

RIDING THE MOUNTAIN

A PLAN FOR IMPROVED MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDING
IN THE FOOTHILLS OF KUNANYI / MOUNT WELLINGTON



Published: 2020

Photo: North-South Track, Flow Mountain Bike



City of **HOBART**

Riding the Mountain

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Industry leading consultants Dirt Art were engaged by the City of Hobart to develop the original track network concepts.

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DELIVERING FOR TASMANIANS

The implementation of this mountain bike plan by the City of Hobart could deliver social and economic benefits for Tasmania.

The plan delivers on the Tasmanian Government's mountain bike and tourism priorities, the 2018 City of Hobart Community Vision and relevant Wellington Park strategies.

Tasmania has experienced massive growth in mountain bike developments and is now recognised as Australia's leading mountain bike destination due to iconic riding experiences at Blue Derby, Maydena Bike Park and Wild Mersey.

These new mountain biking destinations are luring tens of thousands of riders to the state every year, a welcome boost to the Tasmanian economy.

In 2017 the Tasmanian Government recognised mountain bike tourism as an important economic stimulant, establishing a \$6 million Tasmanian Cycle Tourism Fund to help secure the state's reputation as Australia's premier mountain biking destination.

Two years later more than 25,000 visitors to Tasmania participated in mountain biking, injecting \$67 million into the state economy. Mountain bike tourists stay longer and spend more than the average Tasmanian tourist.

Mountain biking is recognised as one of Tourism Tasmania's core four priority markets within its Unordinary Adventures program.

The 2018 City of Hobart Community Vision recognises kunanyi / Mount Wellington as key to Hobart's sense of place, culture and economy. Improving mountain biking experiences on the mountain helps deliver the City Vision.

Implementing this plan has the potential to benefit Hobart's economy through increased tourism, provide better recreation facilities and connections through public open space and engage the public and volunteer groups with the natural environment.

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Wellington Park is set aside as a Reserve under the *Wellington Park Act 1993* for the purpose of providing recreational and tourism uses and opportunities consistent with the preservation or protection of the natural and cultural values of the Park.

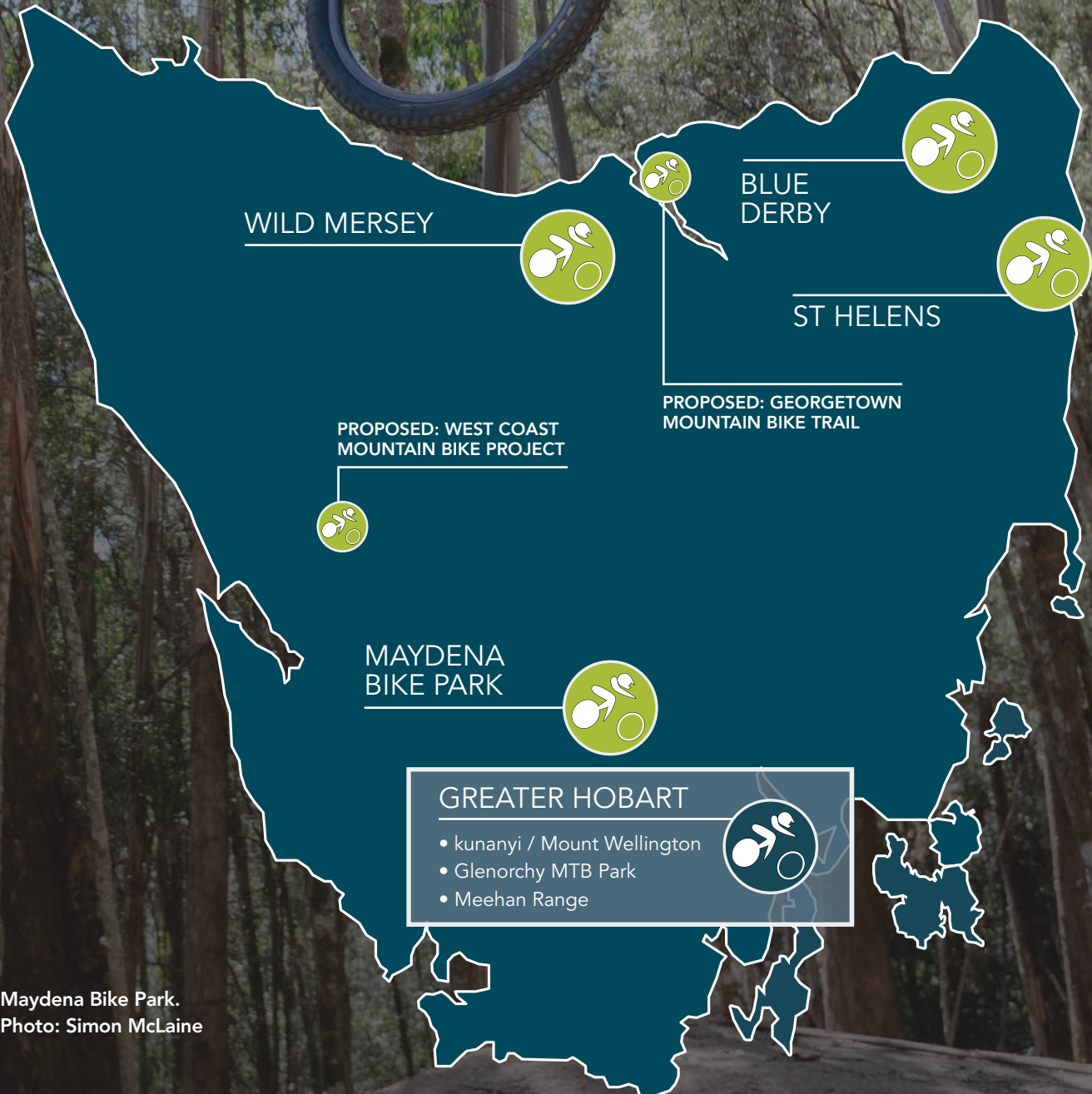
Land managers, stakeholders and communities will work collaboratively to deliver Riding the Mountain, consistent with the following principles.

