5.8	**WTOAC Business Enablement** Support and partner where appropriate the WTOAC in developing tourism offerings on and around the trail network.	High	WTOAC in collaboration with GORRTF

Goal: Accessible and Inclusive Trails

OUR AIM

We will strive to ensure our trails are inclusive and accessible and support the needs of our visitors and communities.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- The current level of knowledge about what accessibility issues and opportunities may be present on the region's trails is limited, as many of the existing trails are legacy trails that have not been developed or managed with contemporary accessibility and inclusivity or Universal Design.
- The Whole of Victorian Government Universal Design Policy was recently released and mandates Universal Design Principles across all government initiatives. The policy has been developed to support Victorian Government departments, agencies and delivery partners to incorporate Universal Design Principles consistently across infrastructure projects.
- The current information available on accessibility to trails and outdoor activities is limited within the region, and there is limited ability for people to easily report opportunities for improvement on trails (i.e., no consistent web or app based approach).

THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED THROUGH:

- Designing and managing trails in accordance with the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks and Adaptive Guidelines (Mountain Biking), with all elements utilising Universal Design Principles.
- Conducting accessibility training, and accessibility audits of trails, providing reports and implementing opportunities and improvements.
- Providing inclusive and accessible communication and seeking feedback from people with disabilities or limited mobility, priority population groups, and those from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

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TABLE 7: ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE GREATER ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

ACTION NO.	ACTION	PRIORITY	WHO
Action 6.1	Trail Classification: Ensure that all trail information sources classify the correct Trail Classification System (i.e. Australian Walking Track Grading System) to allow prospective users to make an informed decision to enter the trail with knowledge about the trail's level of difficulty and risks.	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 6.2	Provide trailheads and associated facilities that are easy to locate, welcoming, safe, maintained to accessibility standards, and are relevant to, and accommodating for, a diversity of users from different backgrounds and with differing abilities.	High	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 6.3	Conduct an accessibility audit of all trails, facilities, and services to identify any opportunities to access and inclusion for people with disabilities or limited mobility, priority population groups and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.	High Enabling	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 6.4	Based on the findings of the accessibility audit, implement prioritised improvements to make trails, facilities, and services more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities or limited mobility, priority population groups, and CALD backgrounds.	High	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 6.5	Provide accessibility training for all staff and volunteers to ensure that they are aware of accessibility and inclusion issues and how to provide inclusive services to visitors with disabilities or limited mobility, priority population and CALD backgrounds.	High Enabling	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 6.6	Provide trail communication information and pre-trip planning information materials that are accessible and inclusive, ensuring that alternative formats for websites and social media channels are accessible to people with disabilities or limited mobility, priority population groups, and CALD backgrounds.	High	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
Action 6.7	Scope and implement an Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Group, evaluate current programs, and actively develop accessibility and inclusion pilot programs. Actively seek feedback from visitors with disabilities or limited mobility, priority population groups and CALD backgrounds to identify areas for improvement, ensure that accessibility remains a priority, and ensure that any issues or concerns are addressed promptly.	High	The Authority in collaboration with GORRTF

Appendices

Appendix A – Regional Context

THE REGION'S RESIDENTS

Residents live in the Surf Coast Shire, Colac Otway Shire, Corangamite Shire, Warrnambool City and Moyne Shire.

The region has a population of 129,860[2]. The majority of residents live in Surf Coast Shire and Warrnambool City.

An analysis of population data[3] indicates:

- 23.95% of the population is aged under 19
- 27.10% is aged between 22-44
- 27.12% is aged between 45-64
- 21.84% is aged over 65
- 5.55% of people in the region need help or assistance in one or more of the three core activity areas of self-care, mobility and communication
- 3.52% speaks a language other than English at home.

Interestingly, 31.09% of the population aged 15 or over did voluntary work through an organisation or group in the 12 months prior to the 2021 Census – though recently there has been a significant decline in volunteering across Australia.[4] This is higher than the state average of 19%. This is a potential opportunity for land managers and organisations to mobilise community in delivering services or experiences.

This diversity is particularly relevant for trail managers as many visitors to the region are from Melbourne and likely to come from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

FORECAST POPULATION GROWTH

Victoria is projected to add 4.7 million people from 2018 to 2056, reaching a population of 11.2 million. This represents annual average growth of 125,000 people, at a rate of 1.5% per annum. Base-case population estimates project Melbourne's new growth areas to rapidly increase in coming decades, with around 770,000 more residents between 2018 and 2036. The region will also experience growth, particularly in Surf Coast Shire (refer Table 8). This will place increasing pressure on the trail network.

Table 8: Study Area Population Projections[5]

LGA	Population (2022)	Projected Growth (to 2036)
Surf Coast Council	38,650	24.2%
Colac Otway Council	22,190	7.5%
Corangamite Council	15,990	-3.8%
Warrnambool Council	35,560	8.5%
Moyne Shire	17,470	9.4%
TOTAL	**129,860**	

TOURISM AND THE REGION

The visitor economy is a dominant driver of the region's economy. Total tourism consumption for the region in 2020-21 was $1.4 billion, with over 2,000 tourism businesses operating in the region, employing 14.5% of the population.[6]

Prior to the pandemic, and continuing post-pandemic, the visitor economy is one of the largest industry sectors in the region. In 2018/19, 18% of

[2] https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/demography-map/
https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/information-portal/regional-snapshot

[4] https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/volunteers

[5] https://www.data.vic.gov.au/victoria-future-2023-vif2023-data-available-excel-spreadsheets, and
https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/demography-map/

[6] https://www.tra.gov.au/data-and-research/reports/regional-tourism-satellite-account/regional-tourism-satellite-account

the gross regional product, and 18% of all regional jobs, were due to the $1.9 billion direct visitor spending. The Great Ocean Road and the Twelve Apostles is regional Victoria's top attraction.[7]

The region's most popular visitor activities are:

- Going to the beach
- Eating out
- Bushwalking
- Sightseeing
- Visiting friends and relatives
- Visiting National Parks.

FORECAST TOURISM GROWTH

Prior to COVID-19, visitor demand in the region was forecast to reach 8.6 million (5.58 million day and 3.03 million overnight) by 2026-27.[8] This was an increase of an average of 4% per annum. The growth rate of international visitors was predicted to be almost double that of domestic visitors.

While COVID-19 seriously impacted tourism across the country, visitor numbers are increasing and likely to return to pre- Covid levels by 2025.

GLOBAL TRAIL TRENDS

With the advent of specialised equipment (such as e-bikes) and improved comfort and the functionality of walking/hiking gear, a greater demand for trail-based recreation has emerged over the past decade. World-wide trends around being active in nature indicate this demand will continue to grow.

With trails now an integral part of many community lifestyles and tourism destinations, user expectations have changed. They expect trails to be accessible, to connect them to the places they wish to visit, to be an engaging experience (whether for a leisurely stroll or a longer journey), to be safe, and to be sustainably designed, managed and maintained. Importantly, people also expect trails to deliver what they promise, whether it be through consistent application of standards, good signage and navigation aids, or products and services that enhance their experience. They are anticipating ease of planning and fact finding, accessible, high quality, regularly maintained infrastructure, facilities and services, and complementary packaged options, including accommodation, food and beverage and other value-add activities. As such, it is important that the user experience is central to each element of trail design and management.

