

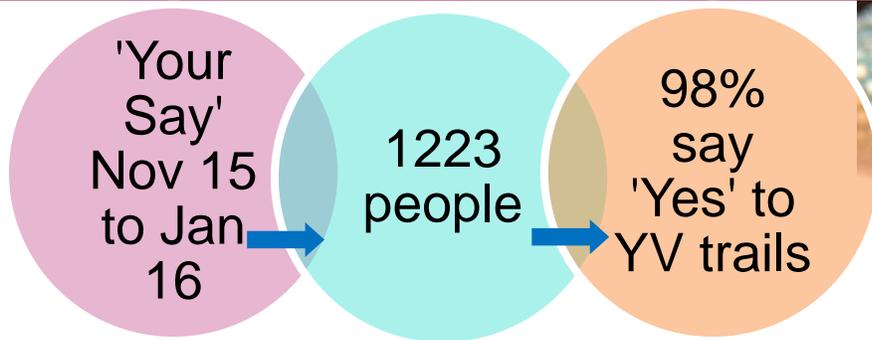


Yarra Valley Trails Survey Summary Report

by

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YARRA VALLEY TRAILS SURVEY 2016



SURVEY BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

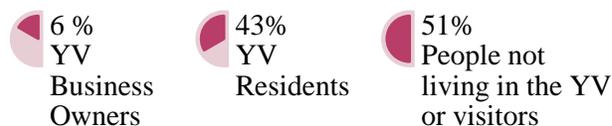
Yarra Ranges Council is undertaking a feasibility study for the Yarra Valley Trail project. The feasibility study will identify and report on the social, economic and environmental benefits of the proposal and identify the trail route, design and costs. It will also include the required approval processes and next steps of the project. The aim of the survey was to gauge community support for the project and to explore the envisaged usage by the community and visitors.

This online survey was in field from November 2015 to January 2016 and distributed to the members of various online networks including Rail Trail Australia, Victoria Bicycle Network, Local Bike Shops and the option of filling in the survey on Council's website.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The survey received 1,223 responses of which 44% live within the municipality and 56% live in suburbs outside Yarra Ranges including a small proportion from interstate. The survey received a fairly even spread of representation of ages with majority of responses (54%) received from those aged between 35 – 54, 30% from those over 54 year old and 16% from those under 25.

Just over half of respondents live outside of the Yarra Valley with 6% (72) identified as business owners in the Yarra Valley.



KEY FINDINGS – YARRA VALLEY TRAIL

SUPPORT FOR THE TRAIL PROPOSAL

From the 1,223 people who responded to the survey 98% are in support of developing the three stages of the Yarra Valley Trails. The key themes identified from the additional 1,048 comments made to support their decision were:

- fitness benefits for all ages – young and old in a safe environment
- wellbeing benefits for the body and mind
- a safe bike riding option
- bringing families and community together
- being among nature
- economic benefits for the local community
- uniting the Yarra Valley
- reducing environmental impacts
- protected off road cycling
- increasing opportunities for community activities
- easing road congestion from cyclists
- easily accessible by train
- increasing tourism opportunities including overnight stays
- enable a world class environmental and heritage experience.

“Great for small business”

“exploring the history of our region”

“a great tourist attraction for bike touring, cycling, horse riding, and adventure races”

“Cycling is inclusive”

THOSE AGAINST THE TRAIL PROPOSAL

Two percent (27) of respondents were not in support of the proposal. The key reasons were:

- funds should be allocated to more community projects
- there are already enough cycling trails
- not enough infrastructure to support visitors
- preference for train line to re-open not a walking trail
- concern about the danger of speeding cyclists
- disruption to local
- fear of Aqueduct water pollution from tourism .

“Funds could be spent elsewhere; we already have sufficient cycling corridors”

“Love the off road trails, but not at the expense of the historical railway”

KEY FINDINGS – TRAIL USAGE

FREQUENCY OF USE

Of the 1,033 responses received only 35 (3.1%) would not see themselves using the trails. 30% would use them weekly and 66% would use them monthly or less.

TRAVELLING TO EXPERIENCE THE TRAILS

The distance you are prepared to travel for an experience is an indication of how much you value something. A third would travel under an hour while 38% would travel up to two hours. 12.5% are happy to travel between two to three hours and 15% would travel more than three hours to experience the proposed trails.

WHILE ON THE TRAIL

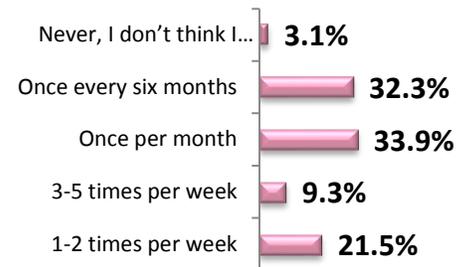
There are many activities that people could undertake while visiting/using the trails. The most common activity is eating at a local restaurant / café (95.4%) and riding a bike along the trail (91.3%). Others might stay overnight or hire a bike to enjoy the tranquility of the trails. Of the 200 other suggestions made the most common include:

- horse riding (26%)
- visiting wineries, art galleries, nurseries, shops (16%)
- running (5%)
- camping along the trail or at campgrounds (3%)
- walking the dog
- group/family activities
- exploring heritage site/events
- riding the Yarra Valley Railway.