These principles are to:

- encourage the provision of recreational and tourism uses

- conserve and enhance the values of the park
- ensure compatibility between recreational uses
- ensure the safety and welfare of all users
- enable a range of experiences, accessible to all
- disperse recreational use and reduce congestion on existing tracks and trails
- provide a seamless experience for users
- enable visitor use to be monitored and evaluated consistently across the park to guide future planning and investment.

The City of Hobart has developed Riding the Mountain at the same time as the Wellington Park Management Trust (WPMT) is preparing a Visitation and Recreation Strategy for the entire park. To ensure alignment between this plan and the visitation strategy, an interim set of principles for the planning, design, construction and maintenance of recreational facilities has been developed between the City of Hobart and the WPMT.



Maydena Bike Park.
Photo: Simon McLaine

RIDING THE MOUNTAIN

Riding the Mountain - A Plan For Improved Mountain Bike Riding In The Lower Foothills of kunanyi/ Mount Wellington responds to the rapidly growing popularity of mountain biking and positions the City to make a strong contribution to Tasmania's mountain biking opportunities.

The plan identifies the potential to establish 37 kilometres of new tracks to improve the existing network in Hobart and deliver a world-class trail development serving local and tourism needs.

The plan has the capacity to deliver a better recreational experience – a well-connected mountain bike network that invites riders to explore the mountain's natural beauty, is safer and more rewarding for a wider range of riders.

The draft plan was released for public consultation in April 2020 and received overwhelming support from

the mountain bike community (93%). The majority of trail runners (72%) and walkers (52%) also supported the draft plan. The final plan responds to the feedback received during the consultation process.

The plan has been developed with the help of a Project Advisory Group comprising local mountain bike riders representing a variety of riding needs. Local tour operators, Glenorchy City Council and the Wellington Park Trust have contributed to the plan and the Hobart Walking Club, Pandani Bushwalking Club, students of South Hobart Primary School and local trail runners have also been consulted.

The plan provides the basis to prioritise the City of Hobart's mountain bike expenditure and seek further external funding.

20 NEW TRACKS



37 km of tracks



4 beginner tracks



13 intermediate tracks



3 advanced tracks



5 shared use tracks



Hobart rider Leyla Sharman pits her skills against the new upper section of the Drops Track in the foothills of kunanyi / Mount Wellington. Photo: ©KiPhotomedia

WHY THE FOOTHILLS?

Despite being the closest of Tasmania's great riding areas to Hobart, the formal trail network on kunanyi / Mount Wellington has not kept pace with rapidly growing interest in the sport.

The foothills of kunanyi/Mount Wellington are better suited to the development of mountain bike tracks than higher elevations on the mountain or in other bushland reserves managed by the City of Hobart for a number of reasons, including:

- The area is already popular with local riders and is a major tourist attraction.
- The foothills present an opportunity to consolidate an existing mountain bike track network rather

than create a 'new' network elsewhere that could lead to habitat fragmentation in areas with higher biodiversity values.

- The foothills are much more accessible for both locals and visitors than the mountain's higher slopes.
- The soil types are more suitable for building mountain bike tracks and as a result production costs are lower.

NEW TRACKS

This plan identifies 37 km of new tracks that could be developed to enhance the mountain bike network in the foothills of kunanyi / Mount Wellington and improve riding experiences.

