



EES chapter 12 – Socio-economic

Warburton Mountain Bike Destination

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12.0 Socio-economic

This chapter assesses the potential socio-economic impacts and benefits from construction and operation of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination (the project). The information is based on the impact assessment contained in **Technical Report E: Socio-economic**. The assessment on socio-economic effects related to traffic and transport is drawn from **Technical Report F: Transport**.

12.1 Overview

The project has the potential to bring substantial economic and social benefits to the local and regional economy through direct and indirect expenditure from visitors and local residents, associated job and wealth creation, and through the increasing health and wellbeing of those people that use the mountain bike trails.

Warburton's local economy and small businesses thrive on the visitor economy. An investment in the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination would contribute to continued growth, both during construction and through ongoing operations. A significant number of jobs and an increase in regional income would be generated during the construction phase of the project. The benefits of the operational phase of the project would be driven by expenditure of users/visitors to towns adjacent to the trail network and in the broader region, as well as spending associated with state and national events that could be staged.

The construction and ongoing operation of the project is expected to generate the following principal benefits:

- Increase in regional spending, including:
 - Spending on trail-linked activities (including spending on bike related expenses and other spending such as food and beverages.) in proximity to the trails
 - Spending on accommodation (for overnight stayers) and meals during stayover
 - Spending on other recreational and tourism services.
- Increase in regional income, generated annually by the operation of the trails and visitor spending totals
- Job creation during both construction and operation of the project
- Social benefits including:
 - Enhanced community access to infrastructure that encourages increased levels of physical activity as well as health and wellbeing outcomes
 - Assist in addressing high levels of obesity, dementia and poor mental health that are significant issues for the community
 - Revitalisation of the local communities
 - Reduced levels of unemployment
 - Support a transition from a mature native timber industry to a nature-based tourism industry
 - Creation of a stronger community connection to the environment with the trail network showcasing some of the high-quality ecosystems in the region.

Further details of the project benefits are provided in Section 12.7 and in **Chapter 2: Project rationale**, which forms part of the environment effects statement (EES) for the project.

The potential socio-economic impacts of the project were assessed and are presented in **Technical Report E: Socio-economic impact of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination**. This includes positive and negative impacts during both construction and operation of the project, including on existing private residences, businesses, other existing land uses, traffic, housing, community infrastructure, employment, and social cohesion.

Understanding how the project would impact socio-economic factors is important to the development of effective mitigation measures. It is not possible to objectively compare the positive and negative impacts of the project on Warburton. Each impact affects a different number of people, in a different way, and the experience of the impact will vary from person to person. Whether a person considers the positive or negative impacts more important will vary depending on, among others, the person's socio-economic status, beliefs and values.

The following analysis has been written to clarify the positive and negative impacts and who is affected to help the community and decision-makers reach a decision regarding the socio-economic impact of the project. It focusses on 'moderate' and 'significant' impacts only.

There are positive impacts anticipated for:

- Property owners. Those who own a commercial or residential property would benefit from increased property prices
- Business owners (the majority of), who would experience higher revenue and profits from the project
- Many young people and low skilled workers who would benefit from increased employment opportunities
- Warburton residents who would enjoy the increased activity in the town
- Residents who enjoy mountain biking (the number of which would increase with the construction of the project) who would benefit from the increased recreational opportunities
- There would also be positive impacts for residents outside of the area of investigation, such as the recreational opportunities provided by the project, and employment opportunities for residents of nearby areas.

Negative impacts would be anticipated for:

- Renters, who would experience increased rents and decreased availability of rental properties, and may eventually leave Warburton
- Some residents would not appreciate the changes to the character of Warburton and social cohesion that the project brings
- Some Warburton residents who would not enjoy the increased traffic volumes created by the project.

In response to the EES evaluation objectives, socio-economic impacts of the project have been assessed and mitigation measures have been identified to avoid and minimise adverse impacts at a local and regional scale. Additionally, the assessment of alternatives presented in **Attachment II: Alternatives Assessment Report** identified the need for a comparative assessment of Trail 1 and an alternative to Trail 1. A summary of this assessment for socio-economic aspects is provided in Section 12.10 below.

12.2 EES evaluation objectives

The scoping requirements for the project set out the specific environmental matters to be investigated and documented in the project's EES in order to satisfy the Commonwealth and Victorian assessment and approval requirements.

The scoping requirements include a set of evaluation objectives that identify the desired outcomes to be achieved in managing the potential impacts of constructing and operating the project.

The following evaluation objective is relevant to the socio-economic study:

- **Social, economic, amenity and land use** – minimise potential adverse social, economic, amenity and land use effects at local and regional scales.

This chapter, **Chapter 2: Project rationale** and **Technical Report E: Socio-economic** addresses the project's specific socio-economic related matters in response to the EES scoping requirements.

12.3 Applicable legislation and policy

Table 12-1 lists the legislation, policies, guidelines and standards relevant to the socio-economic impact assessment. A detailed description of the applicable legislation and policies and their implications on the project is provided in **Technical Report E: Socio-economic**.

Table 12-1 Socio-economic legislation, policy, guidelines and criteria

Type	Applicable legislation, policy and guidelines
Legislation and policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Local Government Act 1989</i> ● <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> ● The August 2015 Ministerial Statement on Local Government (Ministerial Statement)

Type	Applicable legislation, policy and guidelines
Guidelines and advisory documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Homes for Victorians, 2017 ● Yarra Ranges National Park Management Plan ● Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme 31/07/2018 VC148 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 17 – Economic Development - 21.04-1 – Residential, Objective 2 – Housing Diversity - 21.04-1 – Residential, Objective 4 – Green Wedge Residential ● General Provisions Local Law 2012 – (No 1 of 2012) ● Yarra Ranges Integrated Transport Strategy
Plans and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vision 2020 Community Plan ● Council Plan 2017 – 2021 ● Yarra Ranges Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2021 ● Yarra Ranges Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023 ● Yarra Ranges Environment Strategy 2015-2025 ● Economic Development Strategy ● Recreation and Open Space Strategy

12.4 Method

The purpose of the socio-economic impact assessment was to assess the potential socio-economic impacts and benefits associated with the project and inform the preparation of the EES required for the project. This was achieved by undertaking the following:

- Establishing a study area, as defined in Section 12.6.1.
- Developing an understanding of the existing socio-economic conditions through review of reports and assessments as well as interviews and consultation with council representatives, affected landholders, community representatives, stage government agencies and contacts in locations with comparable mountain bike developments.
- Use of a risk assessment as described in **Chapter 6: EES assessment framework** as a prioritisation tool to inform the impact assessment and development of mitigation measures. The full socio-economic risk assessment is provided in **Technical Report E: Socio-economic**.
- Assessment of socio-economic impacts of the construction and operation phases of the project, particularly in regard to guidelines and advisory documents listed in Section 12.3. This included consideration of the sensitivity and magnitude of social and economic effects that could generate impacts to receptors.
- Development of mitigation measures for the construction and operation of the project, based around the implementation of the mitigation hierarchy.
- Evaluation of the residual environmental impacts, which describe impacts once mitigation has been implemented.

12.5 Avoidance and minimisation through design

It is recognised that there are opportunities to avoid and minimise environmental impacts during the many stages of project development and has culminated in the preparation of a project description which is presented in Chapter 3 of this EES. During project inception and early design development stages of the project, decisions on the location of the project, its design and construction techniques have enabled impacts to be significantly avoided and minimised in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy described in **Chapter 6: EES assessment framework**.