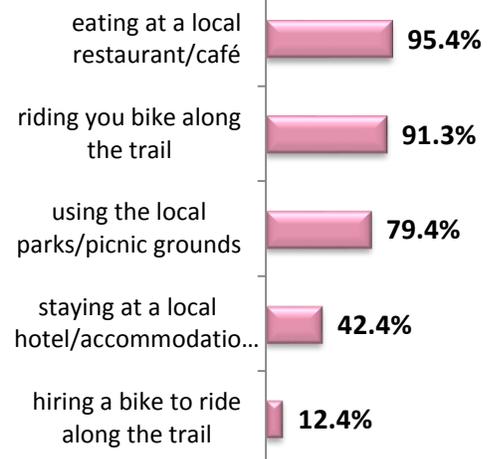
OVERNIGHT STAYS

The option of choosing to stay overnight increases depending on the distance prepared to travel to visit/use the trail. 60% of respondents who would travel over three hours would also choose to stay overnight. It is interesting to note that staying overnight is still a popular option as 54% of people would choose to stay overnight even if their distance to the trail is between two to three hour and 47% if their travel was between one to two hours and even 22% whose travel is less than an hour.

Frequency of use



While using/visiting the trail respondents would consider:



The most likely age group to stay overnight are those aged 45 – 54 (31%) followed closely by those aged 35 – 44 (23%) and 55-64 (21%).

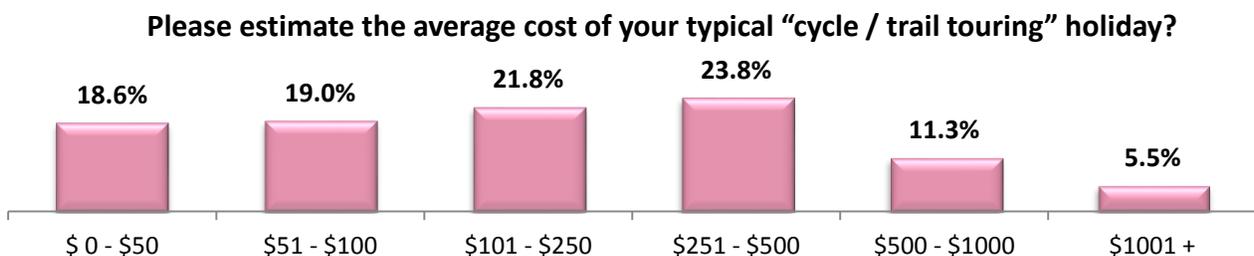
LOCAL RESTAURANTS/CAFE

The desire to combine the use of the trail with a culinary experience is quite high as of the 1,029 respondents who would eat at a local restaurant/café 46% are local Yarra Valley residents and 55% are visiting from outside of the Yarra Valley.

“it would be a very attractive addition to Yarra Valley's outdoor activities, and in particular for tourists.”

LOCAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS

With over 90% of respondents choosing to ride their bike along the trails, the question was raised to determine what the average person would spend on their typical cycle/trail touring outing / holiday. There is a fairly even spread of people covering the spending brackets up to \$500. There is a slight decrease in the above \$500 bracket and above \$1,000 bracket as this would be an indicator of those staying overnight. This shows the positive economic impact the trail would have on the region with 82% of local/visitors combining the trail experience with spending money with the local businesses.



TRAIL USAGE OPPORTUNITIES

The trail is seen as an opportunity for 97% of people to improve their health and fitness, almost 69% would use it to bring the family together on an outing, while 88% agree the trails would connect them to nature. An additional 187 suggestions were made. Key themes included:

- bringing friends together
- tourism destination incorporating a visit to wineries, restaurants, local sightseeing and beautiful photography
- using the trail as a commuter network
- providing a safe local bike riding experience for all ages
- exploring and learning about the historical treasures of the Yarra Valley
- engaging community groups to undertake activities eg Scouts.

CONCLUSION

There is an overwhelming support for the development of the Yarra Valley Trails.. The respondents, who were largely made up of cyclists and local residents, are keen to see a safer method to enjoy the natural beauty of the Yarra Valley.

This proposal will encourage social interaction, increase health and wellbeing of individuals and their dogs and horses and, provide opportunities to bring the community of all ages and abilities together in planned activities. The trail is seen as an opportunity to share the rich history that can be promoted and explored as part of the Yarra Valley experience.

The visitors to the trails and locals will support the local economy by attending the restaurants and cafés and buying from the local shops,. While the length of the trail would allow for the experience to be spanned over a few days this also opens up the opportunity to increase the number of overnight stays. The Yarra Valley is already known as a tourist destination and this new infrastructure would draw more visitors locally and from a far.