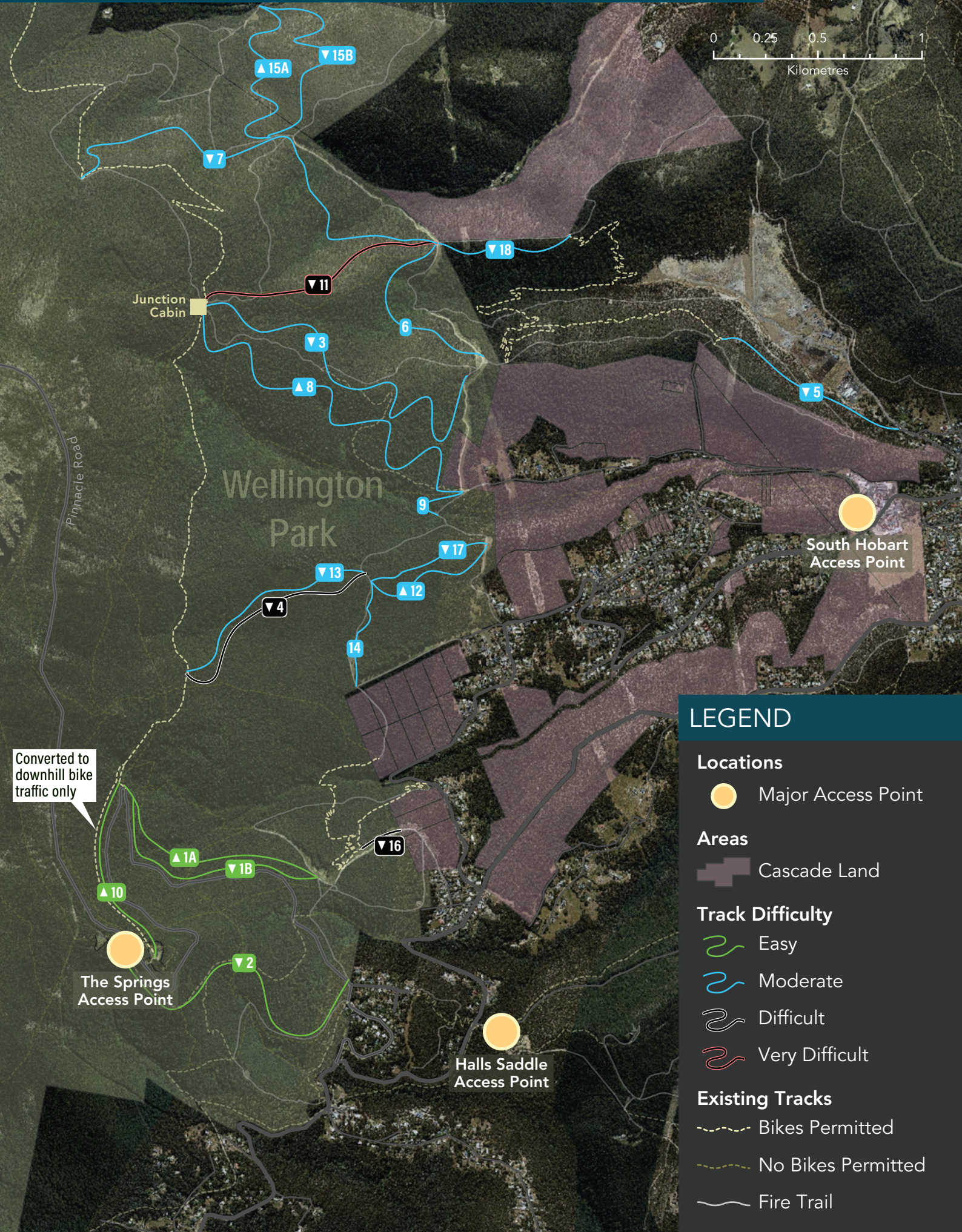
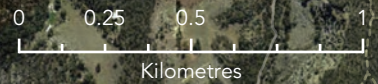
The track concepts have been designed to provide safe, sustainable, high quality experiences while respecting environmental, historical and cultural

values. The range of identified riding experiences focus on local needs and will appeal to visiting riders. The track concepts include a number of loop rides that vary in technical challenges, style and distance. The maps in this report show how the new tracks could fit into the existing track network and include three examples of the many loops that could be created as the network is progressively built.

TRACK N°	NAME	MOUNTAIN BIKE DIRECTION	RECOMMENDED USE	TRACK NOTES
1A	Rocky Wheel'n			An easy climb from Bracken Lane to North South track.
1B	Free Wheel'n			A fun beginner descent.
2	Springboard			Longer easy run from the Springs down to Fern Tree.
3	Boulder Dash			Major descent from Junction Cabin to South Hobart.
4	Ridgeback			Difficult downhill trail for advanced riders.
5	Tip Top (extension)			Extending Tip Top out to the streets of South Hobart.
6	Wattle Grove		*	Bypasses a steep section of fire trail.
7	Devils Run		*	Creates a big loop from North South track.
8	Cabin Fever			Gets you up to Junction Cabin.
9	Heart Attack		*	Bypasses a steep section of fire trail.
10	Splitters Track			Easy climb from Shoobridge to the Springs.
11	Wiggin Out			Very difficult downhill – only for the brave.
12	Skid Road			Climb from main fire trail into the heart of the network.
13	Midnight Blue			A more challenging intermediate descent.
14	G-Fawkes		*	Bypasses a steep section of fire trail.
15A	Toil			Provides network access from Lenah Valley.
15B	Downtime			Descend off the mountain into Lenah Valley.
16	Jumps Track			An extension of the Drops jump line down the fuel break.
17	Upper Luge			Formalisation of the existing track.
18	Swing Set			A fun connection from Main Fire Trail to Slides.
North-South Track				The section from the Springs to Shoebidge Bend converted to mountain bike only when track 10 is built.

Easy
 Moderate
 Difficult
 Very Difficult
 * May be considered for shared use.