For socio-economic issues the key avoidance and minimisation measures that have been incorporated into the design include:

- Minimisation of trails on private property
- Minimisation of trails near residences by focusing trails in natural areas (including modifications to avoid Merlino Avenue and Old Warburton properties)
- Provision of additional parking at Warburton Golf Course and Wesburn Park to cater for peak parking demand
- Use of small construction teams and small plant and equipment for construction of trails

- Restriction of construction works to normal working hours
- Staged construction of the project over several years to enable adjustment of businesses and communities.

After opportunities to avoid and minimise impact through design were exhausted, minimisation and rehabilitation measures were developed. These are described in the construction and operation impact assessment sections below.

12.6 Existing conditions

12.6.1 Study area

The study area for the socio-economic impact assessment consists of the areas within and around the project area defined in **Chapter 3: Project description** and the areas within the township of Warburton. This includes areas in close proximity to the proposed trails, trail heads and other ancillary infrastructure proposed as part of the project.

12.6.2 Private land use

12.6.2.1 Private residences

The proposed trails currently cross five private landholdings and run within approximately 100 metres of a further about 29 private residences.

Engagement has been ongoing with the landholders. Some indicated to require further planning details from Yarra Ranges Council and have privacy, remuneration and safety issues to be resolved. Further discussions and engagement would be undertaken to formalise and finalise landholder agreements.

12.6.2.2 Warburton Golf Course

The proposed project would intersect the Warburton Golf Course as the new Visitor's Hub and a main trail head would be built at this location.

Warburton Golf Course is a private golf course with an 80-year history. The golf course is nestled amongst the Yarra Ranges and situated at the entrance to the township of Warburton on Dammans Road. The golf course is unique and picturesque and offers a challenging 18-hole golf course with spectacular views. The golf course also has a spacious clubhouse and pro-shop.

Warburton Golf Club currently has approximately 200 members, many of whom are older men who use the club to maintain physical health and social connection.

12.6.3 Business and economy in Warburton

It is estimated that there are 250 businesses operating in Warburton employing 744 people and generating \$180 million annually. Key industry sectors are service industries such as 'Accommodation & Food Services' (144 jobs), 'Education & Training' (104 jobs) and 'Retail Trade' (87 jobs) (YRC, 2020).

Warburton is an emerging tourism destination within the Yarra Valley, with high visitor numbers during the peak times of weekends and school holidays. The town supports a range of shops, cafes and other businesses that service the town.

There has been a shift in the type of businesses operating in Warburton over the last five years, as tourist numbers and population have increased. For example, there are several new cafés and some specialist stores, such as a wine bar, that have opened during this period.

Anecdotally, some entrepreneurs have already started investing in Warburton based on the number of tourists already visiting the town and due to the proposed Warburton Mountain Bike Destination. These businesses include bicycle focussed retailers, an adventure tours business and accommodation set up to provide for mountain bikers. Further to that, there are investors in the planning phase of establishing new businesses in Warburton, most likely influenced by the establishment of the proposed mountain bike park.

Estimated accommodation in Warburton includes a hotel (up to 80 guests), motel (up to 22 guests), and a holiday park (with several multi-occupancy cabins and over 100 camping/caravan sites). There are also several bed and breakfasts and 85 private properties are listed on the accommodation sites Airbnb and Vrbo. Based on available accommodation in Warburton and average occupancy rates of certain types of accommodation, it is estimated that there are 63,000 overnight visitors per year in Warburton.

12.6.4 Current recreational uses of the proposed area

The proposed trails intersect with a range of existing recreational uses. This includes bushwalking, horse riding, recreational motorcycle riding and four-wheel driving on tracks and trails in the same general area. The most heavily used is the Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail which, at its peak, has as many as 7,000 cyclists, walkers and horse riders per day.

A summary of tracks and trails used for recreational uses that may be affected by the project is provided in Table 12-2. Further information on land use has been provided in **Chapter 11: Land use and Planning**.

Table 12-2 Current recreational uses of the proposed area

Track/trail	Primary existing users	Peak estimated usage (per day, excluding one-off events)
Mount Donna Buang Walking Track	Bushwalkers	50
O'Shannassy Aqueduct Trail	Walkers, cyclists, horse riders	500
Mount Little Joe Loop (via Backstairs Track)	Bushwalkers, motorcycle riders	30
Highway Walking Track	Bushwalkers, trail runners	<10
Cemetery Track	four-wheel drivers	<5
Crusher Creek Track	Walkers, horse riders	<10
Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail (Warburton-Millgrove)	Walkers, cyclists, horse riders	7,000 (184 users per km)

12.6.5 Traffic in Warburton

This section provides a summary of the existing car traffic volumes and available parking in the study area. Further detail about traffic and transport is provided in **Chapter 13: Transport**.

12.6.5.1 Car traffic volumes

Warburton Highway is the primary connector between Wesburn, Warburton and East Warburton, and further on to Yarra Junction, Lilydale and the broader Melbourne metropolitan area.

Traffic volumes for the roads within the road network in the area summarised in Table 12-3. Current traffic estimates in Warburton show an average of just over 6,000 vehicles per weekday, and just under 7,000 vehicles per day on weekends. As the Warburton Highway is the primary thoroughfare for the town, residents have indicated traffic congestion in town is increasingly a challenge.

Table 12-3 Traffic estimates on roads within the road network in the area

Location	Average weekday traffic volumes (vehicles per day (vpd))	Peak weekend traffic volumes (vpd)
Mayer Bridge, Warburton	1,100	1,100
Warburton Highway, Warburton	6,600	7,000
Warburton Highway, Wesburn	7,100	7,100
Donna Buang Road (near Warburton Highway)	900	1,300
Donna Buang Summit Road	4,200	4,200
Old Warburton Highway (east of Warburton Highway)	340	390
Old Warburton Highway (south of Prospect Avenue)	460	500
Old Warburton Highway (north of Mount Bridge Road)	130	170

12.6.5.2 Parking

Parking accessibility in Warburton is also an existing challenge for residents and businesses, particularly along the Warburton Highway within the township. There are 416 formal public parking spaces available within the area. Of these spaces, 300 are located on-street with the remaining 116 spaces located in off-street car parks. The width along some streets is insufficient to accommodate traffic flow as well as provide parking space.

Parking restrictions include time limited parking, loading zones, taxi zones, disabled parking, and no stopping restrictions. Parking in the area is typically unrestricted after 6:30 pm Monday to Saturday

A 2018 parking survey however indicated parking was generally available during peak periods, (albeit located away from the Main Street and is not well known and therefore underutilised). The Thomas Avenue precinct was found to have the highest peak utilisation during the observation period (76 per cent at 12 noon on a Saturday).

At the locations of the proposed trail heads there is existing parking at Mount Donna Buang, Wesburn Park and Dee Road. Mount Donna Buang parking is gravelled and there are two areas which are used for snow season car parking. Parks Victoria advise that the secondary car parks each hold 120 car parks. The existing parking area at Wesburn Park is gravelled and spaces are unknown. Dee Road has approximately 20 gravelled car parking spaces.

