

Engagement Summary Report – Draft Paths and Trails Plan 2025-2035

Project overview

The Draft Paths and Trail Plan seeks to establish and maintain a high-quality network of paths and trails to encourage people in the Yarra Ranges to be more active.

Community engagement

The Draft Paths and Trails Plan was open for feedback between 25 June 2025 and 8 August 2024.

The project team carefully reviewed all feedback received during the consultation period. The results show strong community endorsement for the Paths and Trails Plan:

- ✓ **70%** of contributors **supported the vision** outlined in the plan, highlighting strong community alignment with its goals. The remaining 30% of respondents indicated lower satisfaction, citing concerns such as missing links and level crossings and safety issues.
- ✓ **73%** **supported the guiding principles**, indicating broad agreement with the values and priorities underpinning the proposed approach. The remaining 27% of respondents reported lower satisfaction, citing safety concerns on shared trails and limited walkability through townships.

While these concerns are acknowledged, they fall outside the scope of this plan, which focuses on strategic network planning rather than detailed infrastructure upgrades or township-specific improvements. These issues may be more appropriately addressed through future projects or complementary strategies.

This level of support highlights a shared enthusiasm for creating a safer, more connected, and accessible trail network across the community.

How did people get involved?

Between 25 June and 8 August 2025, residents in Yarra Ranges found out about the engagement and got involved in the following ways:

 E-newsletters Over 11,200 recipients across Council received electronic newsletters; 89 readers clicked through to view this project.	 Project page More than 1060 people visited the page, with a total of 56 contributions.	 Social media Over 1700 views on Yarra Ranges Council Facebook and Instagram. From here, there were 21 clicks to view the project.	 Targeted engagement Our team contacted local groups to invite them to provide feedback on the draft.
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Key Themes

Safety:

Community members strongly support the proposal's emphasis on improving safety. In particular, there was widespread endorsement for enhanced crossings along key trails. These improvements are seen as essential to encouraging more walking and cycling, especially for families and older residents.

Connectivity:

There is clear appreciation for the Plan's role in promoting active lifestyles and fostering community connection. Many respondents highlighted the value of paths and trails in linking neighbourhoods, parks, schools, and local destinations. The Plan was recognised as a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach to creating a well-connected network that supports both recreational and commuter use.

Budget:

While the importance of paths and trails was widely acknowledged, some participants expressed concern about funding priorities. These respondents emphasised that while trail development is valuable, it should not come at the expense of other critical infrastructure needs. A balanced investment approach was encouraged.

A selection of key comments highlighting support for the plan include:

- "These principles go a long way in providing a resilient community the tools it needs to grow in these areas. Trails provide a deep connection to both social and environmental aspects of our wider community."
- "This is an exciting vision as it will create a safe, legacy trail network for all trail users that facilitates both resident's and visitor's enjoyment of the beautiful natural features and communities of the Yarra Valley region. As a horse rider, walker and cyclist, I seek to experience the outdoors safely away from traffic."
- "The principles encapsulate all the key considerations of a successful trail network. Both residents and visitors alike enjoy spending time exploring and simply appreciating the outstanding natural values across the Yarra Valley Region, supporting the vitality of local, rural communities and businesses in the process.
The benefits of outdoor recreation, relaxation and fitness are well understood; the serenity, sanity and peace that our natural environment provides is more important than ever. People seek authentic and diverse experiences where there is real connectivity with nature. Trails provide multigenerational social benefit and engagement – healthy, active individuals and communities connecting to and caring for the environment, providing the opportunity to develop deep, intrinsic affinity and a lifelong appreciation.
Trails provide for active ageing and are key recreational infrastructure for rural residents. Further, enjoying trails is free and they are accessible 24/7."
- "Accessible trails connect me with places and nature. I'm a frequent user. I also it is a low impact and high interest link with tourism. It gives people another reason to visit the Yarra Valley!"
- "I enjoy riding my bicycle on safe well maintained trails."