NEW TRACKS



LEGEND

Locations

-  Major Access Point




Areas

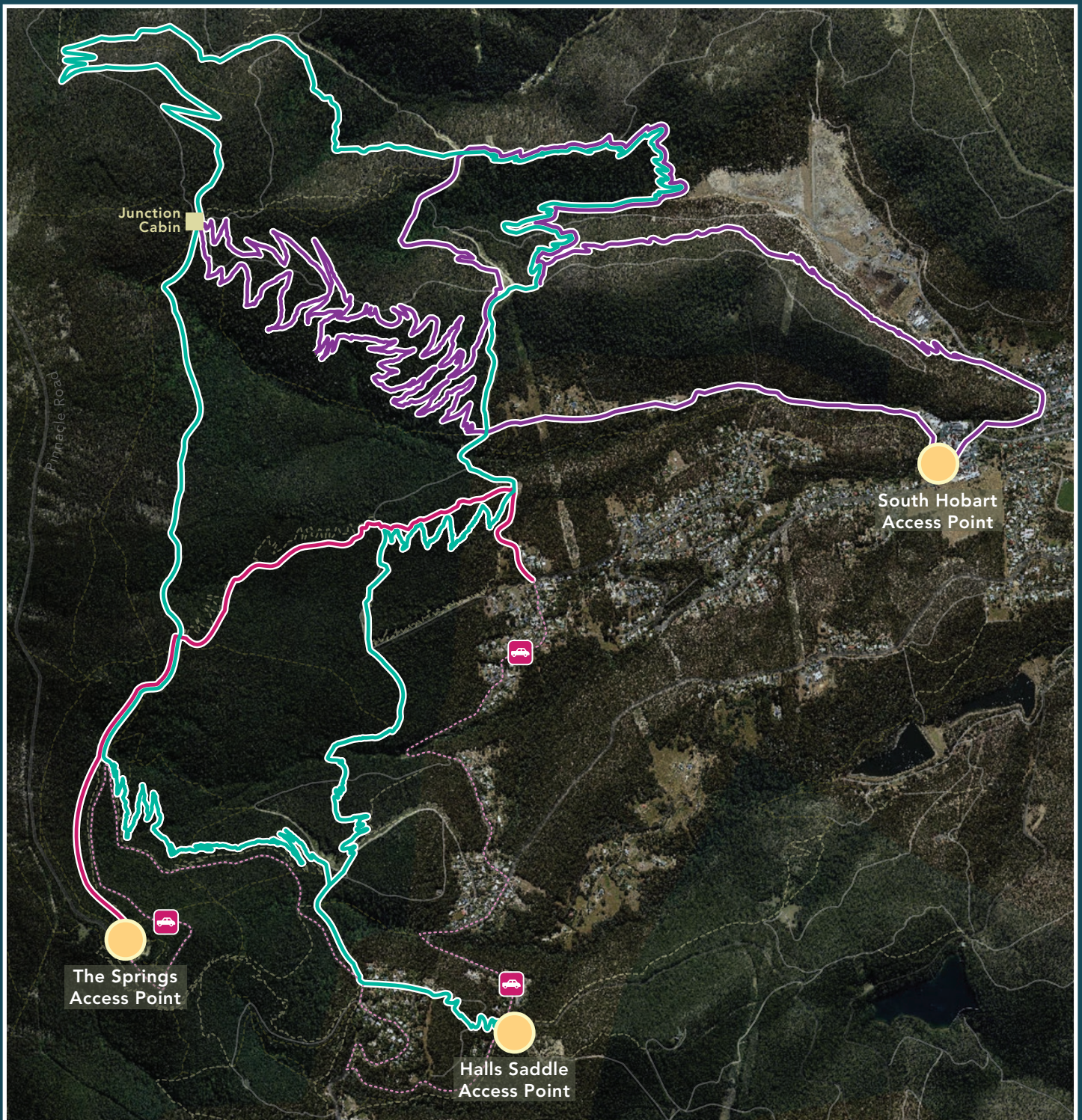
-  Cascade Land

Track Difficulty

-  Easy
-  Moderate
-  Difficult
-  Very Difficult

Existing Tracks

-  Bikes Permitted
-  No Bikes Permitted
-  Fire Trail



RIDE 1: CROSS COUNTRY – XC

A classic XC loop, climbing from Halls Saddle to Shoobridge Bend before traversing the mountain's foothills via the North-South Track. A long descent on new trail follows, before returning to the start via McRobies Gully and the Missing Link area.

RIDE 2: ENDURO

Starting from South Hobart, this enduro loop would feature a long intermediate climb to Junction Cabin before descending back towards McRobies Gully and Tip Top Track, returning to South Hobart.

RIDE 3: DOWNHILL

This downhill ride would start from The Springs, descending on the North-South Track before branching off into steeper territory and on to Upper Luge. Riders could exit on to Strickland Avenue.





Slides Track, South Hobart.
Photo: Flow Mountain Bike

A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

The City of Hobart's *Riding the Mountain – A Plan For Improved Mountain Bike Riding In The Foothills of kunanyi/ Mount Wellington* is based on community feedback on the current mountain bike track network and lays out a vision for the future.