Globally, trails and trail networks are being offered as 'total experiences', in which the visitors' use and enjoyment of a trail and its distinctive character is facilitated by quality information and signage, booking and support services, accommodation, linked activities and attractions.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRAIL EXPERIENCES

The experiences offered to trail users will inform the type of access, materials, trail width, design and grading. The overall trail experience will need to be carefully packaged with trail and user type at the front of mind. This includes facilities, signage, products and services and value-add activities. It is likely that there won't only be one type of user on the trails, and it is important to cater for the needs of multiple user groups and user capacity where appropriate.

[7] business.vic.gov.au - Regional-Victorias-Top-Attractions-year-ending-December-2019.pdf

[8] Great Ocean Road Visitor and Accommodation Forecast Delloite Economics 2018

TRAIL MARKET ANALYSIS

The various types of trails and their respective markets are discussed briefly below. Horse trails and water trails are not covered, due to the emphasis of this Strategy on walking, running and cycling. They are, however, important from a local community perspective.

THE WALKING MARKET

Bushwalking

- Bushwalking is currently rated in sixth position of the top 20 physical activities undertaken by Australians.
- 1.3 million Australian adults (6.4% of the population) and 21,000 children participate in bushwalking activities annually, with 18% of participants undertaking bushwalking activities at least once per week.
- Peak participation age for men is 55-64 years and for women is 25-34 years.
- 50% of Australian bushwalking participants walk for three hours or more on average.[9]
- From an international perspective, overseas visitors engaging in bushwalking and rainforest walks increased by 7% to 1.9 million per annum (2018).[10]

Recreational Walking

- Recreational walking is currently rated in first place of the top 20 sports and physical activities undertaken by Australians.
- 8.9 million Australian adults (44.4% of the population) and 18,900 children participate in recreational walking activities annually, with 91%. of participants undertaking recreational walking activities at least once per week.
- Peak participation is by women 65+ years (closed followed by women 55-64 years) and men over 65 years.
- On average, the majority of walkers spend 62 minutes on each walking occasion.
- Since 2001, participation in recreational walking by Australians has increased by 14.4%.[11]

The Running Market

- Estimated at 20 million participants since 2010, trail running is one of the world's fastest growing sports, according to the International Track and Field Federation[12]. Since the mid-1990s, the popularity of trail running has grown at a rate of 15% each year.[13]
- Records show a 1,000% increase in trail running events in the last decade.[14]
- The largest trail running event in Australia (Ultra Trail Australia, 7,000 participants) is seven times as big as the largest mountain biking event (Otway Odyssey, 1,000 participants).
- There are four times as many trail running events (450-500) as mountain biking events in Australia and the average trail running event attracts 2-4 times participation (600-800).
- A report in 2021 showed that entry fees for trail running events alone generated approx. $13 million in direct entry fee revenue across 331 trail running events, accounting for 154,113 registrations.

The Cycling Market

- In the year ending September 2018, the number of international visitors to Australia who participated in cycling increased 12% to 495,000.[15]

[9] Ausplay National Sports and Physical Activity survey, Bushwalking Participation December 2020

[10] TRA International Visitors in Australia – Year ending September 2018.

[11] Ausplay Participation Trends since 2001

[12] https://theconversation.com/the-trail-running-community-faces-its-biggest-challenges-yet-156260

[13] https://www.worldathletics.org/disciplines/trail-running/trail-running

[14] https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/apr/02/ultrarunner-ultramarathon-racing-100-miles

15 TRA International Visitors in Australia – Year ending September 2018

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- Shared paths are the most common form of off-road cycling facility in Australia[16]
- While over a third of Victorians have cycled in the last year, most of them did so for recreational purposes rather than transport[17]
- The popularity of electric bikes, or e-bikes, is growing rapidly. An e-bike allows people of various fitness levels to cycle together and take on greater distances and inclines with ease.[18] Furthermore, e-bikes may also suit people who have stopped cycling because of injury, illness or age
- Research suggests that cycle visitors stay longer. On average, cycling tourists also spend more on their visit when compared to all visitors, and this pattern has continued throughout recent years.[19] [20]

Mountain Biking

In Australia, the mountain biking (MTB) market size has been estimated at 388,900, just under 2% of the population. Almost 3 million people (14% of the population) participate in cycling of some sort[21] and around 4 million overnight trips including cycling are made each year.[22] Of these, just over 1 million trips were made that include MTB.

The Victorian population engages in cycling at a greater rate when compared to other states and territories. An estimated 34% of Victorian residents spent money on cycling in 2020, compared to the national average of 29%.[23] Over 30% of all cyclists chose to ride off-road on a mountain bike trail.

From a tourism perspective, the MTB market of those who travel to mountain bike is broadly divided into:

- 'Holiday first' Holiday Mountain Bikers. This is the market of people who go on holiday for any reason other than the express purpose of mountain biking, and then, whilst on holiday or during their overall planning, decide to mountain bike as part of a broad holiday experience.
- 'Passion first' Destination Mountain Bikers.[24] This market includes those who travel for their passion first – for the express purpose of mountain biking. Typically, but not always, they will bring their mountain bikes with them on their trip and will value transport and accommodation that provides safety and security for their bikes.

Although the travel and biking behaviour of these two segments are considerably different, they are both important to the success of a destination.

Electric Mountian Bikes (E-MTBs) have been gaining serious traction in the mountain biking world. They have been credited with a second wave in popularity of mountain biking, as riders are reinvigorated to get back on trails without worrying about fitness levels or their capacity for uphill efforts. E-MTBs encourage users who would otherwise not have considered cycling as a preferred recreation due to concerns about age or fitness. Further, they are significantly extending the upper age limit of riders and increasing their overall average usage, leading to health and wellbeing gains. E-MTB riders typically seek a recreational experience, more than a competitive one, valuing high-quality, accessible, nature-based experiences that offer some degree of support (via township and service integrations, and inclusive charging points for longer-distance journeys). One in three bikes sold in Europe is an 'e-bike'[25]. It is estimated that more than 40 million e-bikes are expected to be sold each year by 2023 in Europe.

16 Victoria Walks (2015). Shared paths – the issues, Melbourne, Victoria Walks
17 Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-2028. Transport for Victoria
18 https://worldexpeditions.com/2019-adventure-travel-trends
19 https://www.tourismnewzealand.com/media/1764/cycling-tourism_profile.pdf
20 https://www.tourismnewzealand.com/markets-stats/sectors/special-interest/cycling-and-mountain-biking/
21 AusPlay (2020)
22 Until 2019. Tourism Research Australia (2021)
23 WeRide: The Australian Cycling Economy Report 2020
24 TRC (2017)
25 www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-06/electric-motors-might-change-congestion-cycle/11282384

New Walking Experiences in Australia

New walking experiences in iconic and scenic locations are under development in nearly every state and territory, and increasingly from international destinations. In the Eastern States, in addition to Queensland's plans for the introduction of five new signature walks, the Tasmanian government is introducing a sixth new premium walk, and the NSW Government has committed to bringing forward nine new major trail experiences.

This is also the case for mountain biking, with new developments in recent years in Tasmania (Derby, Maydena, Hollybank) Victoria (Warburton, Creswick, Omeo) as well as NSW (Mogo, Tathra, Eden).

Key Points

- Population growth in the study area will drive demand for trails, noting the demographic of the population represents an active cohort.
- Increasing populations across the study area create a strong argument for investment in regional trails and trails that connect with existing facilities and attractions.
- The growth of visitors to the region will also increase demand for high quality trail experiences.
- Consideration should be given to prioritising regional trail connections between existing trails to reduce vehicle use and increase length of stay, particularly in high growth areas.

