GSCORE

Great Southern Centre for
Outdoor Recreation Excellence

Great Southern Regional Trails Master Plan

BACKGROUND
REPORT

Photo: Steve Pontin

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Photo: Tourism WA

The goal of the Regional Trails Master Plan is to position the Great Southern as a World Class Trails Destination.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Great Southern region is currently engaged in a master planning process for the development of active leisure trails. Many examples from trail destinations nationally and internationally demonstrate that effective planning and management of trail networks, associated with strategic investment in trails and related infrastructure, leads to better long-term outcomes in relation to trail planning, design, construction and maintenance. The need for a regional trail master plan is identified in the Great Southern Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2018-2020 and the Great Southern Regional Sport and Recreation Plan (2018).

The Great Southern Regional Trails Master Plan (RTMP) will identify a coherent and clearly outlined program of trail infrastructure development across the Great Southern region over a ten-year period (2019-2029). The Master Plan will focus on a range of nationally and regionally significant trail experiences suited to different user groups across the Great Southern. It will guide decisions about the management of, and investment in, trails and provide a vision of what the trail network across the Great Southern will look like in the future. It will cater for a diversity of trail users, types and experiences, and involves future planning for relevant trail towns, trail networks and visitor services.

The Great Southern Centre for Outdoor Recreation Excellence (GSCORE) is delivering this project in conjunction with project partners - the City of Albany; the Shires of Broomehill-Tambellup, Cranbrook, Denmark, Gnowangerup, Jerramungup, Katanning, Kent, Kojonup, Plantagenet, and Woodanilling; the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA); the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC); and the Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC). The project has received funding support from all our project partners, as well as Lotterywest and the Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF).

Purpose of the Trails Background Report

The Trails Background Report is the first deliverable in the master planning process. The purpose of this background report is to provide the RTMP project partners with an overview of the current trail networks in the region and an understanding of the social, health, economic, and environmental benefits of trails in order to identify opportunities for potential trail development.

WHY DO WE NEED TRAILS?

The Western Australian Strategic Trails Blueprint 2017–2021[1] is a high-level strategic planning document produced by the Western Australian state government to guide future investment and ensure planning consistency and sustainable trails development across the State. It recognises the role that trails play in encouraging participation in outdoor recreation and driving economic growth through nature-based and adventure tourism. It also highlights the importance of trails in helping communities to realise important health and wellbeing benefits, to make social and cultural connections, and, when correctly designed, to provide environmental benefits.

What are trails?

"Trails are pathways or routes that are used for recreation, tourism and appreciation of natural and cultural values. Trails may be short or long; be part of a trail network or a single journey; be used for one activity or be shared by several different trail activities; be primarily used by local residents or form a visitor attraction; be purpose-built paths or routes designated by signage and information."[2]

Active leisure trails may be terrestrial (e.g. hiking, walking, running, mountain biking, cycling, equestrian) or aquatic (e.g. paddling, snorkeling, diving). They can also involve the use of motorised transport where a vehicle is the primary means of experiencing the natural environment (e.g. trail bikes) or where it provides a means to access recreation sites (e.g. 4WD, on-road vehicles). Many trail experiences include a focus on local culture, heritage, and produce (e.g. arts trails, food and wine trails). Trails may form part of a designated and sanctioned trail network or can be informal (and in some cases unsanctioned by land managers). They can be linear or looped and may be standalone or linked to trail centres and towns.

The WA Strategic Trails Blueprint classifies trails according to a hierarchy of local, regional, and national significance depending on their social, community and economic characteristics. Trails are also categorised according to an agreed classification system and standard (i.e. grades). These standards are specific to each trail type (e.g. walking) and are not interchangeable.

National Trails

An extended trail or trail network that is of sufficient quality with appropriate facilities, products and services to be recognised beyond the State and to attract visitors to WA (e.g. Bibbulmun Track or Munda Biddi Trail)

Regional 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

Local Trails

A trail that services the local community and provides facilities suited to local use. Some local trails may have potential for development to regional status

THE BENEFITS OF TRAILS

Trails are used by residents, tourists, outdoor enthusiasts, sporting clubs, schools, and other interest groups. They can be accessed by people of all ages and abilities and provide an opportunity for the community to experience improved health outcomes and cultural enrichment through interaction with the environment. Trails encourage outdoor recreation activity leading to improved physical and mental wellbeing for residents.

Communities also benefit from economic development associated with trails. They provide employment and business opportunities associated with trail development, construction, and maintenance, as well as tourism and events. Numerous examples for trail development projects in Australia and internationally demonstrate the economic value of trails.

> Trails are popular for active leisure and they bring social, economic and health benefits to individuals and communities.

THE BIBBULMUN TRACK (WA)[3]

ACTIVITY
1000kms walk

VISITORS
302,960 visit days each year
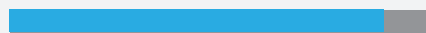
ECONOMIC VALUE
$13.1 million per annum

OTAGO CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL (NZ)[4]

ACTIVITY
4 day cycle, 150kms walk, equestrian

VISITORS
50,000-day cyclists each year

ECONOMIC VALUE
$10 million per annum

BLUE DERBY (TAS)[5]

ACTIVITY
Mountain Bike 100kms

VISITORS
30,000 visitors (2016)

ECONOMIC VALUE
$18 million in the first two years

WALKING

Nationally, walking is the most popular form of exercise enjoyed by 32% of men and 52% of women. [6]

Nationally, running and jogging is the fourth most popular form of exercise (15%) and trail running is experiencing unprecedented growth.[6]

CYCLING

Between 2016-2018, 7% of Australians had a cycle holiday experience in WA, and 26% of Western Australians undertook a daytrip in WA involving cycling.[10]

In 2015, 19% of Western Australians owned a mountain bike, and this figure is growing with over 120,000 mountain bikes purchased every year.[8]

Cycling is undertaken by 14% of men, and 9% of women nationally. [6]

Trail trends

The popularity of active leisure, individual fitness and outdoor recreation activities is increasing, and trail-based activities are central to this growth.