The four key goals of the plan are to:

- Improve the functionality of the current mountain bike track network by addressing key gaps and creating more suitable access points.
- Expand the range of rides available to cater for more riders.
- Establish multiple riding circuits and loops of varying levels of difficulty and distance.
- Where appropriate allow access to some new shared-use tracks for walking and running.

This plan achieves these goals by:

- Plugging key gaps in the mountain bike track network on kunanyi / Mount Wellington.
- Helping build a track network with stacked loops.
- Creating a wider range of riding experiences, including opportunities for bike shuttle services that take riders directly to track heads.

THE CURRENT MOUNTAIN BIKE NETWORK

A review of the existing formal mountain bike track network on kunanyi / Mount Wellington identified:

- Shared use of tracks by runners, walkers and mountain bike riders has the potential to compromise the safety and experiences of all users.
- There is a lack of connectivity between existing mountain bike tracks.
- Few formal mountain bike tracks have been purpose built for mountain biking only and therefore lack the design, dynamics and flow that are becoming increasingly important to riders.
- The majority of existing tracks suit intermediate level riders. Some provision for beginner and advanced level trails where feasible is desirable to enable the progression of skills.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

As part of the development of this plan the City of Hobart engaged extensively with stakeholder groups and community members in the form of focus groups, workshops and information sessions. The City also conducted two user surveys to better understand the current and future needs of the community.



The first survey was launched on Your Say Hobart in March 2019 and aimed to better understand how mountain bike riders utilised the existing track network and how their experiences could be improved. The survey received 446 responses from local riders.

The second survey was launched on Your Say Hobart in August 2019. Officers also conducted face-to-face surveys with users on a number of Saturday and Sunday mornings. The survey aimed to understand whether local mountain bikers, walkers and runners preferred using shared-use or single-use tracks. It also gauged whether users support new mountain bike development in the lower foothills. This survey received 1001 responses, of which 449 were mountain bikers, 327 were walkers and 173 were runners.

Feedback from this community engagement played a valuable role in shaping this plan.

The results of the surveys are publicly available on the Your Say Hobart website. Common themes that have been identified include:

The mountain offers a unique riding experience

- 680 m of vertical decent
- part of and right beside Hobart
- spectacular views
- includes a variety of soil and forest types.

How local riders use the mountain tracks

- primary access point is South Hobart, followed by The Springs
- ride time is up to four hours
- use is steady across the week and doubles on weekends
- majority of people drive to an access point, followed by those who get dropped off or ride from home.

Gaps in the track network

- climbing trail to The Springs
- descending trail from The Springs
- single track trail from Junction Cabin to Main Fire Trail
- climbing trail from South Hobart to Main Fire Trail
- climbing trail from Main Fire Trail to Junction Cabin
- descending trail from North-South Track to South Hobart (pre-Junction Cabin)
- single track from Bracken Lane to Shoebridge Bend.

MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDERS



Use is steady across the week and doubles on weekends.



Up to 4 hours ride time.



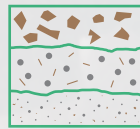
Most people drive to an access node, some get dropped off or ride from home.

Source: Survey 1, n=446 (March 2019)

WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT RIDING ON THE MOUNTAIN?