12.6.6 Community infrastructure

There is a range of community facilities and services in Warburton that meet the day-to-day needs of the community. Services are generally regarded as broadly adequate to meet existing needs, though more resources – particularly for housing and employment – are needed to better support vulnerable members of Warburton's community. The region within which Warburton is located is serviced by 24-hour hospitals at Healesville, Maroondah, Knox, and Ferntree Gully; 31, 45, 48 and 49 kilometres from Warburton respectively. A day hospital is also located in Lilydale, 35 kilometres away operated by Yarra Ranges Health.

Warburton's natural environment and green space is at the heart of its appeal and character. This has been complemented by built features such as trails, parks (including an off-leash dog park at Wesburn), playgrounds and leisure facilities. These facilities provide residents with a mix of green-space amenity, physical fitness opportunities and opportunities for social connection. Public amenity provision, particularly toilets and waste management, is currently high in Warburton and surrounding townships with high rates of bins per resident and frequent collection.

12.6.7 Housing in Warburton

12.6.7.1 Renters

In 2016, 18 per cent of homes in Warburton were rented. Local real estate agents report comparatively low numbers of rental properties available in Warburton compared to other parts of the region. More broadly, the whole Yarra Ranges Shire has very little social housing and only two per cent of rental properties (0.4 per cent of all homes) in the region were social housing.

In Warburton, based on ABS 2016 statistics, of the 185 homes that are rented, 95 housed families on a low income (<\$800, based on the lowest income quartile across Victoria). In 2016, an estimated 60 Warburton households faced rental stress, where weekly rent was more than 30 per cent of weekly household income. This equates to five per cent of all households and 34 per cent of renters. This is broadly similar to the results for the Yarra Ranges as a whole.

It is likely that rental prices have been increasing over the past five years in line with house prices. The median rental price increased from \$265 in 2016 to \$365 in 2020. While rental prices may have dropped during COVID-19 it is likely that they would continue to rise in the future.

While average household incomes have increased broadly in line with increasing rental costs, social support payments have not risen at the same pace, increasing the level of rental stress on households relying on such payments.

12.6.7.2 Homeowners

Most households within Warburton and surrounds live in purchased homes – 40 per cent are owned outright, and 41 per cent are owned with a mortgage.

Over the period between 2011 to 2019, median house prices in Warburton and East Warburton have increased at six per cent and five per cent per year, respectively. This is in line with increases in the Melbourne suburb of Ringwood. Median house prices in Warburton have increased by over 59 per cent since 2015, from \$330,000 to \$525,000 and 63 per cent in East Warburton, from \$300,000 to \$487,500.

In 2020, according to the ABS, approximately 43,000 Australians moved to regional areas from capital cities. In Victoria, approximately 13,000 people over the 2020 calendar year relocated to a regional area. While it is a very recent development and the implications are unclear, increased relocation to regional areas could potentially increase housing demand and associated house prices..

12.6.7.3 Warburton labour force

Warburton is a town experiencing social disadvantage. This disadvantage is reflected in the labour force status of its residents who are more likely to be unemployed or not in the labour force at all, compared with the wider region and Victoria.

Based on 2016 ABS census data, of the 2,499 Warburton residents aged over 15 years, 1,026 (41 per cent) were 'not in the labour force', while 1,267 were in the labour force. The population not in the labour force includes people that are not working or are unavailable to start work for a variety of reasons including full-time care-givers, those in education, retired people, and those that are temporarily or permanently unable to work.

Of the 1,267 people in the labour force, 1,177 (93 per cent) were employed. A total of 89 people (seven per cent) were unemployed. This unemployment rate was higher than that of the Yarra Ranges region (five per cent).

Among the 296 young people aged between 15 and 24, 40 (14 per cent) were 'fully disengaged' from the labour force – meaning they were not employed, seeking work or in any form of education. This represents a measure of youth disengagement from the labour force which is significantly higher than that for the wider Yarra Ranges region (eight per cent).

In 2016, the top five industries for employment for residents of Warburton and surrounds accounted for 53 per cent of all residents' employment. The top five industries include, health care and social assistance, education and training, retail trade, construction and accommodation and food services. All sectors grew between 2006 to 2016 apart from the construction sector which saw a fall in the number of employed persons in this period. The growth of the other four major sectors is potentially linked to a growth in tourism in the region.

12.6.8 Social cohesion

Social cohesion measures a community's connectedness, focusing on the sense of belonging and relationships among community members. For this assessment, indicators of social cohesion are social mobility, social capital and social exclusion.

Social mobility is the association between parents' and adult children's socio-economic standing, where higher association means less mobility. Residents in the Warburton and surrounding township are currently experiencing upward social mobility which is broadly consistent with national trends.

Social capital refers to the bonds, bridges and linkages that connect people and groups that support communities socially and economically. Three measures have been used to consider current social capital in Warburton; volunteerism, sense of belonging and community trust. Based on the level of volunteerism which is higher in Warburton and the surrounding area compared to the state and national average, the sense of belonging among residents and community trust, social capital in the Warburton community is high.

Social exclusion describes a community in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a community. To measure this, three indicators have been considered; income equality, housing affordability and relative socio-economic disadvantage. Social exclusion rates are high in the Warburton community based on the area's score against the index of socio-economic disadvantage. For further details see **Technical Report E: Socio-economic**.

12.7 Project benefits

Anticipated economic and social benefits arise from direct and indirect expenditure from visitors and local residents contributing to benefits to the local and regional economy and associated job and wealth creation, as well as increasing health and wellbeing of those people that use the mountain bike trails.

The level of benefits is dependent on the final network development case as outlined in **Chapter 4: Project development and alternatives**. Expected socio-economic project benefits are summarised below and are detailed in **Chapter 2: Project rationale**.

The construction and operation of the project covering the full development of the trail network is expected to generate the following economic benefits:

- In 2031 users would be injecting \$48.6 million into the local economy
- Generation of 84 jobs during the construction period and 229 direct and indirect jobs when the project is fully operational in 2031
- Increase of around \$143.3 million in regional income over 10 years

- Indirect health benefits for Victorian users estimated at \$47.1 million over 10 years
- User value benefits, in economic terms this is known as 'willingness to pay', estimated at \$26.7 million over 10 years.

The project is expected to bring the following social benefits:

- Enhanced community access to infrastructure that encourages increased levels of physical activity as well as health and wellbeing outcomes
- Assist in addressing high levels of obesity, dementia and poor mental health that are significant issues for the community
- Revitalisation of the local communities
- Reduced levels of unemployment
- Support a transition from a mature native timber industry to a nature-based tourism industry
- Creation of a stronger community connection to the environment with the trail network showcasing some of the high-quality ecosystems in the region.

12.8 Construction impact assessment

Socio-economic issues associated with the project were examined. Disruption to private residences during construction is considered the issue of most interest to stakeholders and the community, and is likely to have a material impact, therefore assessment of this potential impact is described in this chapter.

Other matters assessed, but not presented within this chapter are set out in Table 12-4. With the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures (refer to Section 12.11) such as engagement and consultation with land holders and community residents, encouragement of investment in the region and negotiation with the Warburton Golf Club to identify mutually beneficial outcomes, these impacts would not contribute to a material change in existing conditions. Further information on these impacts can be found in **Technical Report E: Socio-economic**. Additional impacts, particularly those relating to amenity have been identified in **Chapter 11: Land use and planning**.