Visitors are drawn back to WA to experience its natural beauty time and again. **Almost 90% of those** whose last two trips to WA were for a holiday experienced 'amazing natural landscapes or national parks' on both trips. [12]

Of the **3,371,100 visitors** to Australia's South West in 2018, the majority were from WA. These visitors had a **total spend of $1.615M.**[13]

2.7 MILLION

An estimated 2.7 million overnight visitors to WA participated in a nature-based activity in 2015-2016.[11]

EQUESTRIAN

64% of horse riders spend 2-8 hours per week recreational riding, and 54% regularly ride 2-5km.[7]

SUP

Sales of stand-up paddle-boards and kayaks point to a growing interest and demand for water-based trail activities.[9]

GREAT SOUTHERN TRAIL NETWORK

In January 2019, GSCORE conducted an audit of existing and planned trails in each local government area (LGA) across the Great Southern region. This audit revealed that the Great Southern region has many trails with different characteristics. However, because most of these have been developed in isolation from each other, the region lacks a coherent trail offering. There is a high concentration of trails close to coastal areas, while inland areas, despite having natural attractions including parks and reserves, are very poorly served by trail infrastructure.

Existing trails in the Great Southern

Trail Types

- Walking is relatively well catered for with a variety of grades available, although trails are concentrated in the Lower Great Southern.
- There is a significant lack of sanctioned mountain bike trails.
- There are a number of informal road cycling routes, but very few recognised cycle trails.
- There are two recognised dive trails, and few formally recognised canoe trails.
- There are two designated bridle trails.
- Except for motocross facilities, there are no designated areas specifically for trail bike riders.

Trail Experiences

- There are very few looped trails, and most of these are short town walks.
- Apart from the two iconic, long distance trails (Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Trail) there are few trail products that appeal to a broad market and attract mass visitation.
- Several local governments in the hinterland areas have heritage trails and town walks.
- There are many informal routes (e.g. walking, cycling, bridle, trail bike) used primarily by residents.

Trail Information

- The region lacks consistent trail signage.
- There is no comprehensive source of information about the region-wide trail offering.
- There are few physical and/or promotional linkages between trails.

Trail Management

- There are a diversity of trail construction and maintenance standards, funding sources and governance arrangements.
- There are currently no recognised trail towns (hubs), trail centres, or trail networks.

Table 1: Existing Sanctioned Trails in the Great Southern (31 May 2019)

Trail type	Total Distance (km)	Number of trails
Walk	194	91
Walk (long distance)	179	2
Dual use (walk and cycle)	103	18
Off road cycle (long distance)	243	2
Mountain Bike (MTB) Trails	1.3	1
Equestrian/Bridle Trails	84	2
Dive Trails	0.6	2
Aquatic Trails	81	10
TOTAL TRAILS	**885.9**	**128**

Note: This audit only considered designated or sanctioned trails, not informal and/or unsanctioned trails.

Table 2 describes the spread of these trails across each LGA. A complete list of trails in each LGA has been provided to the project partners.

Table 2: Number of sanctioned trails by trail type in each LGA (31 May 2019)

LGA	Walk	Walk (long)	Dual	Cycle (long)	MBT	Bridle	Dive	Aquatic	Total
Albany	35	1	5	1	1	1	1	10	55
Broomehill-Tambellup	3								3
Cranbrook	3								3
Denmark	18	1	9	1		1			30
Gnowangerup	5								5
Jerramungup	9		1				1		11
Katanning	6								6
Kent									0
Kojonup	3		2						5
Plantagenet	8		1						9
Woodanilling	1								1

Note: Includes trails managed by DBCA or other bodies where these are located within LGA boundaries

Lack of trail planning at a local or regional level

In addition to a trails audit, GSCORE undertook a comprehensive review of existing planning documents at a local, regional and state level. This audit revealed that there has been little local level planning to meet the growing demand from residents for the construction of trails and trail networks. Except for the City of Albany, which is implementing its Trails Hub Strategy, none of the other local governments in the Great Southern have current local Trails Master Plans or equivalent documents. However, the need for trails master planning is listed in the LGA priorities in the *Great Southern Regional Sport and Recreation Plan* and is identified in several LGA strategic documents, including community or recreation plans.

Some LGAs have trails committees or project groups. The City of Albany has a Trails Project Control Group overseeing the implementation of the Albany Trail Hub Strategy, as well as project-specific working groups for individual trails/reserves. The Shire of Jerramungup has an active Bremer Bay Trails committee; and the Shire of

Denmark has a trail planning group in recess. The Shire of Plantagenet has recently established a trail working group. Seven of the region's eleven LGAs have population bases below 2000 residents and struggle to commit capital and human resource towards trail planning and development.

> While there are many trails, there are significant gaps in the types of trails and trail experiences. The current trail supply is insufficient to meet the needs of both residents and visitors.

WHAT KIND OF TRAILS WOULD THE COMMUNITY LIKE TO SEE DEVELOPED?

Throughout March to May 2019, GSCORE undertook an extensive community consultation process that involved key stakeholders, including landowners, land managers, local governments, the regional development commission, tourism organisations, peak recreational bodies, user groups, and the broader community. The main data collection techniques were face-to-face workshops, meetings with stakeholder groups, and an online survey. The consultation revealed widespread support from the public and local government for trail development. See Appendix A for a summary of the community and stakeholder engagement process; and Appendix B for a summary of the online survey results.

Trail ideas

Stakeholder groups and community members were asked to identify gaps in local and regional trail provision and to generate ideas for future trails. Most of the discussion focused on local trail ideas that would cater to the needs of residents. Opportunities to increase visitation to the Great Southern through trail-based tourism were also discussed.

• Long distance walk trails

These trails could follow rivers, stock routes, and historic sites. Link or extend trails and where possible link with existing long-distance trails.

