

Canberra Mountain Bike Report

REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD



SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAIN BIKING IN THE ACT

One of the priority actions within Canberra's Cycle Tourism Strategy is to enhance Canberra's mountain biking trail network and prioritise future opportunities for investment to make it Australia's mountain bike destination of choice

The Canberra Mountain Bike Report responds to this action and provides a framework to support the development of mountain biking in the ACT. It identifies a range of priority projects that offer the greatest potential to support the vision for Canberra to become a cycling destination of choice.



The Canberra Mountain Bike Report is:

- a document that builds on the existing trail network and associated plans and identified opportunities for new trails
- a critical tool in budget planning for trail development
- the identification of a 10-year program for trails infrastructure delivery to position the ACT as an international mountain bike destination
- a long-term planning document that provides a vision to guide future growth and development of trails in the ACT.

THE CONVERSATION

The Draft Mountain Bike Report was released for comment and feedback in September 2020 following community engagement that commenced in March 2019. The primary focus of the final stage of consultation was to seek feedback on the Draft Mountain Bike Report.

The development of the Draft Mountain Bike Report was informed by extensive community consultation that commenced in March 2019. The conversation started when the community was invited to share their thoughts on Canberra as an exciting mountain biking destination and what features could be enhanced or created to improve mountain bike experiences.

Three community workshops held over July 2019 and August 2019 discussed issues and opportunities associated with mountain biking in Canberra. Two workshops were held at Ainslie Football Club and one workshop was held at Weston Creek Labor Club. Submissions were also invited through YourSay, the ACT Government's engagement website. Selected stakeholder groups/organisations were also interviewed throughout the consultation.

A Project Reference Group was established at the commencement of the project and met three times in July 2019, August 2019 and September 2019. The group provided advice on the current state and opportunities for the development of mountain biking in the ACT. The Project Reference Group also undertook a field visit to selected locations during August 2019.

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Upon releasing the Draft Canberra Mountain Bike Report for comment in September 2020, the community were invited to comment via email submission until November 2020 through YourSay, the ACT Government's engagement website.

WHO ENGAGED?

Consultation was undertaken with a range of stakeholders including local mountain bike riders, bike clubs, ACT Government representatives, local businesses, event organisers, tour operators and other community members. The outcomes informed the development of the Canberra Mountain Bike Report.

In the early stages of the project, 159 email submissions were received and 100 participants attended the community workshops.

Nine stakeholder groups/organisations were interviewed. These groups included ACT Parks and Conservation Service, Canberra Cycle Tourism Strategy Steering Group, Visit Canberra, Venues Canberra, Dynamic Motivation, Stromlo Forest Park Management, Stromlo Forest Park Trails Advisory Committee, ParkCare, and a selection of mountain bike athletes and trail builders.

The Project Reference Group consisted of 11 representatives from The National Parks Association of the ACT, Majura Pines Trail Alliance, Dynamic Motivation, Cycle Education, Mountain Bike Australia, Visit Canberra, Canberra Off Road Cycling, Stromlo Forest Park, Kowalski Brothers, Fixed by Ryan and Ride Technics.

In the second phase of consultation, 126 email submissions were received between September and November 2020 in response to the release of the Draft Canberra Mountain Bike Report. The following section presents a summary of the submissions.

Key insights from the community

Strong support for the development of mountain biking in the ACT

There is strong support for the development of mountain biking in the ACT, with 80% of email submissions on the Draft Canberra Mountain Bike Report being supportive and one-third of these also contributing specific suggestions for consideration such as potential locations, trail types and trail users. 13% of submissions were unsupportive and/or concerned, with the majority of these (8.5%) related to concerns held by the equestrian community and 4% related to the impact on the Uriarra Village landscape and residents. 7% of overall submissions were neutral, making general comments or requesting further information about the project.

Competition from other destinations

The community expressed that significant investment in other destinations across Australia has seen, and is seeing, a decline in Canberra's share of the mountain biking tourism market. The sentiment is that compared to other popular mountain biking destinations, Canberra is being left behind. At least 53% of email submissions referenced the need for Canberra to have the appropriate quality of trails and trail-related infrastructure in place to successfully attract mountain biking enthusiasts and compete with other Australian and international mountain biking destinations.

The need for, and capability of, the trail network to cater for riders of all abilities

At least 17% of email submissions suggested that a priority should be to ensure that users of all abilities will be able to enjoy the trail network and any associated enhancements or development. With record bike sales and increased recreational trail use resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, there are more beginners on existing trails. This increased volume of users and mix of abilities on existing trails has resulted in some concerns regarding safety. At the same time, experienced and technical riders are seeking diversity and more challenging mountain biking experiences. At least 12% of email submissions support the development of trails that will provide dedicated gravity or vertical experiences, attractive to both local users and potential visitors seeking a more challenging mountain biking experience. The lack of more technical options contributes to both locals and potential visitors choosing competitor mountain biking destinations outside of Canberra. Other comments related to ensuring the trail network caters for riders of all abilities included the increased preference to use electric mountain bikes, growth of female riders and popularity of mountain biking with families.

Dispersing users from Stromlo Forest Park to other Canberra locations

The creation of more mountain biking options outside of the purpose-built Stromlo Forest Park will not only address the current congestion being experienced at this location because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also bring attention to other locations that are attractive for mountain biking development and are currently underutilised. At least 12% of email submissions referenced current challenges related to large crowds at Stromlo Forest Park including car parking and safety issues for trail users. A cohesive trail network and the effective governance of these trails may also address concerns surrounding the varying levels of maintenance and trail conditions across the Canberra region.

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WHAT'S NEXT?

The email submissions received on the Draft Canberra Mountain Bike Report are currently being considered and will inform the development of the final report. It is anticipated that the Final Canberra Mountain Bike Report will be made available in mid 2021.

If you have any questions or want to learn more about this project, please contact ACT Parks and Conservation Service by email canberramtbxperience@act.gov.au or visit www.environment.act.gov.au.

To find out more about the status of the Canberra Mountain Bike Report and other initiatives, policies and projects in Canberra visit www.yoursay.act.gov.au.

Key Timings

March 2019 – Initial email submissions invited through YourSay and interviews with stakeholder groups/organisations commenced

July 2019 – Two stakeholder consultation workshops and a meeting of the Project Reference Group

August 2019 – One stakeholder consultation workshop, meeting of the Project Reference Group and a field visit undertaken by the Project Reference Group

September 2019 – Close of initial email submissions and meeting of the Project Reference Group

January 2020 – Draft Canberra Mountain Bike Report finalised

February 2020 – Severe weather events (bushfires and floods) and COVID-19 caused a delay to release of Draft Canberra Mountain Bike Report

September 2020 – Draft Canberra Mountain Bike Report released for comment and email submissions invited through YourSay

November 2020 – Close of email submissions on the Draft Canberra Mountain Bike Report

Mid 2021 – Anticipated release of the Final Canberra Mountain Bike Report

Mid 2021 – Anticipated release of Trail Plan for new mountain bike trail network.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

<p>159 initial email submissions contributed ideas for creating a mountain bike trail network for Canberra via YourSay</p>	<p>3 community workshops were held</p>	<p>100 participants attended community workshops</p>	<p>11 representatives formed the Project Reference Group</p>
<p>9 stakeholder groups/organisations interviewed</p>	<p>126 email submissions received on the Draft Canberra Mountain Bike Report via YourSay</p>	<p>11569 people visited the YourSay page</p>	<p>285 email submissions received in total throughout the consultation period via YourSay</p>