Table 12-4 Potential impacts and findings

Potential impacts	Findings
Disruption to local businesses	<p>The Warburton Golf Club would be directly impacted by the construction of one trail (Trail 10) through the course and the construction of the proposed main trail head. A total of 26 additional plant and equipment daily movements are expected at the Warburton Golf Course main trail head. Construction works may limit play on certain sections of the course for several days while trails are completed. Mitigation of trail construction would be similar to mitigation measures for trail construction adjacent residential properties: communication and temporary fencing or barriers.</p> <p>The mitigation of impacts of trail head construction would depend on the nature of the development and would be determined in consultation with the Warburton Golf Club at the same time as the proposed development is agreed.</p> <p>The residual impacts on the Warburton Golf Club of construction activities will depend on the ultimate design of the development, which is not yet finalised.</p>
Traffic delays from bridge construction	<p>Several temporary and local lane and road closures as a result of bridge construction would take place during construction, potentially impacting traffic, resulting in traffic delays. The closures are only anticipated to be for a few hours on a number of separate occasions, meaning that road users would only be impacted for a small period of time. In addition, the number of road users that are impacted would be minimised by recommending that closing lanes and roads are only undertaken during off-peak periods. Road users would be notified prior to closures and would have access to alternate lanes or routes during these closures.</p> <p>Mitigation includes the development and implementation of a Traffic Management Plan to minimise disruption during all stages of construction; development and implementation of a stakeholder communication plan to ensure that appropriate consultation and advanced notice is provided prior and during construction, and; undertaking of a Road Safety Audit to ensure that roads, intersections and the Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail are designed and constructed to provide safe vehicle movements during construction.</p>

Potential impacts	Findings
	<p>Refer to Chapter 13: Transport for further detail about traffic and transport impacts related to lane and road closures as a result of bridge construction.</p> <p>The residual impact of traffic delays from bridge construction is likely to be short term, localised and minor.</p>

12.8.1 Disruption to private residences

The construction of trails would mean construction teams would be working on land bisecting or adjacent to some local resident's properties. Trail construction may have up to eight teams of four workers at separate trail locations.

Five private residences would be directly impacted by trail construction (bisecting property or directly adjacent) and about 29 residences may be indirectly impacted (within approximately 100 metres of trail construction) by trail construction.

For residents who are directly impacted by trail construction, it is likely that a construction team of up to four members, would be present with a mechanical digger for a period of two to seven days on or adjacent to their properties. This may result in temporary noise disturbance and inconvenience in property access as well as raise safety concerns for residents and particularly children living on the property.

For residents who are indirectly impacted by trail construction, it is possible that some may experience low-level construction noise for up to a maximum of three days. It is unlikely that these residents would encounter privacy and safety issues.

Additional residents could be affected by trail head construction works at Wesburn Park (Old Warburton Road) and Warburton Golf Course (Dammans Road). This may include increased traffic and associated noise and construction noise. Trail head construction works at each of these locations are anticipated to last between weeks to months and work would only occur during normal working hours to minimise impacts.

12.8.1.1 Mitigation measures

Disruption to private residences would be minimised by adoption of the following measures:

- Develop construction schedules in partnership with residents whose properties are bisected by, or within 100 metres of a trail, through phone or face-to-face discussions in the first instance and subsequent letter-drops confirming plans.
- Place temporary fencing or barriers are placed along trail construction sites to clearly demarcate safe areas for residents where construction bisects a property.
- It should be ensured that daily communication is conducted between residents and construction teams for residents where construction bisects a property.
- Create a clear mechanism for residents to raise complaints or concerns, ideally through a single point of contact at Council.
- Construction works would comply with EPA Publication 1834 for civil construction, building and demolition.

Through active collaboration and negotiation with affected residents, developing a complaint handling process and adhering to appropriate noise level guidelines, disruption and impacts to nearby private residences would be minimised.

12.8.1.2 Residual impacts

It is expected that trail construction would create minor and short-lived residual impacts on residents in the form of noise disturbance and access inconvenience.

12.9 Operation impact assessment

Socio-economic issues associated with the project were examined. The following issues are either considered to be of high residual risk or are of most interest to stakeholders and the community. Therefore, assessment of the potential impacts and residual impacts for the following issues are described in this section:

- Disruption to private residences
- Impacts on access, safety and enjoyment

- Increased traffic resulting in impacts on liveability for residents
- Disruption to residents' capacity to access appropriate community infrastructure
- Reduction in affordable housing stock.

Other matters assessed, but not presented within this chapter are set out in Table 12-5. With the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures (refer to Section 12.11) such as engagement and consultation with local landholders and businesses, completion of proposed community infrastructure as a priority, targeted employment opportunities and supporting community events and initiatives to sustain community diversity and engagement, these impacts may still have residual impacts. Further information on these impacts and associated residual impacts can be found in **Technical Report E: Socio-economic**. Additional impacts, particularly those relating to amenity have been identified in **Chapter 11: Land use and planning**.

Table 12-5 Potential impacts and findings

Potential impacts	Findings
Disruption to local businesses	<p>The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination would have a direct and positive impact on the local economy. The project would allow businesses to access a greater number of customers and increase their turnover. It would support existing businesses that are not open seven days a week to extend their opening hours. It would also support the establishment of new businesses in Warburton; increased trade from trail users (particularly overnight visitors) could support increased opening hours (and therefore employment) for a number of existing businesses.</p> <p>While the impact on business of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination would be overwhelmingly positive, there may be some negative impacts for a small number of business that are not able to adapt to changing markets and higher input costs. Some of these businesses may have owners who are ready to retire regardless of changing markets.</p> <p>Yarra Ranges Council would advocate for and facilitate access to business adaptation programs and government grants to help businesses adapt to the changing market and benefit from the opportunities provided by the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination.</p> <p>The majority of the impact on businesses would be positive, by bringing new customers and expenditure to Warburton and increasing business turnover.</p> <p>However, some businesses may not be able to capitalise on new markets and would close due to increased rents. This impact is thought to be minor, as it would occur gradually and only to a small number of business owners.</p>
Disruption to Warburton Golf Club	<p>Operation of the trail 10 would run through the course, resulting in riders coming within 10 metres of one hole and potentially require the realignment of another hole. Additionally, the establishment of the main trail head at the Warburton Golf Course may result in reduced appeal for some members. However, the Club is likely to benefit from increased parking, exposure of the course to potential new members, and the potential financial stability from an appropriate leasing agreement of facilities if approved by members.</p> <p>Disruptions to the Warburton Golf Club during operation of the project may result in a residual impact on the physical health and social connection value of the Warburton Golf Club for members, since the proposed alignment and trail head infrastructures would mean golfers would see increased levels of interaction with bike riders in a previously mostly exclusive space.</p> <p>The residual impact of the trail itself would be localised and overall minor.</p> <p>The extent and severity of the residual impact of changes to the clubhouse, however, is highly contingent on the ongoing negotiations with Club representatives.</p>
Employment impacts	<p>It is estimated that 84 jobs would be created as a result of the construction of the project including 70 jobs in construction and equipment/material supply and 14 through flow on effects. The operation of the trails would generate a total of about 133 Full-time Equivalent (FTE) direct and indirect jobs in year one, increasing to 229 FTE jobs in year 10. This level of job creation represents a significant increase on jobs located in Warburton as 133 direct and indirect jobs would be an increase of about 18 per cent above the current 744 jobs located in the town. Jobs created during operation of the trails would largely be in accommodation, food and beverage, services, retail and transportation sectors.</p>