Nature

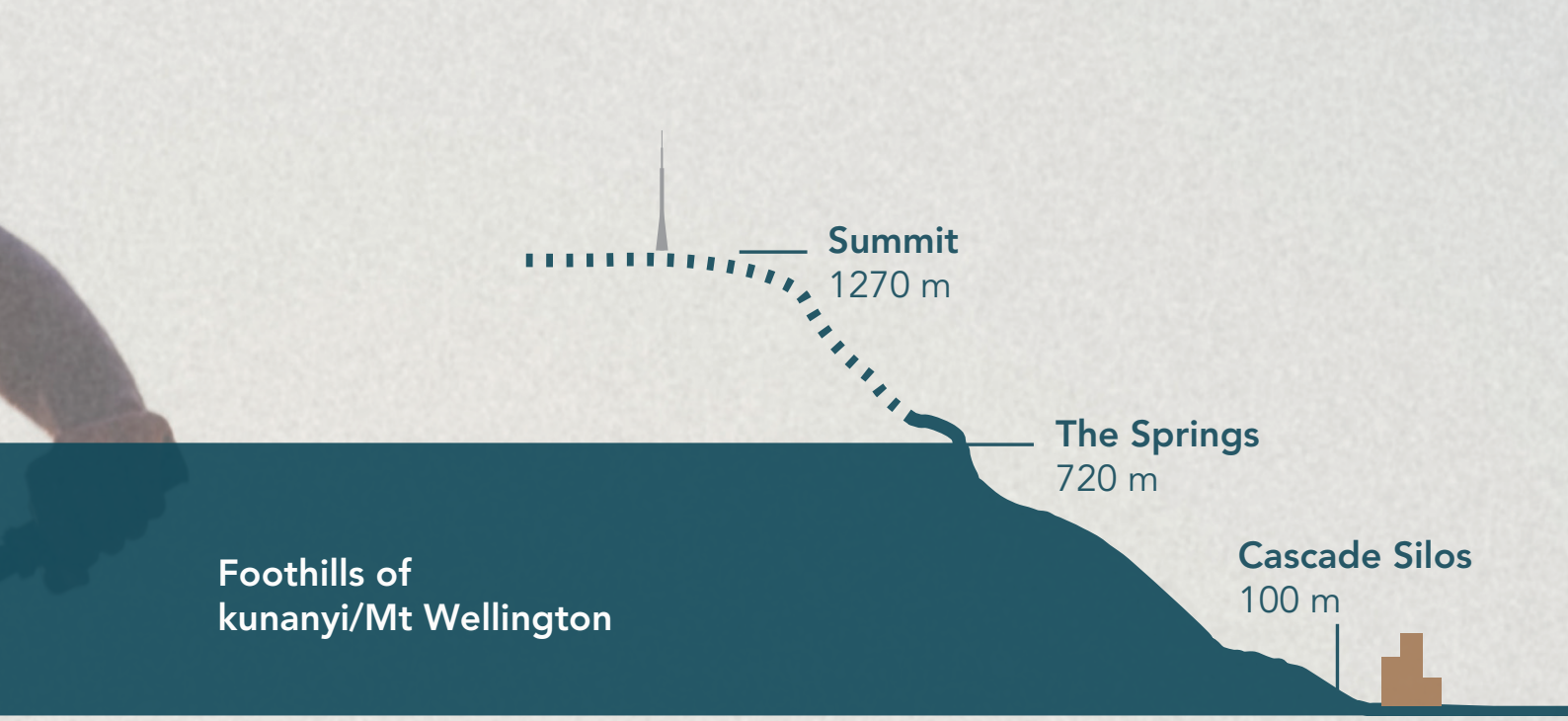


Terrain



Views

Source: Survey 1, n=446 (March 2019)



Foothills of kunanyi/Mt Wellington

ROOM TO IMPROVE



Signs



Connectivity



Variety



User Conduct

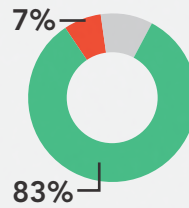


Access Nodes

Source: Survey 1, n=446 (March 2019)

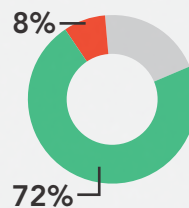
SHARED SUPPORT

New MTB Development



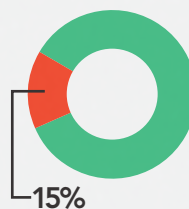
83% of respondents support new mountain bike development on the mountain. 7% do not.

Separation of Use



72% prefer separation of use. 8% do not.

Situational Shared Use



The majority were happy to share in particular situations (mountain bikes going uphill but not when going downhill), whereas 15% of users were not happy to share in any situation.

Source: Survey 2, n=1001 (August 2019)





MOUNTAIN BIKE ACCESS POINTS

More than half a million people visit kunanyi / Mount Wellington every year. That number is expected to reach 700,000 by 2029. Therefore, key access points to the mountain and the movement of people requires careful consideration.

Three key access points have been identified for mountain bike riders exploring kunanyi / Mount Wellington's tracks based on prevailing usage patterns.

- The Springs.
- South Hobart.
- Halls Saddle.

The Springs

The Springs is a major access point for mountain bike riders, especially for those riding the North-South Track and those with access to a vehicle shuttle, either private or commercial, who want to descend through the foothills to Hobart.

The Springs is an extremely busy area in peak tourist times, and includes a café and a drop-off/pick-up point for buses.

Due to site constraints, limited parking for about 70 cars and growing local and tourist demands at the primary visitor area for the mountain, the Springs is not recommended as a focus for developing a major new access point for mountain bike tracks in the mountain's foothills. However, the Springs will remain a place for riders to start and end trails in the area, including a shuttle drop-off area.



Foothills of kunanyi / Mount Wellington.
Photo: Craig Garth

South Hobart

A survey undertaken as part of the development of this plan revealed South Hobart as the most common access point for local riders exploring mountain bike tracks in the foothills of kunanyi / Mount Wellington. The area is also popular with those riding or driving to the area.

However, limited council-owned land in the direct vicinity restricts the further establishment of a primary access point with parking, signage and bike wash-down stations. Stakeholders have also raised concerns regarding the volume of mountain bike traffic along the narrow Old Farm Road. The development of a major mountain bike access point for riders in this area is desirable but will require careful consideration and the approval of private landholders.

Opportunities to improve access for mountain bike riders travelling from South Hobart into the lower foothills tracks will be investigated.

Halls Saddle

The City of Hobart has investigated a site at Halls Saddle just below Fern Tree as a gateway to kunanyi / Mount Wellington, Tasmania's most visited natural attraction.

Early work indicates that developing this site as a major visitor node could help resolve access issues for people visiting the mountain. If an access point were to proceed tracks to connect with the broader network would be prioritised.



Minor access points

Riders already take advantage of a number of smaller access points to reach their favourite rides in kunanyi / Mount Wellington's foothills, including at:

- Ridgeway
- Knocklofty
- West Hobart
- Lenah Valley.