• Local town and heritage walks

Strong desire to see local informal trails recognised, and existing trails to be upgraded and better advertised to promote the town.

• Walk trails

There is strong interest in developing looped trails of short to medium length (half-day to day walks), particularly off the Bibbulmun Track and/or associated with existing attractions.

• Drive trails

Desire to see an extension of existing trails, Silo Trail, Great Southern Treasures etc, and new trails which link historical places, natural values, or other linkages.

• Mountain bike

Need for designated mountain bike trails including purpose-built MTB park within City of Albany, Shire of Denmark, and/or Porongurup National Park. MTB to cater for all users from black/double black, to beginner rides for families.

• Road Cycling

Desire to improve signage and mapping for using existing roads to enable long distance cycling routes into the hinterland areas, linking with national parks.

• Equestrian

This group is not well catered for and requires specifically designed trails. Short and long-distance trails were discussed, following old stock routes. Common issues were inadequate parking facilities, access, and knowing where to go as signage is poor or absent.

• Rail trails

Particularly in the Shires of Woodanilling, Kent, Kojonup, Katanning, and Gnowangerup, which could be developed into a network offering different rail trail experiences.

• Snorkel trails

Development possible at four different sites in the Shire of Denmark, with extended opportunities at each site.

• Cultural heritage

Desire to see walk or drive trails that focus on Aboriginal stories of significant places and history. This could involve interpretive information via signage or via audio (using an App) and/or using Aboriginal guides.

• Trail bikes

Are not catered for at all, with no dedicated trails or official trail bike tracks in the Great Southern.

Common themes

In addition to trail ideas, the consultation process also elicited information on several key issues associated with planning, maintenance, and promotion of trails:

planning

- Trails are not a current priority for many LGAs
- There is no coordinated approach to trail planning within LGAs or across LGA boundaries
- LGAs lack knowledge of existing trails in their area
- LGAs lack trail planning documents
- There is concern about the costs associated with building trails
- Trail users are concerned about safety issues with dual and multi-use trails
- Uncertainty about who the responsible organisation or land manager is for PROPOSED trails

maintenance issues

- Uncertainty about who the responsible organisation or land manager is for EXISTING trails
- Little or no budget for maintenance (LGAs and DBCA) > work is opportunistic or doesn't occur at all
- Approvals - process unclear or takes time
- LGAs lack knowledge of trail design
- LGAs are concerned about ongoing maintenance costs for future trails
- Trail users are concerned about the poor condition of many trails

promotion

- There is no coordinated approach to marketing or promoting trails
- Lack of understanding of promotion opportunities
- Most trails are not listed on the Trails WA website
- Lack of signage
- Lack of knowledge about where to go to access a trail

Support from land managers

Many of the trail ideas that emerged through the community consultation process involve planning and collaboration across multiple land tenures. The exceptions to this are town trails and short walking and cycling trails.

GSCORE has initiated discussion with all key land manager groups to consider their appetite for trail upgrades or new trail development. Individual organisations are bound by their own policies and procedures, which may conflict with future trail development.

Table 3: Summary of feedback from land managers (May 2019)

Organisation	Role	Support	Concerns
LGAs	Key land manager, roads, inactive rail lines, public open spaces, recreational areas.	High	Cost of construction and maintenance.
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER)	Operational Policy 13 (Recreation on Crown Land) stipulates that the level of activity permissible must be at 2012 levels only, and that any new activity since then is not permissible. Public drinking water source areas (PDWSAs) are surface water catchments and groundwater areas that provide drinking water to cities, towns and communities throughout the state. PDWSAs are proclaimed under the Country Areas Water Supply Act 1947. DWER has responsibility but will consider offering management to others.	Low-Medium	Will discuss options when the project has more detail (Round 2 consultation). Project will need to work around boundaries or catchment areas.
Water Corporation	As above	Low	Exclusion zones apply. Plan work around boundaries.
Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions	Key land manager for parks and reserves, and crown land. Responsible for overall management of Munda Biddi Trail and Bibbulmun Track.	Medium	Supportive of two potential Munda Biddi realignment considerations. Will consider other opportunities on a case by case basis. Trails need to comply with identified uses listed in individual Management Plans.

Table continued on following page

Organisation	Role	Support	Concerns
Main Roads WA	Responsible for all state roads except within designated town sites. Responsible for 1,609 km in the Great Southern.	Medium	Road reserve width varies greatly and may contain native vegetation which is subject to clearing regulations.
Department of Transport	Regional Bike Network Plan identifies cycling opportunities as part of transport routes. Opportunity for smaller towns and City of Albany to be part of Great Southern Cycle Strategy.	High	Looking for opportunities to collaborate on regional transport routes.
Public Transport Authority (PTA)	Owns the leases for active and disused rail corridors. Manages lines to the west of the north-south freight line.	Low	Usually unsupportive of any development in the past.
Arc Infrastructure	Leases rail corridors and manages lines to the east of the main north-south freight line.	Low	As above.
Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries	Provides support and access to planning documents and frameworks.	High	Ensure consistent planning across the region. Need to focus on unique points of difference.
Peak Bodies and local user groups	Such as Outdoors WA, Bushwalking WA, Bibbulmun Track Foundation, Munda Biddi Trail Foundation, and local MTB clubs, cycling clubs, equestrian clubs, bushwalking and trail running groups, and kayaking groups.	High	Desire to see trails infrastructure improved at local and regional level.

Strong desire for trails development from the community, requires collaboration and tenure agreements.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE WITH THIS PROJECT?

The goal of the Regional Trails Master Plan is to position the Great Southern as a World Class Trails Destination.