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Figure 4: Summary of Different Types of Trail Experiences

Walking/Hiking	This can vary from a leisurely stroll to enjoy the coastline and forests to a more intense and strenuous hike through rugged terrain. Walking can be done for commuting or exercising with the dog, in urban areas or in national parks and reserves. It can also offer an overnight experience. Walkers undertaking a more remote activity are generally looking to immerse in nature or challenge themselves on an adventure hike.
Running	As with walking, runners can use a range of trail types, from urban and hard settings to more remote and wild settings, running through challenging terrain. Trail running continues to grow in popularity, with new trail running events occurring internationally. Trail running adventures can also include orienteering and rogaining challenges.
Cycling	Cyclists may use urban trails for commuting, however, they may also enjoy longer cycle trails for short breaks and weekends, independently or with family and friends. There are also cycle tourists (domestic and international) who travel from place to place with their bicycle to better explore a region.
Mountain Biking	Mountain biking applies to a range of users, from beginners and family groups to more adventurous cross-country and downhill riders. Mountain biking may be done for leisure locally or can also attract major international competitions and visitors.
Horse Riding	Horse riding users can also be categorised into short recreational riders, undertaking a few hours' ride on a weekend; endurance riders, who participate in riding competitions and may use trails for training purposes; and long-distance riders, who enjoy an overnight experience or longer journey on horseback.

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LEGISLATION

The management and operation of the trail network in the region is governed and informed by a range of legislation outlined below.

The *Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Act 2020* and associated regulations legislates for the management responsibility of approximately 1,000 parcels of Crown land and their associated assets be transferred to the Authority across five Local Government Areas and three other crown land managers. This is set to be completed by 1 November 2025.

The vision is a thriving Great Ocean Road region through integrated land management and infrastructure planning, and a strategic approach to visitation, environmental forces, severe weather events and climate change along the stretch of coastline.

The *National Parks Act 1975* provides for the management of the State's National Parks and various classes of reserves. The Act and its Regulations prescribe the permitted use and regulation of activity in Parks, ensuring the protection of individual park values while providing for safe and enjoyable use.

The *Forests Act 1958* sets the management framework for the State Forest. The Act includes firefighting and fire management guidance and for

recreation activities as well as commercial management of forests.

The *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* and the *Land Act 1958* provide the legislative framework for the management of Crown Land in Victoria. Specifically, they provide for regulations governing use and the provision to create Committees of Management, relevant to Councils for managing rail trails and other areas of Crown Land for recreation or tourism.

The Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (VIC) and the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)* both apply to the study area, along with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

Various other acts apply to land use planning including the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018 and the Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

Parks Victoria manages the Commercial Tour Operator Program for all the public land in Victoria in a bid to streamline the administration and regulation of tour operators, and to encourage the appropriate use of public land.

STRATEGIES AND PLANS

Country Plans

The Eastern Maar Country Plan – Meerreengeeye Ngakeepoorryeeyt 2015 contains goals relating to Country which includes strengthening culture and identity, ensuring healthy Country and natural resources, thriving communities, and creating a future for young people.

The EMAC would like to see its people employed in the care and management of Country and other enterprises such as tourism. The regional trail network can support inter-generational knowledge transfer and the sharing and strengthening of cultural identity. The development of the Regional Trail Strategy is the vehicle for Eastern Maar, the Authority and its partners to co-design these opportunities and to offer outstanding experiences for trail users.

Tourism Plans

The Visitor Economy Master Plan for the GOR Region 2021-2030 provides a roadmap for regional visitor economy recovery from Covid-19 to 2024, through to 2030. The planning pathway builds on recovery, to foster growth in the visitor economy. The plan emphasises that the high volume in visitation has significantly under delivered in-region yield and has resulted in congestion and poor visitor experience. It specifically refers to Twelve Apostles revitalisation.

Land Management Plans

Parks Victoria's relevant plans and strategies include the Great Otway National Park and Otway Forest Park Management Plan 2009, amended 2019. The plan contains policies, actions and provisions for protection of the park and for the provision of recreation activities and associated infrastructure. Other documents relevant to trails include Parks Victoria Signage Manual 2022 and the Track and Trail Grading Manual.

The Authority's current plans and strategies include the Great Ocean Road Action Plan and the Coastal and Marine Management Plan 2020–2025, that aim to establish an integrated and coordinated approach to protecting and managing coastal Crown land and the adjacent marine environment. The vision is to create world-leading environmental protection and coastal experiences for all.

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Strategies and Plans Impacting the Great Ocean Road Region

Appendix B – Assessment of the Trail Network

TRAIL NETWORK OVERVIEW

TRAIL NAME	DESCRIPTION	LAND MANAGER	OTHER ASSOCIATED
Anglesea MTB Trail Network (incorp. Anglesea Bike Park).	Located on Wadawurrung Country, the Anglesea MTB Network is an extensive collection of formal (sanctioned) and informal (unsanctioned) mountain biking trails encircling the township of Anglesea. The formal network consists of the 'Eumeralla Trails – Hurst Road' network which is approx. 25 km of predominantly IMBA blue-rated trails complimented by a number of green shared-use (walk/run) trails, and another 46kms of tracks, trails and management vehicle only (MVO) tracks of varying rideability and appeal to riders. Within the total of 71kms formal trails, 65km are managed by Parks Victoria with trail maintenance, volunteer engagement and support via the Surf Coast Mountain Bike Club. The Anglesea MTB Trail Network Concept Plan, developed in 2021, highlights the potential for an expansion to the existing formal network and an enhancement to the quality of trail provision including rideability and connections. The proposed network includes 36 trails and 107km of dedicated and shared use trails, spanning from Aireys Inlet to Torquay, with Anglesea in the centre. The scope of the Plan would deliver new trails (approx.16km), formalise illegal trails (approx. 19km), improve existing trails, improve/create new trail heads, develop supporting amenities, ensure closure of illegal trails, and implement signage and promotion of the network. The use of the formal Eumeralla Trails network has increased significantly over recent years. Runners, walkers and hikers also enjoy the existing shared-use trail sections and many more will enjoy a vastly improved network. Funding is essential for the Concept Plan project, with the next key stages prior to construction being to undertake vegetation and cultural heritage assessments (including wider community consultation), determine the feasibility of all new trails, and obtain Land Manager approval for all trails. Given the size of the network and the number and location of trails across different areas, there is potential to undertake the project in stages. The popular Anglesea Bike Park, located on the outskirts of the township, is on Alcoa freehold land, with a lease provided to the Surf Coast Shire as land manager up to June 2024. The long-term future of the bike park in its current location remains unresolved.	Eumeralla is managed by Parks Victoria with trail maintenance volunteer engagement and support via the Surf Coast Mountain Bike Club. Surf Coast Shire is the land manager for the bike park. This trail may be subject to transitional arrangements with the Authority	WTOAC Surf Coast Mountain Bike Club Anglesea Bike Park Community Asset Committee