There are no plans to turn any of these minor access points into major access points due to a number of constraints, including limited parking and the potential impact on local residents. Minor access

points will be monitored for the need to improve existing infrastructure to ensure access, safety and amenity is adequate for local users.

Glenorchy Mountain Bike Park

The City of Hobart is working closely with Glenorchy City Council to ensure connections between neighbouring track networks are identified in key strategies, maintained and where possible improved.

ROLLING OUT THE NETWORK PLAN

Each track concept has been prioritised with the help of members of the Project Advisory Group, local tour operators and relevant land managers. Preference was given to tracks that would best establish key linkages and meet user demands, create loop rides and resolve safety concerns. The staging will guide the order in which tracks will be built once funding becomes available.

This plan will be rolled out in stages as funding becomes available. Some stage 1 work is already underway. The priorities within each stage may change in light of funding opportunities and user demand.

Stage 1 focuses on building new tracks that significantly close gaps in the existing network. The highest priority tracks – 1a, 1b, 12 and 17 – are funded jointly by the City of Hobart and the Tasmanian Cycle Tourism Fund from the Tasmanian Government. There is currently no Council funding available for future stages. However, opportunities to secure external funding (ie grants) will be actively pursued.

Stage 2 includes three intermediate tracks, one black diamond track and one double black diamond track.

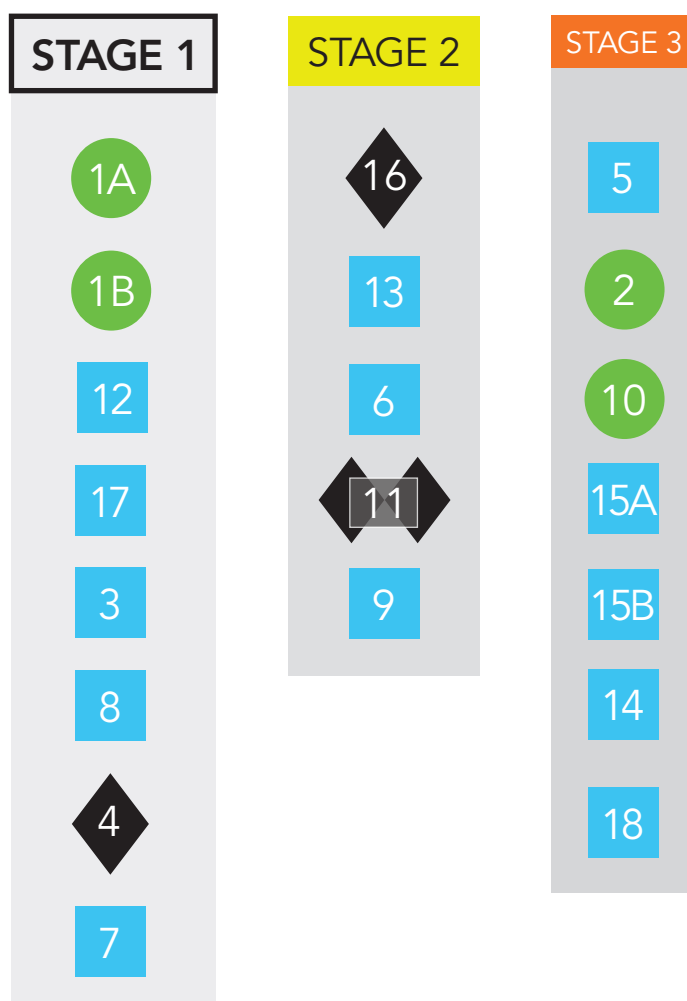
Stage 3 includes two beginners tracks and five intermediate tracks.

PLANNING

The alignment of tracks outlined in this plan is conceptual and feasibility studies will be completed before they can be built. These studies will include investigations into track alignments, environmental and heritage impacts, and may alter the final feasibility and design of each track.

The final alignment of some tracks may utilise existing clearings, such as fuel breaks. This approach minimises the need for further disturbance.

The detailed design of each new track will need to meet the planning requirements identified in the *Wellington Park Management Plan 2013*.





North-South Track, kunanyi / Mount Wellington.
Photo: Flow Mountain Bike

DESIGNING TRACKS

The majority of new tracks proposed in this plan will be mountain bike specific and purpose-built for mountain bikers. Mountain bike specific tracks are generally narrower than shared use tracks, create a better connection between the rider and environment, and can offer greater technical challenges.