The trail audit and community consultation process has shown that to achieve our vision there is an urgent need to develop a range of different trail types that will address local needs while providing unique and diverse trails experiences to increase visitation. The following key objectives for the RTMP have been endorsed by the project partners:

Photo: Tourism WA

Table 4: Project and planning principles

Principles	Implications for planning
We want to ensure sustainable trail development	The project will adopt the sustainable trail design principles in the DLGSC/DBCA Trail Development Series
We want to develop a range of different trail experiences (terrestrial and aquatic)	Include a range of different trail activities
We want to cater to different user groups and abilities	Include a range of grades, levels of difficulty, and styles
We want to disperse visitors across the region	Identify trail projects across the entire region
We want to showcase our unique landscapes	Build experiences around our unique points of difference
We want to build partnerships across LGA and regional development commission boundaries	Identify projects that cross boundaries
We want to provide a coherent and exciting array of experiences across the region that keep visitors in the region for longer	Focus on experiences not trails
We want to collaborate not compete	Put the user experience first
We want to attract visitors from outside the region	Focus is on nationally and regionally significant trails

Importantly, the RTMP will identify nationally and regionally significant trails that have the potential to attract residents, intrastate, interstate and international visitors to our region. These trails will be complemented by an array of trail-based experiences and services across the region that encourage visitors to remain in the region for longer. The project will identify and prioritise areas where high quality, sustainable and accessible trails could be developed, including locations capable of hosting state, national and international events.

Our goal is to establish an array of trail towns, trail centres, and trail networks that cater to different trail user groups. In doing so, we draw on the trail model outlined in the WA Strategic Trails Blueprint. A trail model defines how a trail or set of trails can be developed and applied to a population centre or an individual site. Trail models heavily influence all parts of trail planning, design, construction and management. These three trail models are shown in the diagram that follows.

1. TRAIL NETWORK

A collection of linked trails, often of same type, typically accessed via a trailhead. E.g. Pemberton, Porongurup National Park, Bremer Bay

Individual Trails

Amenities & Facilities

Individual Trails

2. TRAIL CENTRE

A managed trail or trail network supported by dedicated on site trail related services and facilities. May be stand alone or part of a trail hub. E.g. Margaret River

Visitor Info

Equipment Hire

Trail Networks

TRAIL CENTRE

Individual Site

Individual Trails

Amenities & Facilities

TRAIL TOWN

Population Centre

Trails & Trail Networks

Visitor Info

Individual Trails

Amenities & Facilities

Attractions & Activities

Trail Centre

Equipment Hire

Accommodation

General Services & Supplies

3. TRAIL TOWN

A population centre that offers a large range of high quality trails, trail user related services, facilities, businesses, branding and signage. (Also known as a trail hub). The aim of the Albany Trail Hub Strategy is for Albany to become a trail town.

OPPORTUNITIES

Funding for trails is not unlimited, and the cost of maintaining trails to a high-standard should not be underestimated. Rather than developing a long 'wish list' of potential trail projects, the Great Southern Regional Trails Master Plan will create a short list of opportunities that can be realistically delivered within the ten-year time frame. Based on the recognised trail models described on the previous page, there are several ways that our project partners can engage in future trail development (see Table 5).

Table 5: Trail development opportunities

Trail Focus	Aim	Planning Required	Investment	Example
Existing local trails	Develop and enhance designated local trails and/or upgrade informal recreational trails to meet the criteria of becoming a **trail network**.	Upgrade trail infrastructure such as signage, interpretation or mapping.	Low cost, many trails already exist, often managed by LGA.	Enhance local town walks, cultural heritage walks, or short cycling routes using a common theme based on history, culture, or nature.
Develop trail linkages	Develop trails to meet the criteria of becoming a **trail network** and or **trail centre**.	A coordinated planning approach to develop and establish links with existing long-distance routes for cycling and or walking. Requires trail infrastructure such as new trails, signage, interpretation or mapping.	Higher costs associated with new trail construction; relatively low cost for signage, mapping and interpretation.	Develop a drive or cycle trail map and interpretation that uses the existing network of sealed and unsealed roads. Re-align or connect existing trails through short sections of purpose-built trail.
Construct new nationally or regionally significant trail experiences	Develop trails to meet the criteria of **trail centre or trail town.**	Integrated planning across multiple tenure, approvals from several land managers, detailed concept designs for development of different trails experiences, and services, branding and signage.	Higher cost needed to leverage funding from all tiers of government.	Support the implementation of the City of Albany Trails Hub Strategy to enable the city to meet its aim of becoming a designated Trail Town. Other opportunities where there is currently little to no provision for trails are: • Purpose-built mountain bike parks offering a full range of experiences • Long distance road and off-road cycling, including rail trails • Purpose-built trail bike riding area • Medium length (10-20km) equestrian trails • Aquatic trails

How will the project support these opportunities?

In the next phase of the project, GSCORE will work with specialist consultants to develop regional trail plans for different trail activities (e.g. walking, mountain biking, etc). The different elements of Phase 2 of the project are outlined below.

Identify opportunities for local trail projects and regional trail linkages

This Trails Background Report includes an inventory of existing trails in each LGA management area. This will help to identify potential opportunities for local trail upgrades or regional trail linkages.

Identify regionally and nationally significant trail projects

The next stage of the project is to develop a list of priority trail projects. We will do this by identifying facilities, uses and organisations that might benefit from co-location, and provide opportunities to coordinate these activities around clearly defined trail centres and trail networks.

Regional Trails Marketing Plan

Several LGAs have identified marketing and promotion as a current gap. Project partners will have access to marketing resources via established links with Australia's South West, the Amazing South Coast Tourism Incorporated, and Great Southern Treasures.

Trail Building Network

The network will enable sharing of resources, training and information across LGAs thus reducing the financial burden on any one ratepayer group. It will lead to improved outcomes in relation to trail standards and quality, and ongoing trail maintenance, thus ensuring that infrastructure spend delivers long-term sustainable benefits to the community.

Regional planning has already provided an opportunity for many stakeholders to be consulted early in the process and to develop a common vision. GSCORE is working at a regional level ensuring that a wide spectrum of community interests, including land managers, trail user groups, cultural groups, and local service groups, are engaged in the project. Acting in partnership will give strength and scale to trails development, increasing the potential for new development and funding opportunities for LGAs and other land managers.