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TRAIL NAME	DESCRIPTION	LAND MANAGER	OTHER ASSOCIATED
Forrest MTB Trail	Located on Eastern Maar Country, the Forrest MTB (FMTBT) trails showcase the natural beauty of the Otways, passing through tall eucalypt forests, dry heathy scrub and dense fern gullies. The trails have been designed around the village of Forrest and offer experiences for beginners as well as more experienced MTB fanatics. The trails have traditionally been cross country (XC) in riding style, however a recent revitalisation project has increased sustainability outcomes while broadening the rider demographic, with wider, more groomed trails, suitable for all skill levels, including family, beginner and all abilities adaptive MTB access. The trails also host Australia's largest MTB event and generate considerable returns to the Otway region.	DEECA (primary maintenance) Barwon Water	EMAC Forrest MTB Club Colac Otway Shire
Great Ocean Walk	Located on Eastern Maar Country, the Great Ocean Walk (GOW) is a 110 km walking trail with a promoted east to west end-to-end walk, shadowing the Cape Otway coastline and the Great Ocean Road. GOW was Victoria's first appointed and promoted Great Walk. The entire point to point journey takes walkers 2–7 days, showcasing a range of coastal environments, flora and fauna, and European pioneer heritage with a strong (but underrepresented) Aboriginal cultural heritage. Many walkers take on shorter sections, from half to full day walks, often out and back from an access car park, as there are limited loop walks.	Parks Victoria This trail may be subject to transitional arrangements with the Authority	EMAC
Otway Walks and Waterfalls	Located on Eastern Maar Country, the Otway Waterfall and Walks Network (OWWN) is a set of trails exploring the valleys, ridges, canyons and waterfalls of Otway Ranges hinterland. Walks include short nature walks, loop walks and longer point-to-point walks, many interacting with 13+ feature waterfalls dotted across an area bounded by Lorne, Cape Otway/Lavers Hill and Forrest. Several trailheads located along the Great Ocean Road make for easy access, including direct from the Lorne township. There are also numerous major trailheads located inland and picnic grounds and some campsites. Waterfalls or water bodies (i.e., Lake Elizabeth) form the focal destination features for the walks, however they also showcase a range of unique landscapes and ecological environments including canyons, fern and moss jungles, historical tramways and lookouts. This collection of short walks provides significant benefits to visitors allowing exploration of the region's outstanding natural environment.	Parks Victoria DEECA Trails within the Otway Walks and Waterfalls may be subject to transitional arrangements with the Authority.	EMAC

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TRAIL NAME	DESCRIPTION	LAND MANAGER	OTHER ASSOCIATED
Old Beechy Rail Trail	Located on Eastern Maar Country, the Old Beechy Rail Trail (OBRT) is a shared use trail following one of the state's former narrow-gauge railways from Colac to Beech Forest and Ferguson, located high in the Otway Ranges. The trail journeys through scenic forest, rich farmland and rolling hills, with the coast relatively close. There is excellent bird life, rainforest pockets, magnificent eucalypts and blackwoods shading the lush understorey, and plenty of railway history enroute. The route begins with 12 km of road riding at present (from Colac) before joining the railway alignment. Reaching the small township of Gellibrand, the line begins a long climb up the range, reaching for Beech Forest, before a dash down to Ferguson and its café (often closed). The Trail is located on a combination of Council owned land, private land and Crown Land.	Colac Otway Shire	EMAC Colac Otway Shire Friends of Old Beechy Rail Trail
Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail	Located on Eastern Maar Country, the Port Fairy – Warrnambool Rail Trail (PWRT) is a continuous 37 km shared use walking/cycling pathway, making its way through rural landscapes and farming communities between Port Fairy and Warrnambool. It journeys through remnant forest, skirts nearby a 25,000-year-old volcano (Tower Hill) and traverses wetlands and coastal sand dunes. It encompasses the historic towns of Port Fairy and Koroit, rural countryside, woodlands and native vegetation, extensive sea views of Killarney, extensive woodlands, coastal sand dunes, the Merri River wetlands and Warrnambool breakwater precinct. The trail has a gentle gradient and is suitable for use by cyclists and walkers of all ages and levels of fitness. Township sections are bitumen, allowing for use by mobility scooters, wheelchairs and the elderly.	Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail CoM	EMAC Moyne Shire Warnambool Shire
Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail	Located on Eastern Maar Country, the Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail (CTRT) runs from Camperdown, through Naroghid, Cobden, Glenfyne and Curdies to Timboon. Over 34kms, riders and walkers traverse volcanic features, farmland, wooded grassland and tall wet forest on descent into the wooded Timboon valley. Many original historic features remain along the trail, including brick culverts and remnants of the many bridges. The Curdies River pile (trestle) bridge has undergone some restoration and is listed with Heritage Victoria. The trail now directly connects to the recently opened Twelve Apostles Trail, enabling users to reach Port Campbell.	DEECA and Camperdown Timboon Rail Trail CoM	EMAC

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TRAIL NAME	DESCRIPTION	LAND MANAGER	OTHER ASSOCIATED
Surf Coast Walk	Located on Wadawurrung Country and Eastern Maar Country, the Surf Coast Walk (SCW) is a 44 km multi-use trail located at the start of the Great Ocean Road Region, stretching from Torquay to Aireys Inlet. Following clifftops beyond the edge of Victoria's Great Ocean Road with meandering hinterland forest sections, the trail's easy access with twelve trailheads makes it perfect for short, long or multi-day village to village walks or rides. Features the Torquay promenade, Anglesea River mouth, Jan Juc's clifftop lookouts, the world-famous surfing mecca Bells Beach, eucalypt forests of Ironbark Basin, wild beach sections, and the historical Split Point Lighthouse, on family-friendly, easy to navigate shared paths. The Surf Coast Walk is also host to a number of high-profile pedestrian (walk and run) events, including Surf Coast trail Marathon, Surf Coast Century, Surf Coast Walk, Roo Run and Bells Bash.	The Authority Parks Victoria Surf Coast Shire This trail may be subject to transitional arrangements with the Authority.	WTOAC EMAC Bells Beach Committee
The Twelve Apostles Trail	Located on Eastern Maar Country, the Twelve Apostles Trail is a recently completed (Stage 1) 20km shared use trail linking Timboon to Port Campbell with an all off road alignment taking in forest reserves, farmland and ocean vistas on approach to the terminus at Port Campbell. The trail links directly to the Camperdown to Timboon Rail trail, effectively offering a total 60 km journey. The planned Stage 2 will pass beyond Port Campbell to link to the Twelve Apostles Visitor Information Centre and potentially other visitor nodes (i.e., Loch Ard Gorge). Completion of Stage 2 would likely create a State significant trail.	Corangamite Shire Parks Victoria The Authority. This trail may be subject to transitional arrangements with the Authority.	EMAC
Warrnambool Foreshore Promenade	Located on Eastern Maar Country, the Warrnambool Foreshore Promenade (WFP) is a 7 km dual direction shared use concrete pathway that runs parallel to the beaches from the Warrnambool Breakwater in the south to Point Ritchie in the north. It diverts inland to cross the Hopkins River, before tracking Logans Beach Road to finish at the popular Logans Beach Whale Watching Platform. A popular recreational trail for walkers, runners, riders, scooters and those with prams, the trail makes most of spectacular lookouts as it gently climbs into the dunes and back down to Point Ritchie. There are numerous access points to the popular Warrnambool Beach, including at the Surf Lifesaving Club. Facilities enroute include lookout platforms, showers, water bubblers, seating and picnic spots on the hinterland side. The trail accesses popular Warrnambool recreation and conservation reserves along with family friendly attractions such as the Adventure Playground and associated trails. It has numerous car parking zones along its length and within walking distance to various accommodation (including two holiday parks), catering and other township services.	Warrnambool City Council	EMAC