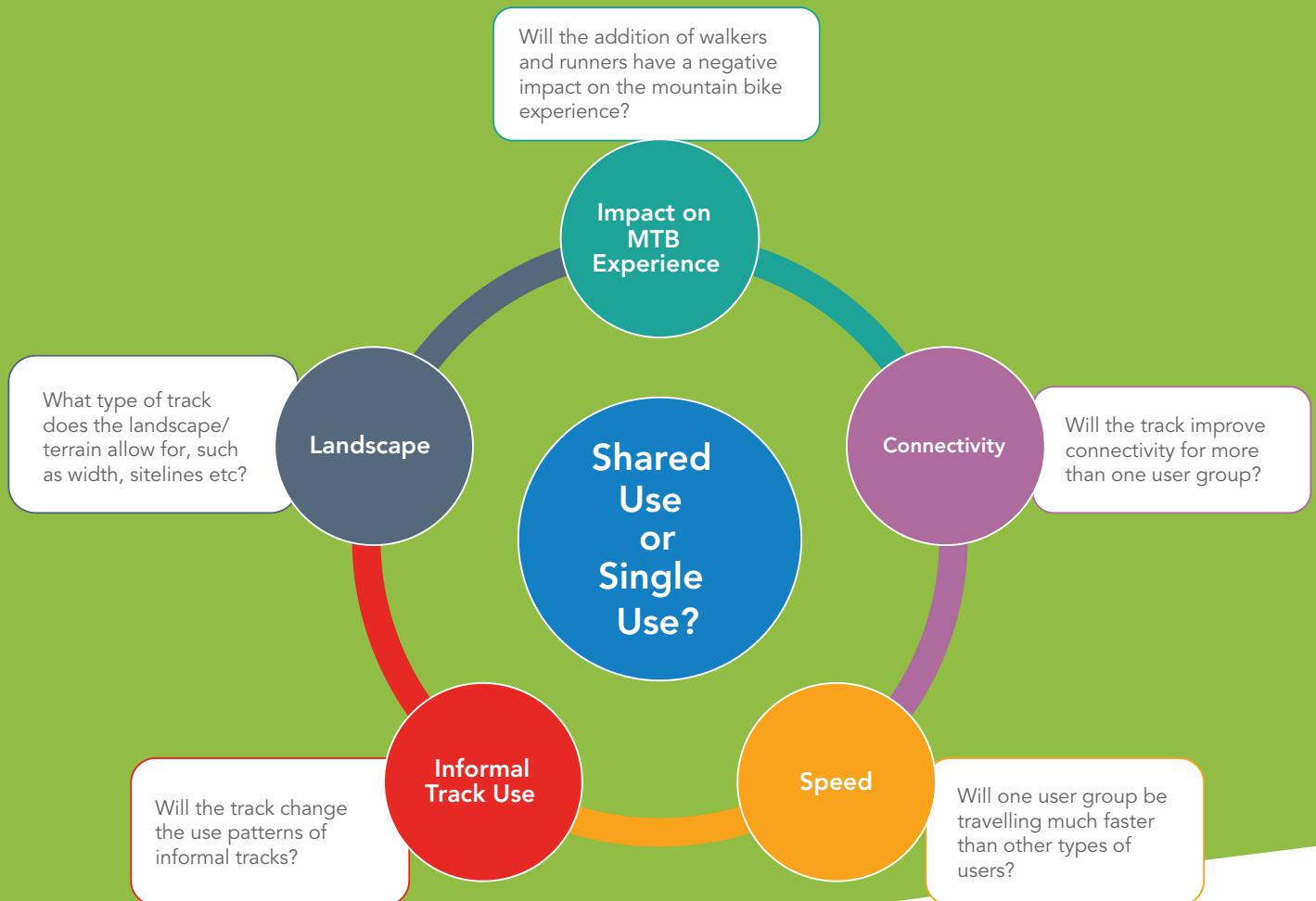
The City has developed a simple framework that outlines the factors that need to be considered when determining whether multiple user groups can use any of the mountain bike tracks specified in this plan. Five tracks have been identified for shared use and four additional tracks will be further assessed using this framework in their detailed design.

In some instances, the development of new tracks will cause existing shared use tracks to become redundant. The framework may also be used to determine whether it is suitable to convert existing shared use tracks back to single use.

PROPOSED NAMES OF NEW TRACKS

Names have been assigned to new tracks with the assistance of the Project Advisory Group and members of the local mountain bike community.

The names in this plan reflect unique attributes of the mountain's foothills, such as historical features and natural values. The stories behind each name can be integrated into track interpretation signage.





**WALKING
& HIKING**



**MOUNTAIN
BIKING**



**TRAIL
RUNNING**



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The City of Hobart recognises the need to investigate opportunities beyond the scope of this plan, such as:

- providing strategic links to neighbouring reserves and future infrastructure developments and visitor nodes
- creating an iconic ride around Hobart's foothills from Mt Nelson through to Lenah Valley / Glenorchy by linking the entire track network. Perched on the edge of Hobart, this could become an epic day trip for tourists whilst providing direct access into the heart of the network for local riders
- developing collaborative relationships with private landholders to benefit the wider community.

The City will continue to pursue these opportunities in conjunction with this this plan.

LIFE OF THE PLAN

The tracks and priorities identified in this plan are subject to change based on future funding, user demand, bike technology, infrastructure developments and land agreements. This plan will be formally reviewed every five years until it is fully implemented, enabling the City to respond and adapt to the changing needs of the community.





Drops Track

BIKES ONLY

Drops track is a challenging, downhill-only mountain bike track with steep gradients and a variable surface.

There are many potential hazards including logs, roots, rocks, dropoffs, and concrete tree stumps.

It is suitable for skilled and experienced mountain bikers only.



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