This approach will ensure that the Great Southern Regional Trails Master Plan will meet the growing demand from residents for sustainable trail development and capitalise on the economic opportunities associated with trail-based tourism. GSCORE looks forward to delivering a well-considered, realistic, and cost-effective Regional Trails Master Plan for the Great Southern.

Stakeholder and Community Engagement Activities

GSCORE employed a range of different methods to maximise engagement opportunities:

Table A1: Stakeholder and Community Engagement Techniques

Method	Description
Community Engagement	
Community workshops	Facilitated 15 community trails workshops across the region. There has been an extremely positive response with local community members, outdoor enthusiasts and elected representatives contributing to the sessions. A total of 184 people attended the workshops *(see Table A2 below for a complete list of workshops).*
Online Survey	An online user survey was widely promoted via Facebook, on the GSCORE website, and at community workshops. 367 responses were received. See Appendix B for a summary of the survey results.
Albany residents	The project has not held open community consultation meetings in the City of Albany, as the RTMP aims to align with the existing Albany Trails Hub Strategy. However, the project team is involved in the City of Albany Trails Project Control Group, and the project coordinator has met with five Albany-based trail user groups and clubs. A significant number of Albany residents completed the online survey (see Appendix B).
Stakeholder Engagement	
Noongar Engagement	The South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council and Wagyl Kaip have appointed an Aboriginal representative to the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG). A representative of the Wirrpanda Foundation also sits on the SRG. Members of the Aboriginal community have been engaged through a Noongar consultation workshop.
Council Briefings	To date, GSCORE has presented to nine Shire Councils on the economic and social benefit of trails at Council meetings.
Members of Parliament	Briefings have been held with Federal and State elected representatives.
Business Groups	Through the Stakeholder Reference Group, the project is engaging with business organisations and tourism bodies in the region, including Australia's South West, Great Southern Treasures, the Amazing South Coast Tourism Incorporated, Regional Development Australia – Great Southern, the Albany Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Denmark Chamber of Commerce, all of whom are represented on the SRG.
Publicity and Promotion	
Social media	GSCORE and its partners have promoted the project extensively via social media, particularly Facebook.
eNews	An eNewsletter (n = 605) is distributed monthly.
Media Coverage	In 2019, ten news stories or interviews have appeared in local and state print media and on radio.

Community Consultation Workshops

Workshops, of one and a half to two hours in length, were held in the following locations during Phase 1. The workshops were promoted via Facebook, an eNewsletter, in local papers and via Shire news bulletins, and through direct invitation by Shire staff.

The workshops were facilitated by Karl Hansom, RTMP Project Coordinator, and focused on collecting: (i) information about existing trails in each area; (ii) ideas for local trails; and (iii) ideas for regional trails.
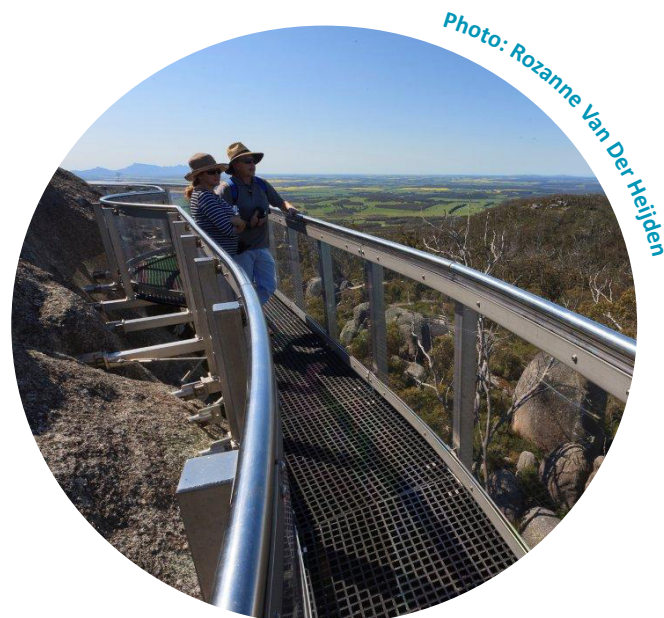
Table A2: Number of participants at each community consultation workshop (Phase 1)

LGA	Location	Date	Number of participants
Broomehill-Tambellup	Broomehill	28 March 2019	9
	Tambellup*	8 May 2019	10
Cranbrook	Cranbrook	2 March 2019	8
Denmark	Denmark	10 April 2019	21
	Valley of the Giants	26 April 2019	10
Gnowangerup	Gnowangerup	22 March 2019	6
Jerramungup	Jerramungup	2 May 2019	6
	Bremer Bay	3 May 2019	15
Katanning	Katanning	3 March 2019	8
Kent	Nyabing	9 May 2019	9
Kojonup	Kojonup	3 April 2019	22
Plantagenet	Mount Barker	22 March 2019	8
	Mount Barker	4 April 2019	20
	Porongurup	9 April 2019	17
Woodanilling	Woodanilling	8 May 2019	15
TOTAL			**184**

*Noongar elder engagement workshop

An online trail user survey was open for six weeks during April and May 2019. The survey was promoted via Facebook, through direct email to a database of trail users which included workshop participants and members of the public who attended the 2018 Albany Trail Forum, and through Shire-based social media.

Number of Respondents

There were 367 respondents, of which 255 (69.5%) were residents of the Great Southern. The majority of Great Southern respondents were from the Lower Great Southern region (Albany, Denmark, Plantagenet).