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TRAIL NAME	DESCRIPTION	LAND MANAGER	OTHER ASSOCIATED
Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail	Located on Eastern Maar Country, the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail (GORCT) is a planned trail along the Otway coast, with views from suspension bridges and lookouts, as well as boardwalks, river crossings and day visitor areas. Sections of new trail will connect with existing walking and management vehicle tracks that will provide a 6-day 5-night hike, day walks, half-day walks and create shorter loop walks. The State government has invested $25.5 million to plan the new trail between Fairhaven and Grey River and construct the new trail between Fairhaven and Jamieson River.	The Authority Parks Victoria This trail may be subject to transitional arrangements with the Authority	EMAC DEECA
Otway Hinterland Horse Trail (proposed)	Located on Eastern Maar Country, the proposed Otway Hinterland Horse Trail (OHHT) is a 105km long-distance lineal trail that passes through public land in the Great Otway National Park, Otway Forest Park and other land managed by Parks Victoria, DEECA, Surf Coast Shire and Colac Otway Shire. Open Trails Australia (OTA) completed an audit assessment of the route in April 2022, that focused on the requirements to enable the trail to be operational and promoted for use by horse riders for single or multi day experiences. The audit identified potential risks to all OHHT users and provided recommendations on how to best manage those risks. The OHHT route alignment was provided by Parks Victoria based on advice by key horse-riding advocates. It was assessed as a dual direction lineal trail and subsequently classified as an Advanced horse-riding trail given the gradients, distances and remote location. The route follows public open roads, and seasonal management tracks of varying surface qualities.	Parks Victoria, DEECA, Surf Coast Shire and Colac Otway Shire This trail may be subject to transitional arrangements with the Authority	EMAC

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INDIVIDUAL TRAIL ASSESSMENT

A high-level assessment of each of the region's existing trails and trailheads was undertaken as part of this project.

The trail assessment found that the region features a diverse variety of long and short distance trails. The condition of the trails varies, with most requiring some level of maintenance and improvement to infrastructure and signage to meet Australian Standards requirements and enhance trail safety and sustainability. The summary results are presented below. Specific actions for each trail to address the issues and opportunities identified are also provided.

Table 10: Summary of Trail Assessment

TRAIL	CHALLENGES
Anglesea MTB Trail Network **Approximately 71 km of formalised trails.**	Erosion and water impacts on some sections. Cinnamon (*Phytophthera Cinnamomi*) Fungus spread. Car parking limitations. Limited stock of trails restricting overall appeal for inter-regional riders. No capacity for event staging on site. No toilets associated with Eumeralla MTB Network. Some erosion issues on small sections of some trails. No picnic/rest areas within park. No water supply.
Forrest MTB Trail **26 trails over 70 km.**	Build complexity with sensitive wet-ground environment. Rising cost of infrastructure (i.e., toilet now $80k). Est $100,000/year required for maintenance – mostly via DEECA currently. Requires new funding streams. Old school style of trails (XC), contrasting with new market demand for flow and gravity (some attendance to this in new trails for Forrest network).
Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail **Rail Trail multi-use over 40 km point to point.**	A connection between Naroghid (current trail head) and Camperdown that allows users to access the trail without travelling on road should be considered. Trail widening between Glenfyne and the Trestle Bridge would benefit users. The Trestle Bridge is a significant asset for the trail and will require funding to maintain it to an appropriate standard. Major trailhead and wayfinding signage would improve the user experience.
Great Ocean Walk **98 km (105 km inc alternatives) one way**	Lack of adequate maintenance capacity. Ageing infrastructure – campsites, car park, toilets, boardwalks, stairs bridges all require replacement now or in near future, etc. Full infrastructure asset condition audit is required. Concentrated use and impacts on popular/accessible sections.
Otway Waterfall Walks Network **Approx 60 km of single walks with fire track access links.**	Ageing infrastructure – campsites, bridges, walkways, some damaged by treefall /weather events. Rapid degradation of infrastructure due to environment. Lack of adequate maintenance capacity. Adequate access for maintenance. Some sites are at capacity (e.g. Erskine Falls).
Old Beechy Rail Trail **50 km Point to point rail trail.**	Lack of major trailhead, toilet and picnic facilities at Maggios Road (start point for car-based visitation). 12 km of alignment prior is undesirable road section only suited for train-based rider access. Road section from Colac Train Station to Maggios Road (start of railway alignment) is a poor experience. Steep sections/climbing profile places this trail in a different category (more challenging) than most rail trails. Current unresolved closure due to private property/landowner concerns.
Port Fairy to Warnambool Rail Trail **37.5 km shared use trail.**	Maintenance and funding remain an issue for the Committee of Management (CoM) and Council. The trail is subject to inundation on low-lying sections of trail on outskirts of Warrnambool. There is a lack of picnic facilities outside township nodes.

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TRAIL	CHALLENGES
Otway Hinterland Horse Trail 105 km horse riding on road verges.	Motor bike and 4WD interactions and other user interactions raises safety and potential conflict for riders, walkers, runners. 1 km section of road between Deans Marsh township and the Bambra Cemetery Road and Winchelsea Deans Marsh Road intersection is not safe for horse and rider to traverse. Lack of water or specific facilities for horses.
Surf Coast Walk 44 km point to point shared use trail.	Clifftop degradation risks (Rocky Point, Anglesea, Aireys Inlet). General erosion (trails and clifftops), guttering and trail degradation due to trail inundation and rain events. High season trail user conflict, especially in township areas (i.e., bikes, walkers, runners, dog walkers).
Twelve Apostles Trail – Timboon to Port Campbell Shared use trail – 20 km linking to rail trail.	No audit undertaken as this trail was under construction during this time.
Warrnambool Foreshore Promenade Walk Walk and ride – 7.5 km point to point.	Popular trail with potential safety issues between bikes and walkers. Maintenance costs are high due to infrastructure exposed to ocean air environment. Limited online information/directives regarding trail use. Full extension of pathway not shown on most online mapping.

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SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL TRAILS

Table 12: Forrest Mountain Bike Network Actions

ACTION NUMBER	ACTION	PRIORITY AND ACTION TYPE	WHO
FMTB1	Seek funding for Yaugher network of trails and upgrade Tiger Rail Trail.	High Action	Colac-Otway LGA and GORRTF
FMTB2	Develop collective Beach to Bush MTB marketing plan in cooperation with Anglesea MTB destination.	High Enabling	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
FMTB3	Encourage more event operators to consider Forrest as a suitable staging ground.	Medium	Colac Otway LGA and GORRTF
FMTB4	Investigate curation of long-distance ride route to link Anglesea (without requiring new trail build, i.e. gravel grind).	Medium Enabling	GORRTF
FMTB4	Investigate and encourage further connectivity between Forrest and Anglesea MTB including shuttle services between the two parks to improve regional positioning.	Medium Enabling	GORRTF

Table 13: Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail (Planned) Actions

ACTION NUMBER	ACTION	PRIORITY AND ACTION TYPE	WHO
GORCT1	Undertake detailed design and planning preparation and submission.	High	DEECA supported by the Authority and EMAC
GORCT2	Continue community consultation and communication as project proceeds.	High	The Authority supported by DEECA and EMAC
GORCT3	Commence upgrades on existing trails.	High	DEECA supported by the Authority, Parks Victoria and EMAC
GORCT4	Commence new trail construction following completion of detailed design and existing trail upgrades.	High Enabling	DEECA supported by the Authority and EMAC
GORCT5	Develop and implement branding and signage along route.	High Enabling	The Authority supported by DEECA and EMAC
GORCT6	Early-stage risk management planning for trail operations.	Medium Enabling	The Authority supported by DEECA and EMAC
GORCT7	Early-stage development of trail specific maintenance and operations plan.	Medium Enabling	The Authority supported by DEECA and EMAC
GORCT8	Identify and implement priority actions from the Business Activation Plan.	Medium Enabling	The Authority, EMAC supported by DEECA
GORCT9	Review options to connect GORCT with GOW including coastal and non-coastal options.	Medium Enabling	GORRTF
GORCT10	Continue investigations for the proposed Les Noseda Highview Trail at Apollo Bay.	Medium Enabling	Colac Otway Shire in collaboration with GORRTF