Potential impacts	Findings
	<p>Yarra Ranges Council would maximise the benefits of job creation for Warburton youth and the disadvantage by implementing mitigation measures.</p> <p>The employment generated by the project is anticipated to benefit Warburton. With appropriate interventions, the benefit of this impact can be maximised, particularly for disadvantaged and young Warburton residents.</p>
Reduced trust, connections and overall cohesion	<p>The operation of the project is likely to increase social mobility over time as funding of services, access to opportunities and employment increases.</p> <p>This project would further embed Warburton and its surrounds as a tourism hotspot resulting in an increase in transient residents and seasonal variations.</p> <p>There would be some visitor peaks around mountain bike events. However, overall, the flow of visitors would be more consistent than in coastal towns and this flow of visitors would mean there is more predictability and stability within communities.</p> <p>Tourism growth could result in diminished social capital and tension between individuals who choose to move to the area and tourists.</p> <p>Yarra Ranges Council would implement measures to improve trust, connection and cohesion to minimise residual impact as far as reasonably practicable.</p> <p>However, there would likely be a residual impact on the social cohesion of the Warburton community. While the mitigation measures would have some ameliorating effect, it is likely that there would still be a residual impact. The experience of this impact is subjective and would vary between individuals in the community.</p>

12.9.1 Disruption to private residences

In Wesburn, residents of five properties would have a trail either bisect a portion of their property (at the back of their blocks, away from residences) or, if land is purchased by Council, run directly adjacent to their land. For these residents, operation of the trails may result in a loss of amenity and privacy. For residents at properties on Martyr Road, within 25 metres of Trail 10, noise due to bike pass-byes would be clearly audible without mitigation strategies in place.

The establishment of a trail head at Wesburn Park and overflow car park has the potential to impact nearby residents as a result of increased traffic and altered visual amenity. The closest residential property is located immediately adjacent to the proposed Wesburn Park trail head location.

Trails would run directly through the land on the site of the historic former Warburton Chalet. As the trail is situated on a large 16.5-hectare property, the current landholder does not anticipate any significant impact from the proposed trails. The project could be a catalyst for the redevelopment of the Warburton Chalet site, providing an opportunity for business growth and support for local tourism.

12.9.1.1 Mitigation measures

In order to minimise disruption to private residences the following mitigation measures would be implemented:

- Engage with each landholder directly impacted by trail operation to build trust, better understand their concerns and develop appropriate responses collaboratively. Impacts from operation noise would be audible at properties on Martyr Road, therefore a noise barrier has been recommended in this location, subject to consultation with immediate landowners. Details of this mitigation measure are provided in **Chapter 11: Land use and planning**.
- Investigate appropriate screening and noise reduction measures, to mitigate amenity and privacy concerns.

Comparable trail operations in St Helens (Bay of Fires) indicate that the impact of riders using trails alongside residential properties is minimal, particularly with appropriate mitigation strategies in place.

12.9.2 Impacts on access, safety and enjoyment of other recreation users

There is some increased risk to the safety of other individuals where trails intersect with established tracks used for bushwalking and horse riding. Mount Donna Buang Track is an existing bushwalking track that would be intersected by the proposed trails and is used by up to 50 walkers a day at its peak. Mount Little Joe Track (which connects with Backstairs Track to create the Backstairs Track – Little Joe Loop) is another existing bushwalking track that would be intersected by the proposed trails. This track is used by up to 30 walkers per day at its peak. There would be an increased risk of noise, congestion and safety along these

tracks where they intersect with the proposed mountain bike trails. The points of intersection between the proposed trails and the existing bushwalking tracks have been minimised by altering the alignment of the trails.

Shared-space interactions would occur between project users and users of the O'Shannassy Aqueduct Trail and Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail. Interactions would also occur around Wesburn Park, which has a range of existing recreation uses including formal sport, equestrian, dog walking and community group use.

More cyclists as a result of project operations alongside walkers and horse riders would increase congestion on parts of these trails, particularly in parts of the O'Shannassy Aqueduct Trail. Given these trails are already shared paths, expectations of mixed uses are established.

Experience from comparable mountain bike projects in Tasmania (Derby and St Helens (Bay of Fires)) and in Bright (Victoria) indicate that incidents of conflict between walkers and mountain bike riders have been minimal.

It is likely the Cemetery Track would need to be closed to four-wheel drive use, for the safety of bike riders and preservation of the local ecosystem. This would impact four-wheel drivers who use the trail periodically, although alternative areas are available for four-wheel drive use.

Local hunters who use the State Forests would also be impacted by the operation of the proposed trails and may need to seek alternative locations when trails become operational.

Impact on recreation users in and around Warburton township would be minimised by increasing mountain bike rider and recreation user awareness, slowing down riders prior to intersection points and consulting with affected user groups to discuss the implications of the project on the trails and tracks that they may use.

For Wesburn Park, Yarra Ranges Council is undertaking careful planning to ensure the safety and operations of existing uses is not compromised, through the development of a master plan for the park. The Wesburn Park Draft Master Plan (Yarra Ranges Council, 2021) identifies opportunities to manage safety and operations of current and future uses, including zoning and separation of activities; signage and wayfinding; fencing, screening and barriers. The master plan development has included comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement and additional engagement would be undertaken to refine the plan prior to approval by Council. Development of the Wesburn Park Trail Head would be undertaken in accordance with the approved master plan once complete.

12.9.2.1 Mitigation measures

Increasing rider and recreation user awareness of intersection points and the potential presence of other users in the area would allow users to familiarise themselves with intersection points and encourage users to proceed with caution when approaching intersection points. Slowing down riders before intersection points would minimise the chance of a collision occurring and would reduce the severity of a collision if one were to occur.

Measures to increase the awareness of mountain bike riders and other recreation users and measures to slow down riders prior to intersection points would be implemented to minimise impacts. These would include the following:

- Establish appropriate signage at trail heads and popular trails to advise riders of the MTBA code of conduct (always give way) and to ride on open marked trails only.
- Use choke points/slowing techniques before points of intersection with other trails.
- Ensure intersection points are clearly marked on trail maps and collateral including details of other likely users.
- Conduct an extensive education campaign and provide updates to user groups, such as Bushwalking Victoria and local horse-riding groups, to minimise other users mistakenly accessing mountain bike trails, and familiarising themselves with intersecting points.
- Yarra Ranges Council would work with land managers to install appropriate signage and barriers to prevent bike riding on intersecting walking trails and monitor compliance.
- Engage four-wheel driving representatives in Melbourne to discuss the implication of closure of Cemetery Trail.
- Increased monitoring of trail bike riding activity, ensuring appropriate mountain bike trails are only used by mountain bike riders.

12.9.3 Increased traffic resulting in impacts on liveability for residents

From a technical assessment perspective, the existing road network and parking availability is sufficient to cater for additional traffic generated by the operation of the project. However, during consultation it was identified that the subjective experience of residents would differ from this assessment. Increased congestion would mean more commuting time is required, and increased competition for parking would inconvenience some. More traffic would also mean more degradation of local roads that already cause residents safety concerns. While increased traffic is certain in particular locations (notably Warburton Highway), the use of shuttle services and general inclination of mountain bike visitors to ride – and not drive – wherever possible, means the impact of increased traffic would be geographically concentrated, which makes it easier to mitigate.

Residents' experiences of traffic and congestion pre-project would inform their view of the liveability and amenity from increased traffic in Warburton post-project.

Refer to **Chapter 13: Transport** for further detail about traffic and transport impacts during operation of the project.