Table B1: All respondents by place of residence

Location	Number	%
Great Southern	255	69.48
Other location	101	27.52
No response	11	0.29
TOTAL	**367**	**100**

Table B2: Great Southern respondents by local government area

LGA	Number	%
Albany	149	58.43
Broomehill-Tambellup	6	2.35
Cranbrook	3	1.18
Denmark	46	18.04
Gnowangerup	2	0.78
Jerramungup	2	0.78
Katanning	4	1.57
Kent	1	0.39
Kojonup	5	1.96
Plantagenet	30	11.76
Woodanilling	7	2.75
TOTAL	**255**	**100**

Demographic Summary

69% of survey responses were aged between 25 and 54. Less than 4% were under 25 years of age. 53% of all respondents were men. Among Great Southern respondents, however, 53% were women.
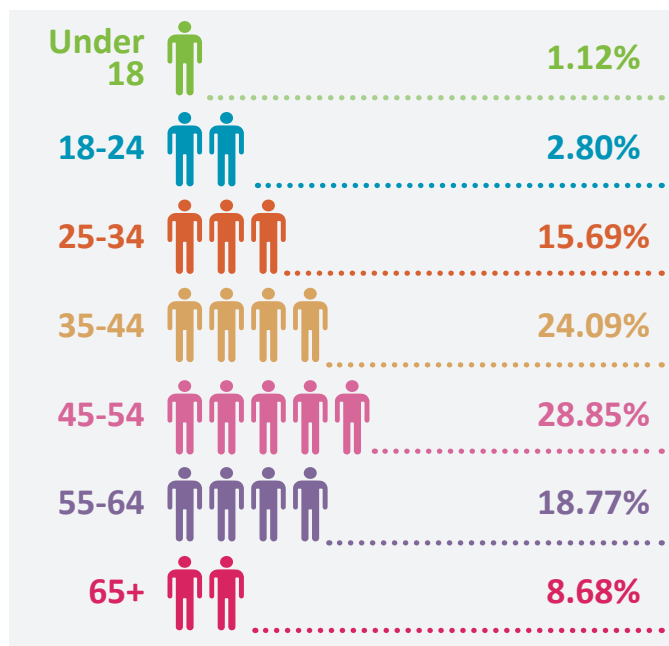

Age	%
Under 18	1.12%
18-24	2.80%
25-34	15.69%
35-44	24.09%
45-54	28.85%
55-64	18.77%
65+	8.68%

Figure 1: Age of all respondents (n=357)

Photo: SUPlime WA

Trail Use

The respondents were all active trail users. 75% of Great Southern respondents used trails in the region a few times a month, with 40% using trails in the region every week. 50% spent between two and four hours on trails each visit.
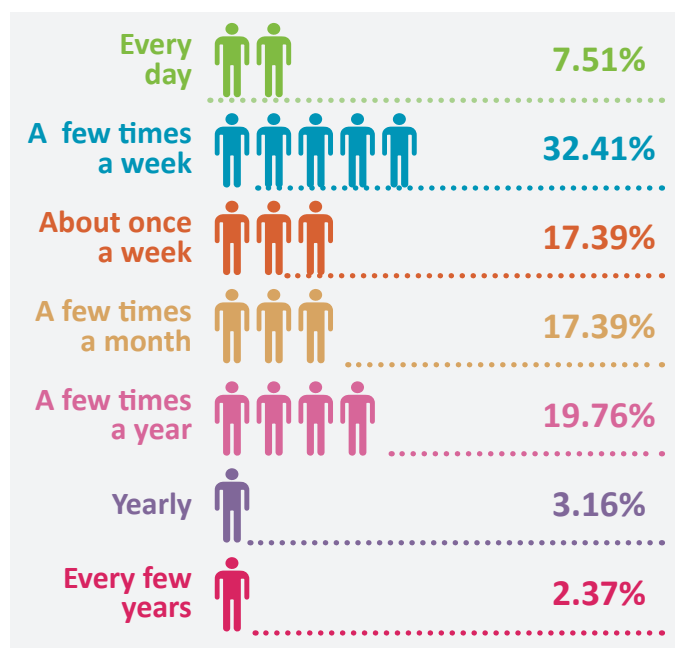

Figure 2: Frequency with which Great Southern respondents used trails (n=253)

The majority of respondents rated their hiking ability as intermediate or advanced (73%). There was a more even spread of abilities amongst other activities.

Table B3: Level of ability for all trail types, all respondents

	Never Tried	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Hiking	7%	20%	51%	22%
Mountain biking	29%	28%	29%	16%
Cycling	25%	24%	41%	10%
Horse riding	51%	26%	12%	12%
Snorkeling	22%	34%	36%	9%
Kayaking /Canoeing	16%	42%	37%	5%
Trail biking	42%	16%	24%	18%

Walking/Hiking (71%), mountain biking (40%), and trail bike riding (26%) were the most popular trail activities from all respondents. Amongst Great Southern respondents, the most popular activities were walking/ hiking (73%), mountain biking (44%), and paddling (26%).
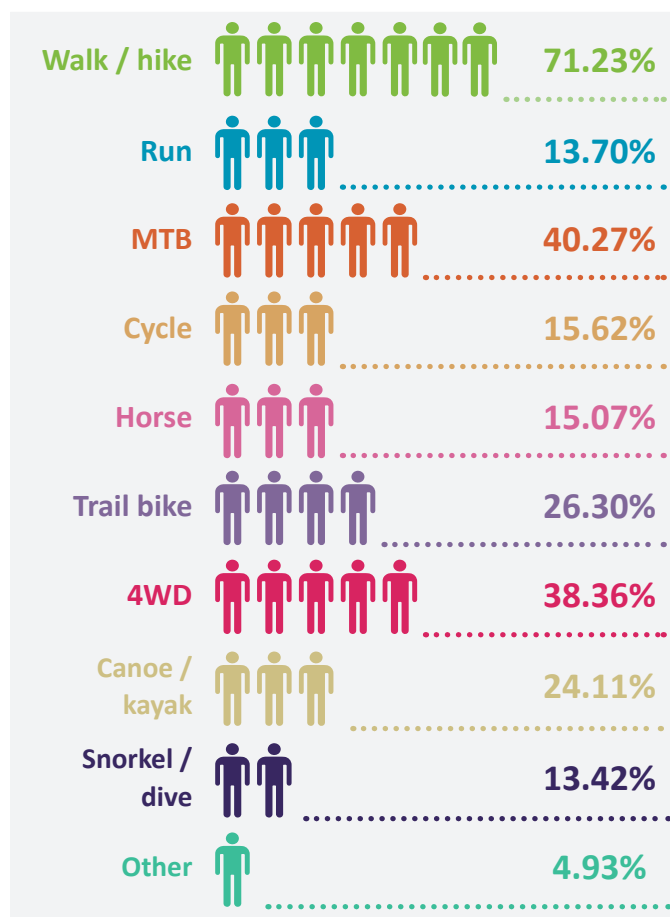

