
Bicycle Victoria Comments on the Lilydale – Healesville Rail Corridor Study

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Bicycle Victoria strongly supports the development of a shared use Rail Trail between Lilydale and Healesville. The rail trail will become a prized community asset that will deliver economic, health and social benefits.

Bicycle Victoria does not support a combined rail trail and tourism/commuter train service for the length of the Lilydale – Healesville Railway easement, primarily because it will decrease the quality, usage and benefits of a rail trail.

It is possible for a rail trail to be developed alongside some sections of an operating tourism railway but not for the entire length of the easement.

Bicycle Victoria rejects the recommendation of the Lilydale-Healesville Rail Corridor Study for a combined tourism/commuter train and rail trail because:

- The prohibitively high capital cost of \$21.34million compared to \$4.8 million for a rail trail.
- The quality of the rail trail would be severely compromised by the recommended sharing of the easement. This will reduce the number of users of the rail trail and the associated health and economic benefits. Additionally the cost of the rail trail will almost double.
- The tourism/commuter train is a high risk and very high cost project.
- The recommendation does not adequately consider the stated “total estimated economic impact from a Lilydale to Healesville trail of \$8.25 million per year.”
- The report appears to significantly understate the economic and social benefits of the rail trail option.

More detailed concerns with the Lilydale-Healesville Rail Corridor Study are presented below.

Economic Comparison of Options.

The report bases its recommendation for a combined rail trail and train service on Net Present Benefit. However this assessment is not appropriate as, to quote the report

“Net Present Benefit calculations presentedincludes operating costs and benefits and direct economic benefits from expenditure. It excludes indirect economic benefits (multiplier effects) and capital costs.”

The assessment therefore excludes the fact that a rail trail only would cost \$4.80 million compared to the \$21.34million for the recommended train and trail combination.

It also excludes the additional benefits for the rail trail option, which are detailed in the report as follows:

“Additional benefits associated with increased levels of expenditure at existing tourist attractions and increased duration of stay results in a total estimated economic impact from a Lilydale to Healesville trail of \$8.25 million per year.”

Triple Bottom Line Assessment

The Triple Bottom Line Assessment presented in the report is not considered accurate or valuable for two main reasons.

- The assessment is unweighted meaning that the demonstration value of a project has the same significance as capital expenditure or health benefits. Triple Bottom Line assessments commonly apply weighting to criteria through consultation with stakeholders. Given this did not occur the results of this assessment cannot be considered representative or relevant.

- The scoring of each option against the criteria is inaccurate on the following scores:
 - Economic Impact - The score of two for the Rail Trail assumes the option is “Not Expected to provide significant (net) positive economic impact or may lead to loss of economic value added” This ignores the “total estimated economic impact from a Lilydale to Healesville trail of \$8.25 million per year.”

 - Employment opportunities – The score given for the Rail Trail only (1) assumes “Poor direct opportunities for start-up and ongoing employment”. This conclusion ignores the total economic impact of the trail (\$8.25 million per year) and the Latrobe University report, which states that for every \$1M spent along a trail 11 jobs are created.

 - Community Transport Potential – The score given for the Rail Trail only (2) assumes the “Project does not address community need for transport or hinders existing”. In fact community transport by bicycle and walking will be improved by the development of a trail.

The social benefits appear to be overstated for the Tourist Rail/PPM option, especially the health and wellbeing potential.

Provision of appropriate facilities.

The report contains the following:

“Trail Type 4: Parallel On-Road Trail – Operating Railway

As there are a number of locations where roads run parallel to the rail corridor, such as along sections of the Yarra Glen-Healesville Rd, a private road near the Tarrawarra Winery and Donovan’s Road. In these locations a trail on-road could be achieved through the widening of the shoulder seal. This would provide a relatively safe location for trail users with savings on earthworks and land acquisition but would detract from the user’s experience of a rail trail. It would also need to ensure that the road shoulder could be safety and easily expanded on both sides of the road (see Figure 8- 11). With future widening of the road, the inclusion of a bicycle lane may be threatened (Figure 8-11).”

On-Road sections on shared use trails are inappropriate and will significantly reduce user numbers. Rail Trail users require separation from motor vehicles as they are commonly families with young children or inexperienced riders. Bicycle Victoria strongly opposes the consideration of any on road section in the rail trail.

Sealing of road shoulders is also a very expensive operation because the surface must be able to carry motor vehicles.