12.9.3.1 Mitigation measures

To ensure that increased traffic does not impact liveability in Warburton, Yarra Ranges Council would complete the recommendations set out in the Yarra Ranges Integrated Transport Strategy (2020-2040) and the Local Movement and Transport Report as important mitigation strategies. In particular, this includes:

- Undertake a Road Safety Audit to ensure that roads, intersections and the Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail are designed and constructed to provide safe vehicle movements during operation.
- Undertake Improvement works where necessary based on the pavement conditions survey.
- Implement mitigation measures to ensure safe pedestrian and cyclist movements during the operational phase of the project.
- Establish a parking management plan to implement appropriate measures for the operation of the Mountain Bike Project to ensure that parking congestion does not exceed acceptable limits for visitors or residents.
- Establish an Emergency Management Plan that considers emergency access.

12.9.4 Disruption to residents' capacity to access appropriate community infrastructure

Ancillary infrastructure upgrades associated with the project are important measures to ensure community infrastructure such as public toilets and recreation facilities (BBQ, bins) matches increasing demand. There is a minor risk that increased rubbish dumping in Warburton may occur as visitors return to the township to dispose of waste; though riders generally pack light during trips and ample bins are currently available and are monitored seven days a week.

Demands on emergency management services – such as the CFA and Ambulance – are likely to increase. Residents raised concerns over the potential for more visitors in State Forest and National Parks to increase the bushfire risk in and around Warburton, and that riders sustaining injuries would increase ambulance demand and waiting times. As a volunteer service, the CFA would be most impacted by any increased risk. In other towns with a high tourist population, such as Lorne, it is difficult to find sufficient volunteers for the CFA. As Warburton's permanent population may decrease as a result of housing stock being converted to holiday homes, the pool of local volunteers could shrink over the next 10-20 years. The CFA may require additional support to continue to adequately service the local area in the years ahead.

In relation to health services, the potential for impact on health services due to the hospitalisations associated with accidents on the mountain bike network was considered. The region within which Warburton is located is serviced by 24-hour hospitals at Healesville, Maroondah, Knox, and Ferntree Gully; 31, 45, 48 and 49 kilometres from Warburton respectively. Warburton once had its own hospital, but this was closed in 2000. Whilst there is potential for mountain bike riders to be injured through falls and crashes on the mountain bike network, hospitalisations for mountain bike accidents are relatively infrequent. Accordingly, use of hospitals by mountain bike riders would not be expected to stretch the resources of health services in the north east of Melbourne which currently are able to support a large urban population.

The project would affect the Wesburn Park off-leash dog area, as part of the park would be converted to parking for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination. The park is the only off-leash area in the Upper Yarra Ranges and is used by 100-150 people. Yarra Ranges Council has consulted with the users of the park and reduced the size and changed the location of the car park in response to their concerns. The carpark would

now occupy 15-20 per cent of the off-leash dog area. Yarra Ranges Council is currently completing a Dog Park and Off-Leash Plan for the Yarra Ranges, with objectives to create new off-lease areas elsewhere.

12.9.4.1 Mitigation measures

To ensure that access to appropriate community infrastructure is maintained for residents and to minimise disruption the following mitigation measures would be implemented:

- Proposed community infrastructure works, including toilet upgrades at Mount Donna Buang and construction of toilets at the Mount Tugwell and Golf Club Trail Heads, would be completed as priorities.
- Yarra Ranges Council monitors the impact of the project on dog walkers at Wesburn Park and provides additional areas elsewhere if necessary.
- Yarra Ranges Council works with relevant authorities to ensure that essential emergency management services are maintained.
- An Emergency Management Plan would be prepared and approved before use of the land for the project commences to ensure that risks to life are reduced and managed appropriately. The emergency management plan would include specific bushfire response measures developed in consultation with the Country Fire Authority, State Emergency Service, Department of Environment Land Water and Planning and Parks Victoria.

12.9.5 Reduction in affordable housing stock

An increase in overnight visitors and tourism activity in the area as a result of the project could lead to increases in rental prices and a significant decrease in the availability of long-term rental properties, ultimately displacing vulnerable residents.

A recent economic assessment of the impact of the project estimated that the number of additional visitor nights generated would be 43,906 in project year one, increasing to 76,661 in 2036 (assuming rooms are twin share) (TRC, 2021).

It is anticipated that some of this demand would be met through the creation of additional tourist accommodation. There are plans to convert existing unused buildings and vacant sites around Warburton into accommodation, examples include the planned 'EcoLodge', Warburton Chalet, the old Warburton Hospital and the old Sanitarium Factory. These developments could satisfy the demand for additional accommodation. The council is working with developers in an effort to realise these developments.

Despite the growth in commercial accommodation, evidence from the literature and from other towns that have experienced an increase in tourism, such as Bright, Forrest and Derby, suggests that an increase in visitor numbers can lead to increases in the numbers of private properties listed for short-term accommodation.

Increases in demand for housing would drive up house prices. This would be beneficial for the 81 per cent of Warburton households who own their house. It would, however, drive up rental prices as long-term rental properties and residential houses are converted into short-term accommodation properties, thereby decreasing the supply of rental properties. In 2016, an estimated 60 Warburton households faced rental stress, where weekly rent was more than 30 per cent of weekly household income. This equates to five per cent of all households and 34 per cent of renters. This is broadly similar to the results for the Yarra Ranges as a whole.

Increased house prices (including rental properties) may negatively impact service sector workers' ability to live and work in Warburton.

Warburton properties currently listed on Airbnb range in price from \$125 to over \$680 per night, with an average price of \$308 per night (weekend rates). Given a median weekly rental price of \$365 for long-term rental properties, it is quite likely that some property owners would convert a long-term rental property into holiday accommodation. It is also possible that some short-term rentals would be made available by people with holiday homes, who have not leased their house long-term before, thereby having no direct impact on the supply of rental housing.

12.9.5.1 Mitigation measures

Yarra Ranges Council would investigate options to increase affordable housing stock in or near Warburton to reduce impacts on vulnerable residents in the community. This would include the following:

- Investigate the potential to increase social housing in or near Warburton through applying affordable housing provisions as part of both rezoning and permit applications for major developments.

- Encouraging the development of visitor accommodation. This would absorb some of the impact of the additional visitors in Warburton.

12.9.6 Residual impacts

Following implementation of mitigation measures, residual impacts on socio-economic issues during operation would not be significant. Residual impacts include:

- Amenity and privacy impacts to residents' properties that intersect the trail would occur. Impacts from noise would be audible at properties on Martyr Road, therefore a noise barrier has been recommended in this location, subject to consultation with immediate landowners. Details of this mitigation measure are provided in **Chapter 11: Land use and planning**. Through active collaboration and negotiation with affected residents to develop mutually beneficial responses, disruption and impacts to nearby private residences as a result of trail operations, would be minimised. Project operations would be a localised minor residual impact on five residents' privacy and amenity.
- The impact of the project on traffic would have a moderate residual impact on Warburton residents. While the roads are technically capable of handling the extra traffic, residents are already concerned about traffic levels in Warburton. Increasing commuting times and competition for parking (although minor) would have a moderate impact on residents' perception of the liveability in Warburton.
- The closure of Cemetery Track for four-wheel driving use would be permanent. Local hunters are likely to be impacted by the operation of trails within the State Forest and would need to seek alternative locations. Impacts to access, safety and enjoyment of other cyclists, walkers and horse riders is anticipated to be minor due to points of intersection being minimised, the fact that walkers and horse riders on some paths are already accustomed to sharing paths with cyclists, and the application of mitigation actions. Implementing the above mitigation measures and considering the anticipated localised interaction only, with clear separation of existing use in most areas, it is anticipated that the residual impacts of the project on recreational users would be minor.
- Operation of the project would result in the permanent reduction of off-leash dog area at Wesburn Park. A Dog Park and Off-Leash Plan for the Yarra Ranges is currently being completed which may result in the creation of new off-leash areas elsewhere. Considering the above mitigation measures to ensure that access to appropriate community infrastructure is maintained for residents and to minimise disruption disruptions, the residual impact on community infrastructure is considered to be minor.
- The impact on the Warburton housing market and vulnerable residents is considered to be the most significant negative impact of the project. It is likely to occur gradually over the development of the mountain bike trails. The exact extent of the residual impact is difficult to predict and highly dependent on the extent of the additional visitor accommodation and social housing that is developed in the town and surrounds. However, this impact has been widely experienced in other tourist towns and based on that experience seems likely to occur to some degree; significant intervention would be required to avoid this impact.

12.10 Assessment of alternative to Trail 1

The assessment and comparison of Trail 1 and the alternative to Trail 1 is based on the existing conditions information provided in Section 12.6. The comparison is based on the residual impact of these options assuming effective implementation of the proposed mitigation and contingency measures outlined in Section 12.11.

In order to compare the two trails, direct and indirect impacts need to be distinguished. Direct impacts are those caused by mountain bike riders using the trails themselves, experienced by adjacent residents or bushwalkers. Indirect impacts are those impacts on the town of Warburton that result from a higher volume of visitors in the town, such as traffic and house prices. Alternative trails would not result in a large change in visitor numbers related to the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination. Trail 1 and the alternative trails are therefore neutral regarding indirect impacts. Thus, the comparison of Trail 1 and the alternative trails focusses on direct impacts only. This comparison is shown in Table 12-6.

Trail 1 has some minor impacts on residents and bushwalkers. The alternative trails have no direct socio-economic impacts. Given that the impacts of Trail 1 are minor, there is not a strong preference for the alternative trails from a socio-economic perspective.

Table 12-6 Comparison of impacts between Trail 1 and the alternative to Trail 1

Impact	Trail 1	Alternative	Conclusion
Access, safety and enjoyment of bushwalkers	There are possibly up to 50 walkers a day at its peak on Mount Donna Buang. Local bushwalkers have expressed their concerns of increased noise, congestion and safety risks from the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination. In responding to this, trails have been moved away from existing tracks, with points of intersection minimised. Experience from comparable mountain bike projects in Tasmania (Derby and St Helens (Bay of Fires)) and in Bright (Vic) indicate that incidents of conflict between walkers and riders have been minimal.	Trails 45 and 46 run parallel to Mount Donna Buang walking track and intersects the track at two locations.	Both trails would have minimal direct socio-economic impact.
Residents' privacy and amenity	The end of Trail 1 is within 30-50 metres of three landholders on Sussex St. The trail is however unlikely to be in line-of-sight of properties and usage is highly unlikely to cause any significant noise/dust/inconvenience to residents.	No residential properties are nearby the alternative trails.	

12.11 Mitigation

Section 12.5 outlines key avoidance and minimisation measures that have been incorporated into the design for socio-economic issues: Table 12-7 outlines further mitigation measures developed to avoid and minimise socio-economic impacts within the project area. The focus of these mitigation measures is firstly avoiding impacts where possible, and secondly, developing, preparing and implementing project-specific measures to achieve acceptable socio-economic outcomes.

Table 12-7 Mitigation measures

Mitigation measure number	Project phase	Mitigation measure
MM-SM1	Construction	<p>Minimise disruption of construction on residents</p> <p>To minimise the impact of the construction of trails and trail heads on residents, Yarra Ranges Council would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop construction schedules in partnership with residents whose properties are bisected by, or within 100 metres of a trail, through phone or face-to-face discussions in the first instance and subsequent letter-drops confirming plans. • Place temporary fencing along trail construction sites to clearly demarcate safe areas for residents where construction bisects a property. • Ensure daily communication is conducted between residents and construction teams for residents where construction bisects a property. • Create a clear mechanism for residents to raise complaints or concerns, ideally through a single point of contact at Council.
MM-SM2	Operation	<p>Assist local businesses to adapt to changing market</p> <p>Yarra Ranges Council would, as far as reasonably practicable, advocate for and facilitate access to business adaptation programs and government grants to help businesses adapt to the changing market and benefit from the opportunities provided by the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination</p>
MM-SM3	Operation	<p>Minimise impact of project operations in Wesburn on residents' privacy and amenity</p> <p>Council would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with each landholder directly impacted by trail operation to build trust, better understand their concerns and develop appropriate responses collaboratively. • Investigate appropriate screening and noise reduction measures, potentially including choke points to mitigate amenity and privacy concerns.

Mitigation measure number	Project phase	Mitigation measure
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue negotiations with club representatives to identify mutually beneficial outcomes for the proposed mountain bike trail head.
MM-SM4	Operation	<p>Maintain appeal and sustainability of the Warburton golf club</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to negotiate with Warburton Golf Club representatives to identify mutually beneficial outcomes. Provide appropriate screening and protection of trails running through the course.
MM-SM5	Operation	<p>Minimise impacts on residents' privacy and amenity.</p> <p>No additional mitigation measures required</p>
MM-SM6	Construction and Operation	<p>Maintain access, safety and enjoyment of other recreation users</p> <p>To maintain access, safety and enjoyment of other recreation users, the following mitigation would be implemented by Yarra Ranges Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate signage is established at trail heads and popular trails to advise riders of the MTBA code of conduct (always give way) and to ride on marked trails only. Choke points/slowing techniques are used before intersection with another track/trail. Intersection points are clearly marked on trail maps and marketing collateral including details of other likely users. An extensive education campaign is conducted and all user groups (such as Bushwalking Victoria and local horse-riding groups) are regularly updated, to ensure they are aware of intersections between trail types and to minimise users mistakenly accessing mountain bike trails. Yarra Ranges Council works with land managers to install appropriate signage and barriers to prevent bike riding on intersecting walking trails and monitor compliance. Four-wheel driving organisation representatives are engaged to discuss the implications of closing Cemetery Trail. Increased monitoring of trail bike riding activity, ensuring appropriate mountain bike trails are only used by mountain bike riders.
MM-SM7	Construction and operation	<p>Minimise impacts to liveability for Warburton residents from increased traffic</p> <p>To ensure that increased traffic does not impact liveability in Warburton, Yarra Ranges Council would complete the recommendations set out in the Yarra Ranges Integrated Transport Strategy (2020-2040) and the Local Movement and Transport Report as important mitigation strategies. In particular, this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a Traffic Management Plan to minimise disruption during all stages of construction. Develop and implement a stakeholder communication plan to ensure that appropriate consultation and advanced notice is provided prior and during construction. Undertake a Road Safety Audit to ensure that roads, intersections and the Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail are designed and constructed to provide safe vehicle movements during both construction and operation. Undertake Improvement works where necessary based on the pavement conditions survey. Implement mitigation measures to ensure safe pedestrian and cyclist movements during the operational phase of the project. Establish a parking management plan to implement appropriate measures for the operation of the mountain bike project to ensure that parking congestion does not exceed acceptable limits for visitors or residents. Establish an emergency access plan.
MM-SM8	Operation	<p>Increase affordable rental housing stock</p>