Figure 3: Most popular trail activities, all respondents (n=365)

Social Aspects of Trail Use

Most respondents preferred to explore trails with a friend or partner (72%), however many also indicated that they used trails solo (49%), with their family (40%) or in a small group of less than six (52%).

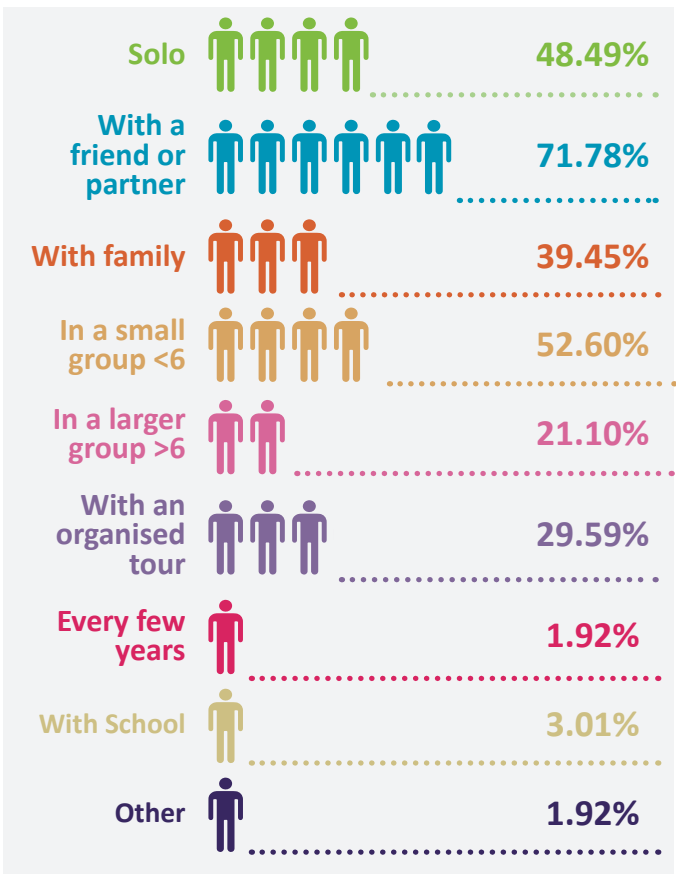|	
Solo	48.49%
With a friend or partner	71.78%
With family	39.45%
In a small group <6	52.60%
In a larger group >6	21.10%
With an organised tour	29.59%
Every few years	1.92%
With School	3.01%
Other	1.92%

Figure 4: Who the respondents explores trails with, all respondents (n=365)

38% of Great Southern respondents were members of a trail-based group or club, 26% were members of an online trail group (e.g. Facebook), and 48% were not members of any group.

Trail Promotion

Great Southern respondents gathered information about trails through word of mouth (73%), friends and family (54%) or social media (45%). For responses outside the Great Southern social media ranked highest (67%).

Table B4: How respondents find out about trails, all respondents

Answer choices	Responses (%)
Word of mouth	67.67
Social media pages	50.14
Friends/family	49.04
Brochures/maps	34.25
Social media groups	31.23
Club	27.40
Trails WA website	26.58
Books/guides	20.27
Trail apps (e.g. Strava, AllTrails)	19.45
Internet/blogs	19.18
Events	13.70
Other	7.12
Tour operators	2.74
Teacher/school	2.74
Podcasts	1.92
Television	0.82
Radio	0.82

Photo: Elements Photography

Trail Visitation Habits

60% of respondents who resided outside of the region, visit the Great Southern to access trails several times a year.

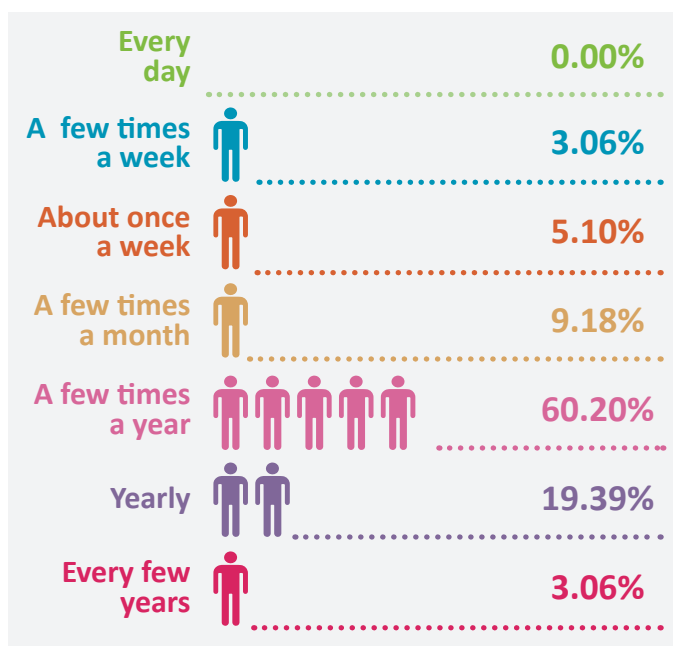|	
Every day	0.00%
A few times a week	3.06%
About once a week	5.10%
A few times a month	9.18%
A few times a year	60.20%
Yearly	19.39%
Every few years	3.06%