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Table 14: Great Ocean Walk Actions

ACTION NUMBER	ACTION	PRIORITY AND ACTION TYPE	WHO
GOW1	Revisit RDV Business Case for realignment of dirt roads. Circa $20 million proposal.	High Enabling	The Authority supported by the GORRTF
GOW2	Improve engagement with, and operational trail planning alongside EMAC.	High Enabling	Parks Victoria, the Authority, EMAC
GOW3	Develop short walk offerings/curation including identification of viable loop walk experiences from trailheads.	High	The Authority supported by the GORRTF
GOW4	Develop a strategic plan for off trail-adjacent nodes: Cape Otway Lightstation and Princetown precincts.	Medium Enabling	The Authority supported by the GORRTF
GOW5	Promote new Fiji Monument Trail (potential for short walk in/out visitation).	Medium Enabling	GORRT in collaboration with the GORRTF
GOW6	Establishment of a Climate Change Impacts – Trail Management, Resilience and Retreat Plan.	Medium	The Authority in collaboration with the GORRTF

Table 15: Otway Waterfall Walks Network Actions

ACTION NUMBER	ACTION	PRIORITY AND ACTION TYPE	WHO
OWWN1	General review/trail audit and maintenance requirement report for all trails included in the network/	High Enabling	Parks Victoria supported by GORRTF
OWWN2	Sabine Falls upgrade identified including review of viewing platform experience.	High	Parks Victoria supported by GORRTF
OWWN3	Kalimna Falls Walk/s trail upgrades identified, including boardwalks.	High	Parks Victoria supported by GORRTF
OWWN4	Include Little Aire Falls as focus promotion target (already linked to Triplet Falls via short out and back).	High	GORRT in collaboration with GORRTF
OWWN5	Investigate scope for sensory walks for people with disabilities, 'curated' around sound, smells, touch.	High Enabling	GORRTF
OWWN6	Investigate potential parking expansion (trail linked) above Erskine Falls to north.	High	Parks Victoria supported by GORRTF
OWWN7	Investigate linking Allenvale Mill Site to Sheoak Picnic Area. Likely delivered by Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail alignment.	Medium Enabling	DEECA
OWWN8	Increase promotion of walk to Erskine Falls from Lorne township and/or investigate solutions for support transfers.	Medium Enabling	GORRT supported by the GORRTF for actions

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Table 16: Surf Coast Walk Actions

ACTION NUMBER	ACTION	PRIORITY AND ACTION TYPE	WHO
SCW1	Initiate 10–20 year trail management plan including climate change response.	High Enabling	The Authority supported by GORRTF
SCW2	Implement planning and accountability structures for new maintenance guidelines and programming.	High Enabling	The Authority supported by GORRTF
SCW3	Formalise and structure process for engaging volunteer groups for defined maintenance roles.	High Enabling	The Authority supported by GORRTF
SCW4	Upgrade trail infrastructure to integrate more sustainable and maintenance-friendly design solutions.	High	The Authority supported by GORRTF
SCW5	Review Interpretation Signage and focus points for development of cultural interpretation i.e., Point Roadknight.	Medium	WTOAC, EMAC supported by the Authority and GORRTF
SCW6	Investigate primary SCW trailhead at Whites Beach/terminus of Esplanade – better end-to-end experience.	Medium	The Authority supported by GORRTF
SCW7	Investigate options for improving shuttle service offerings along SCW.	Medium Enabling	The Authority supported by GORRTF

Table 17: Anglesea MTB Trail Network Actions

ACTION NUMBER	ACTION	PRIORITY AND ACTION TYPE	WHO
AMTN1	Progress Anglesea MTB Trail Network Concept Plan – undertake required assessments, engagement and approvals, re-assess for alignment revisions, secure project funding, progress to formalisation and build phases (potential for a staged approach).	High Enabling	Surf Coast Shire, DEECA, GORRTF, Alcoa and Anglesea Mountain Bike Park Community Asset Committee
AMTN2	Develop missing trail alignments linking to Torquay addressing connectivity and safety concerns.	High	GORRTF
AMTN3	Confirm long-term future of Anglesea Bike Park	High Enabling	Surf Coast Shire, DEECA, GORRTF and the Alcoa and Anglesea Mountain Bike Park Committee of Management
AMTN4	Accessibility trail audit to identify appropriate adaptive MTB routes within network.	Medium Enabling	GORRTF

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Table 18: Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail Actions

ACTION NUMBER	ACTION	PRIORITY AND ACTION TYPE	WHO
CTRT1	Complete replacement of 5 bypass bridges: – Bridges 11 and 12 replaced 2022 – Bridges 14 and 15 to be replaced 2024 (funding and tender process complete) – Bridge 13 temporary repairs completed to enable bridge to remain open until 2025 – Funding shortfall of $300,000 to be sort to enable replacement by early 2025	High Enabling	DEECA/CoM and GORRTF
CTRT2	Curdies Trestle Bridge – obtain funding to enable assessment and repair.	High Enabling	DEECA/CoM
CTRT3	Track Surface upgrade between Curdies Trestle Bridge and Timboon – grant for funding (RDV) has been submitted.	High Enabling	DEECA/CoM
CTRT4	Upgrade Trail surface and increase trail width between Bridges 11 and 15.	Medium Enabling	DEECA/CoM
CTRT5	Re-investigate and develop a strategy for realignment of trail alongside Lake Bullen Merri (west side), linking to lake facilities (noting current private landholder status and associated Doctorate of Accretion). Further connection link west alongside Naroghid Rd (southern side).	Medium Enabling	DEECA/CoM and GORRTF
CTRT6	Identify potential participatory walk/ride events linking towns.	Medium Enabling	DEECA/CoM supported by GORRT
CTRT7	Identify and install major trailhead signage and in/out township wayfinding at and in Cobden.	Medium Enabling	DEECA/CoM
CTRT8	Seek improved bike hire options for Camperdown.	Medium	DEECA/CoM – trailhead signage Cobden Progress Association – wayfinding signage

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Table 19: Old Beechy Rail Trail Actions

ACTION NUMBER	ACTION	PRIORITY AND ACTION TYPE	WHO
OBRT1	Resolve closure of Wimba to Beech Forest section.	High	Colac Otway Shire Council
OBRT2	Assess potential for development of Maggios Road as primary user trailhead including car park and facilities.	High	Colac Otway Shire Council
OBRT3	Assess location and potential for picnic facility between Gellibrand and Beech Forest.	High Enabling	Colac Otway Shire and GORRTF
OBRT4	Identify and support potential event activations, recreational and/or competitive.	Medium	Colac Otway Shire and GORRTF
OBRT5	Identify and promote potential gravel grind route connection to Forrest.	Medium Enabling	Colac Otway Shire and GORRTF
OBRT6	Update marketing material for better promotion and facilitation.	Medium	GORRT in collaboration with Colac Otway Shire
OBRT7	Identify relevant tour operations with potential to leverage the trail for new experiences.	Medium	Colac Otway Shire and GORRTF