Mitigation measure number	Project phase	Mitigation measure
		Yarra Ranges Council would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate potential to increase social housing in or near Warburton through applying affordable housing provisions as part of both rezoning, and permit applications for major developments. Encouraging the development of visitor accommodation. This would absorb some of the impact of the additional visitors in Warburton.
MM-SM9	Construction and operation	<p>Maintain Warburton residents' access to appropriate community infrastructure</p> <p>To ensure that the project does not diminish Warburton residents' access to appropriate community infrastructure, it is proposed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed community infrastructure works, including toilet upgrades at Mount Donna Buang and construction of toilets at the Mount Tugwell and Golf Club Trail Heads, would be completed as priorities. Yarra Ranges Council monitors the impact of the project on dog walkers at Wesburn Park and provides additional areas elsewhere if necessary. Yarra Ranges Council works with relevant authorities to ensure that essential emergency management services are maintained. An emergency management plan would be prepared and approved before use of the land for the project commences to ensure that risks to life are reduced and managed appropriately. The emergency management plan would include specific bushfire response measures developed in consultation with the Country Fire Authority.
MM-SM10	Operation	<p>Maximise the benefits of job creation for Warburton youth and disadvantaged</p> <p>Yarra Ranges Council would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a training and work placement component as part of the contracts to construct the mountain bike trails. Through a partnership model, coordinate employment and education opportunities with appropriate wrap around services to facilitate employment opportunities for local unemployed people.
MM-SM11	Operation	<p>Improve trust, connection and cohesion</p> <p>To improve trust, connection and cohesion in Warburton, Yarra Ranges would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and promote social enterprises locally. Support community events and initiatives separate from mountain biking to sustain community diversity and engagement. Promote the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination to families, with a particular focus on diversity of riders (women, children, ages).

12.12 Conclusion

The project has the potential to bring substantial economic and social benefits. The local and regional economy would benefit from direct and indirect expenditure from visitors and local residents, associated job and wealth creation and an increase in health and wellbeing of those that use the mountain bike trails. Warburton's local economy and small businesses thrive on the visitor economy and an investment in the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination would contribute to continued growth, both during construction and through ongoing operations.

During the construction phase of the project, a significant number of jobs and an increase in regional income would be generated.

The benefits of the operational phase of the project would primarily be driven by expenditure of users/visitors to towns adjacent to the trail network and in the broader region, as well as, spending associated with state and national events that could be held at the project.

The socio-economic assessment has shown that the construction and operation phases of the project could be managed such that the objective of minimising potential adverse social, economic, amenity and land use effects at local and regional scales can be achieved.

To avoid and minimise impacts on socio-economic issues there would be minimisation of trails on private property and near residences, additional parking, small construction teams and equipment, restriction of construction to normal working hours and staged construction.

The assessment considered potential socio-economic impacts during both construction and operation of the project including on existing private residences, businesses, community infrastructure, traffic, housing, employment, and social cohesion finding that there are not anticipated to be significant impacts due to the project.

It is not possible to objectively compare the positive and negative socio-economic impacts of the project on Warburton. Each impact affects a different number of people, in a different way, and the experience of the impact will vary from person to person. Whether a person considers the positive or negative impacts more important will vary depending on who they are and what their values are.

The following analysis has been written to clarify the positive and negative socio-economic impacts and who is affected to help the community and decision makers reach a decision regarding the socio-economic impact of the project. It focusses on 'moderate' and 'significant' socio-economic impacts only.

There are positive impacts anticipated for:

- Property owners. Those who own a commercial or residential property would benefit from increased property prices
- Business owners (the majority of), who would experience higher revenue and profits from the project
- Many young people and low skilled workers who would benefit from increased employment opportunities
- Warburton residents who would enjoy the increased activity in the town
- Residents who enjoy mountain biking (the number of which would increase with the construction of the project) who would benefit from the increased recreational opportunities
- There would also be positive impacts for residents outside of the area of investigation, such as the recreational opportunities provided by the project, and employment opportunities for residents of nearby areas.

Negative impacts would be anticipated for:

- Renters, who would experience increased rents and decreased availability of rental properties, and may eventually leave Warburton
- Some residents would not appreciate the changes to the character of Warburton and social cohesion that the project brings
- Some Warburton residents who would not enjoy the increased traffic volumes created by the project.

The implementation of measures described in Section 12.11, will reduce the socio-economic impacts of the project. However, some residual impacts would remain.

The two most significant impacts are:

- The impact on the Warburton housing market and the consequent impact on vulnerable residents. It is likely to occur gradually over the development of the mountain bike trails. The exact extent of the residual impact is difficult to predict and highly dependent on the extent of the additional visitor accommodation and social housing that is developed in the town and surrounds. However, this impact has been widely experienced in other tourist towns and based on that experience seems likely to occur to some degree; significant intervention would be required to avoid this impact.
- The (positive) impact on Warburton's labour force due to the employment creation, which would provide employment for Warburton residents, particularly young residents.

Residual impacts that are likely to be of moderate significance are:

- The impact of the project on traffic would have a moderate residual impact on Warburton residents. While the roads are technically capable of handling the extra traffic, residents are already concerned about traffic levels in Warburton. Increasing commuting times and competition for parking (although minor) would have a moderate impact on residents' perception of the liveability in Warburton
- A residual impact on the social cohesion of the Warburton community.

Residual impacts that are likely to be minor or insignificant include:

- The impact of trail and trail-head construction on residents. Land occupancy for construction would be temporary and the intensity of construction activities would be minimised to an extent that material residual impacts are not anticipated.
- The impact of trail construction on the Warburton Golf Club, as with the impact on residents, this impact would be short-lived and relatively minor.
- The (negative) impact of project operations on businesses. For most businesses the impact of the project would be positive, however it is anticipated that a small number of businesses would not adjust to the changing market and higher commercial rents and shut down.
- Amenity and privacy impacts to residents' properties that intersect the trail. Impacts from noise would be audible at properties on Martyr Road, therefore a noise barrier has been recommended in this location, subject to consultation with immediate landowners.
- The impact on other recreational users around the trails. The closure of Cemetery Track for four-wheel driving use would be permanent. Local hunters are likely to be impacted by the operation of trails within the State Forest and would need to seek alternative locations. Impacts to access, safety and enjoyment of other cyclists, walkers and horse riders is unlikely to be material due to points of intersection being minimised, the fact that walkers and horse riders on some paths are already accustomed to sharing paths with cyclists, and the application of mitigation actions.
- Operation of the project would result in the permanent reduction of off-leash dog area at Wesburn Park. A Dog Park and Off-Leash Plan for the Yarra Ranges is currently being completed which may result in the creation of new off-leash areas elsewhere. Impacts to other community infrastructure (i.e., public toilets and recreation facilities) would not be material providing infrastructure works identified in the Project Masterplan are completed.

The impact on the physical health and social connection of Warburton Golf Club members is highly contingent on the result of ongoing negotiations between Yarra Ranges Council and the club.

The other potential impacts would not contribute to a material change to existing conditions and are able to be managed through mitigation measures.

In response to the EES evaluation objective described in the beginning of this chapter, impacts of the projects on socio-economic issues have been assessed and mitigation measures have been identified to avoid and minimise adverse impacts.