Figure 5: Frequency of visits to Great Southern trails, non-residents (n=98)

59% of Great Southern respondents would travel more than 50km to access a trail, with 44% stating they would travel more than 100km. 67% of non-resident respondents would travel over 100km to access a trail.
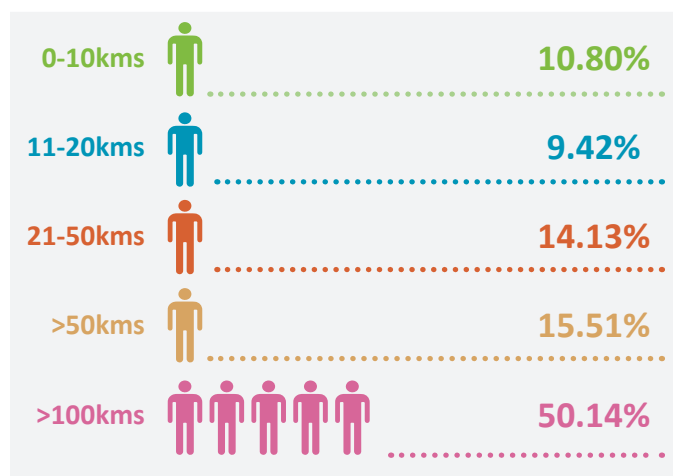
0-10kms	10.80%
11-20kms	9.42%
21-50kms	14.13%
>50kms	15.51%
>100kms	50.14%

Figure 6: Willingness to travel to use trails, all respondents (n=361)

Trail Ideas

Respondents were asked what type of trail experiences they would like to see developed in the region. The most common responses were: mountain bike trails (25%), trail bike trails (18%), hiking trails (14%), and bridle/ equestrian trails (14%). 285 survey respondents provided suggestions for new trail locations and these have been incorporated into the trail ideas database.
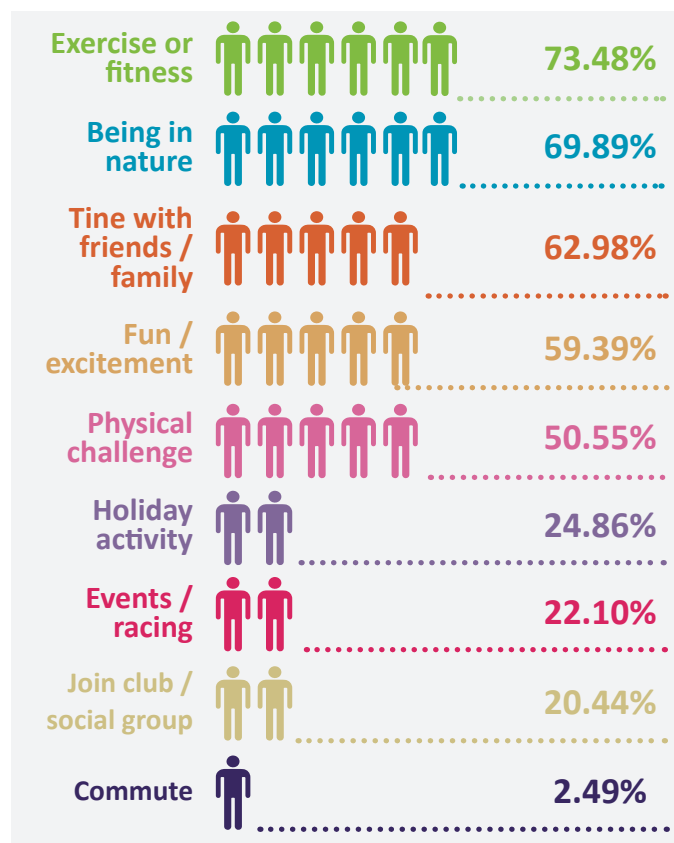
Exercise or fitness	73.48%
Being in nature	69.89%
Tine with friends / family	62.98%
Fun / excitement	59.39%
Physical challenge	50.55%
Holiday activity	24.86%
Events / racing	22.10%
Join club / social group	20.44%
Commute	2.49%

Figure 7: Main reasons for using trails, all respondents (n=362)

Reasons for Trail Use

The main reasons for using trails were Exercise/Fitness (74%), Being in Nature (70%) and Time with Friends/ Family (63%)

Feedback on Great Southern Trails

- 265 respondents provided open-ended comments on trails in the region. Their responses focused on:
- The need for more trails (18%)
- Improvements in trail facilities (e.g. parking, signage, water, toilets) (11%)
- Management issues (e.g. maintenance, safety, design, sustainability) (22%)
- Improved marketing and maps (7%)

Endnotes

1. *Western Australian Strategic Trails Blueprint 2017-2020*, Department of Sport and Recreation.

2. Ibid, page 18.

3. *Bibbulmun Track User Survey Report 2014-2015*, Bibbulmun Track Foundation.

4. *Otago Central Rail Trail User Survey 2014-2015*, Otago Central Rail Trail Trust.

5. Chris Hughes (2018) "Establishing a world-class trail network: The Blue Derby Experience", presentation at the Albany Trail Town Forum, 31 May 2018.

6. *AusPlay: Participation data for the sport sector 2017-2018*, Sport Australia.

7. *Taking the Reins, The Western Australian Recreational Horse Trails Strategy*, Australian Trail Horse Riders Association, October 2015.

8. *Western Australian Mountain Bike Strategy 2015-2020: Unlocking the Potential*, Westcycle.

9. Schram and Furness (2017) "Exploring the utilisation of stand up paddle boarding in Australia", *Sport* 5(3):53.

10. *Segmenting the Cycle Tourism Market*, Tourism Western Australia 2018.

11. *Overview of Visitation to Western Australia – Year Ending December 2016*, Tourism Western Australia.

12. *Understanding Repeat Visitation to Western Australia,* Tourism Research Australia, March 2018.

13. *Australia's South West Overnight Visitation Summary 2018*, Tourism Research Australia.

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