Table 20: Port Fairy to Warrnambool Rail Trail Actions

ACTION NUMBER	ACTION	PRIORITY AND ACTION TYPE	WHO
PWRT1	Identify and develop new parallel route from Koroit Township to lip of Tower Hill Reserve to add connectivity and significant tourism value.	High Enabling	Moyne Shire supported by the CoM
PWRT2	Assess and rectify trail levels to solve current inundation issues on outskirts of Warrnambool (from Millers Lane through Swinton Street and Merri River alignment).	High	City of Warrnambool
PWRT3	Identify feasible and appropriate picnic facility sites outside township nodes.	Medium	CoM supported by LGAs
PWRT4	Identify potential event concepts and operators.	Medium	CoM supported by LGAs
PWRT5	Promote route and attractions to gravel grind and bikepacking markets.	Medium	GORRT in collaboration with CoM and LGAs

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Table 21: Twelve Apostles Trail Actions

ACTION NUMBER	ACTION	PRIORITY AND ACTION TYPE	WHO
TAT1	Confirm alignment and experience design of missing link Port Campbell to Princetown.	High Enabling	The Authority and Corangamite Shire Council
TAT2	Explore on-trail accommodation options including farm stay or public recreation reserve repurposed – i.e., Paaratte Recreation Reserve	Medium Enabling	Corangamite Shire Council supported by GORRT
TAT3	Identify potential pathway to establishing hire bike operations including e-bike charter.	Medium Enabling	Corangamite Shire Council
TAT4	Ensure future promotion planning accounts for extension of trail to Princetown.	Medium Enabling	Corangamite Shire Council supported by GORRT
TAT5	Seek funding to activate research findings and interpretation potential from Indigenous culture studies/data set.	Medium Enabling	Corangamite Shire Council
TAT6	Identify potential opportunities for and operators of events suitable for trail experience (likely non-competitive given road crossings).	Medium Enabling	Corangamite Shire Council supported by GORRT

Table 22: Warrnambool Foreshore Promenade Actions

ACTION NUMBER	ACTION	PRIORITY AND ACTION TYPE	WHO
WFP1	Redevelop Surf Lifesaving Club.	High Action	Warrnambool City Council
WFP2	Assess trail section Blue Hole Rd to Whale Watching for realignment or improved experience.	High	Warrnambool City Council
WFP3	Identify relevant proximal events and opportunities for activating trail.	Medium Enabling	Warrnambool City Council
WFP4	Develop improved online information pertaining to trail.	Medium Enabling	GORRT in collaboration with Warrnambool City Council

Table 23: Otway Hinterland Horse Trail Actions

ACTION NUMBER	ACTION	PRIORITY AND ACTION TYPE	WHO
OHHT1	Undertake a feasibility study to address the challenges identified in trail audit.	Medium Enabling	PV and GORRTF
OHHT2	Assess capacity for shared use with gravel grind (noting majority on road alignment).	Medium	PV and GORRTF
OHHT3	Consider production of stage one digital route guide with relevant pre-trip information and safety caveats.	Medium Enabling	PV and GORRTF

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Appendix C – Assessment of the Great Ocean Road Region as a Trails Destination

The following table assesses the region's trails and trail experiences against the key criteria for a outstanding trails destination. Emojis are used to provide a guide to current performance against the criteria.

CRITERIA	RANKING 1 Performs well. 2 Average performance with room to improve. 3 Significant improvements required.	GAPS AND ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
Diversity of Trail Types	1	• Diversity in the network is good, including 'top end' trail experiences designed to bring visitors to the region, family friendly options (rail trails) and cycling/shared use trails. • Two mountain bike parks tend to have limited diversity. • Lack of a high-quality MTB multi-day experience. • Shorter walks are appealing for broad market – but some are not maintained to high standard. • Accessibility across the network is limited and patchy.	• Marketing more-easily accessible walks to help disperse visitors across the region. • Connecting trail network with local communities and other trails/attractions. • Implementation and development of the Mountain Bike Master Plans and Concept Plans, to provide a strong mountain bike trail offering.
State/National Trails	1	• GOW and the proposed GORCT and other signature trails identified will require ongoing funding to support the visitor economy. • Lack of a regional approach to trail classification. Signature trail experiences are not agreed across the region or promoted as visitor drawcards. • Strong mountain bike networks provide a strong regional trail offering and could be leveraged further. • Existing rail trails offer a strong product, but they are not linked and, in most cases, have large expanses between products and services.	• Adopt an agreed regional classification of trails as national, regional and local, as a basis for experience development prioritisation and promotion. • Focus on development of smaller number of great experiences. • National trails investment needs to be increased, protected and maintained. • Revitalise the GOW and planned GORCT offering and other signature trails with improved maintenance and infrastructure upgrades. • Create a 'GORR Rail Trail Product' that provides a consistent high-class multi-use rail trails network linking attractions.
Concentration of Trails	2	• The region has a good concentration of trails and visitors can stay in one place to enjoy several days of trail use. • The Rail Trails are poorly connected around the region and	• Connectivity of the rail trail and 'multi-use' trail network would improve usage from visitors and communities. • Continue to develop trail 'clusters' where market demand continues to

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CRITERIA	RANKING 1 Performs well. 2 Average performance with room to improve. 3 Significant improvements required.	GAPS AND ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
		offer disparate experiences to different standards.	grow. This includes day walk hubs in Otways. • Develop the concept of a marketing MTB experiences together – Forrest, Anglesea and potentially You Yangs to give critical mass to offering combined with other trail experiences in the region to increase length of stay.
High Quality Infrastructure	**2**	• Trail infrastructure varies by trail type and across the region. • Inconsistent trail standards (difficulty, use) and signage across the region. • Some trail standards differ across the region for similar type trails and similar users. • Ageing infrastructure across most trails. • Different quality and level of interpretation.	• Trail head facilities and visitor information can be improved - some newer trails have high quality infrastructure. • Develop innovative models to assist land and trail manager with trail maintenance. • Consider closing or rehabilitating several lower priority trails to enable a focus on the trails with the highest visitor economy and community outcomes. • Consider a design or 'brand' for 'GORR Trails' to help with market penetration and an understanding of what GORR can offer to trail users.
Accessibility	**2**	• Public transport connecting trails is lacking. • Many trails are not accessible by all ability standards.	• Work with transport authorities to develop a walk/bike friendly transport service on buses and trains on selected routes in peak periods. • Use strong design guidelines to develop all-ability trail and trail infrastructure where appropriate and as a general rule. • Develop a regional map and approach to all abilities access.
Distinctive Experiences	**1 for walking** **2 for MTB**	• Mountain bike trails are generally of a regional level. • Many walking trails are unique and showcase the environment of the region. • The rail trail and multi-use trails are variable and have sections that are unique to the region while other sections are variable.	• The trails would significantly benefit from exceptional interpretation and cultural experiences. • The ability to connect into other trails from existing trails would make the GOR a outstanding destination.
Attractive Natural or	**1**	• Coastal and hinterland trails pass through sensitive environments and volume of use places pressure	• Signature experiences to be constructed and developed in outstanding natural areas.

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CRITERIA	RANKING 1 Performs well. 2 Average performance with room to improve. 3 Significant improvements required.	GAPS AND ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
Cultural Context		on these values. Managing use and dispersal of visitors to ensure protection of the important values is critical. • Aboriginal cultural heritage is paramount to First Nations Peoples in the region and decisions on any impact or interpretation need to be made by those groups.	• Developing a strong partnership with the Aboriginal corporations and communities in the region to bring culture alive on the trails and to include the community in associated enterprises and management.
Quality Pre-Trip Information	**3**	• Parks Victoria and DEECA have information on walks and trails on their land within their corporate websites. • A search of trails, national parks and walks (attractions) on the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (Australia's online marketplace for tourism information) shows limited trails listed. Parks Victoria have a number of listings; however, the hierarchy is unclear and there are some key products missing. • Individual Councils have their own information through printed material, and websites. • There is no central source of information on GORs trails easily accessible in one location for consumers and visitors. • There is little, if any, mobile digital information that enables story telling or support for experiences.	• A single source website that had information on trail tourism in GOR– even with links back to detailed information on the individual land manager's websites – would be a significant improvement for visitors being able to find information. • A regional brand for the significant trails and experiences in the region might be a valuable tool to enable visitors to seek out relevant information more easily and to know what to expect within that branding.
Range of Quality Support Services	**3**	• The region has several commercial operators using the trail network. • Many of the best-known attractions of the GOR region can be linked to tracks and trails. • In addition to outdoor recreation, GOR region offers a variety of non-commissionable and commissionable activities for residents and visitors. There are several organised walking and cycle tour opportunities.	• Investigate a 'Regional Trail Friendly' accreditation scheme to help encourage and promote trail visitor friendly businesses.
Support Businesses in Food, Beverage etc.	**3**	• There are very few trail-specific food and beverage businesses and products.	• Economic development activation across the trail network (at scale) will benefit all areas and connect to marketing approach of GORRT as a trails destination.

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CRITERIA	RANKING 1 Performs well. 2 Average performance with room to improve. 3 Significant improvements required.	GAPS AND ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
		• Most of the services are in towns and can be some distance from trail-based experiences. • Some farm gate and small producers are close to trails and could be aligned to trail visitors.	
Strong Trail Destination Positioning and Marketing	2	• Many sources of information about trails in the region – often conflicting. • Generally, there is no region-wide alignment of trail-based experiences. • GORRT provides regional products on their website without significant branding and positioning of the region.	• One regional owner promoting and business activation of trails-based experiences and products. • Develop a single portal/website for trails-based information.
Effective Governance	3	• Limited funding means all trail managers are competing for funds. Collaboration occurs between land managers and Councils on a local level. • Limited connection with EMAC and WTOAC • Rail Trails are reliant on Committees of Management with limited succession. • There's no formal mechanism to develop a regional approach to trail management and development.	• Develop and implement a region-wide governance structure that enables strong regional decision making on strategic priorities. • Hold regular regional trail forums and encourage private industry to seek out business opportunities on trails. • Formal governance structure involving Traditional Owners.
Community Engagement	2	• Strong community engagement occurs at local government level particularly around individual Council trail and pathway plans, and economic development plans. • Land managers undertake community engagement and develop stakeholder relationships with trail user groups around specific parks or trails.	• With the development of an agreed region-wide governance mechanism, develop community information and consultation forums that do not override the need for Councils or land managers to undertake this.
Events	1	• High number of trail-based events – there remains capacity in low and shoulder season for events.	• Develop a regional umbrella event to celebrate trails and align it to the Regional Events Strategy.

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STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

STRENGTHS

- The natural and cultural landscapes and seascapes are outstanding
- Diverse range of trails
- Active and supportive community
- The opportunity to capitalise on strengths
- Strong and well-known offerings
- Close to Melbourne visitor markets
- Great Ocean Road touring route acts as main route to access trails
- Different markets, with some served well
- Large number of existing gravel tracks suitable for riding and touring.

WEAKNESSES

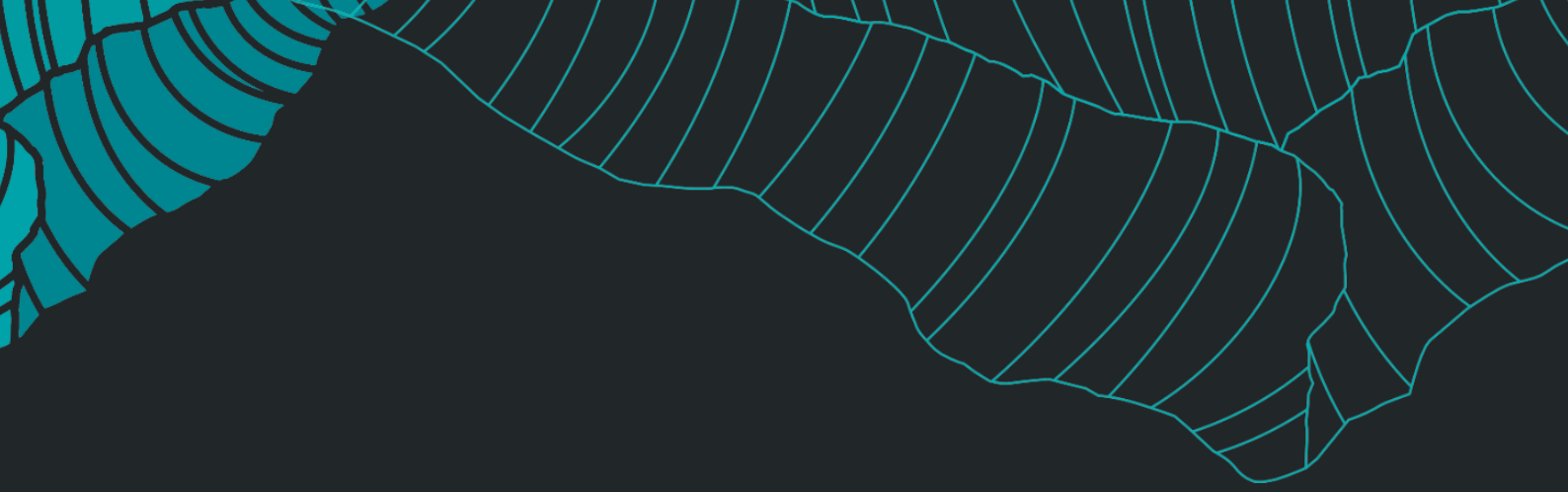
- Lack of consistent standards and resources to support quality network
- Lack of data on use, and therefore its values and threats are underestimated
- Region positioning as trail destination does not exist
- Accessibility patchy and not visible to market
- Trail and transport connections between trails are poor and often bike unfriendly
- Many existing trails are struggling to receive the necessary maintenance and governance
- Many existing trails are not mapped
- No single source of information – confusing
- Many entities and complex bureaucracy.

OPPORTUNITIES

- A sustainable funding model
- Climate adaptation strategy for trails across the region
- Rationalise investment to bring a smaller number of trails to a higher standard.
- Income streams to finance trail maintenance
- Bring together trail community for more effective resource co-ordination
- Capacity building and resource support for volunteers
- Connect the trail community to improve linkages existing products, infrastructure, and trails
- Partner with Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation and the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Corporation, promote respect and understanding of Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar knowledges, cultures and values, and to create economic opportunities.

THREATS

- Climate Change
- Emergencies, including fires, close areas or destroy infrastructure
- The region falls behind other Victorian regions and destinations that offer high quality market-aligned products due to lack of funding for maintaining trails to a quality standard
- Complexity of land management across boundaries and the regulations that apply
- Lack of funding, capital and operational
- Diversity (lack of, or not focusing on, product strengths)
- Policy differences between partners
- Threat of lack of funding resulting in a poor user experience and future lower visitation.



GREAT OCEAN ROAD
COAST & PARKS AUTHORITY