



NORTHERN TRAILS 2022

Northern Regional Trails Strategy Review and Update

Oct 2024

**The Northern Region Trails Group recognises the rich
Aboriginal heritage of our region and acknowledges
that the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Taungurung
people are the Traditional Custodians of the land.**

This document was prepared by **Fitzgerald Frisby Landscape Architecture**, working with Banyule City Council, Darebin City Council, Hume City Council, Merri-bek City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council and Whittlesea City Council, as well as the specialist subconsultants *SGS Economics & Planning*, and *Quentin Frayne* (trail auditing).

This document is an update of the 2016 *Northern Regional Trails Strategy* prepared by *Arup*.

This document has been endorsed by all of the six northern LGAs.

<i>Council</i>	<i>Endorsement date</i>
Banyule	27.02.2023
Darebin	19.12.2022
Merri-bek	08.02.2023
Hume	27.02.2023
Nillumbik	30.04.2024
Whittlesea	21.03.2023



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Northern Trails 2022 is a regional trails strategy that has been prepared to establish a framework for the planning and development of regional trails in Northern Melbourne for the next 10 years and beyond. This document is an updated version of a strategy completed in 2016. The original strategy successfully leveraged approximately \$11 million of State Government funding to deliver key priority projects. The delivery of projects and recent significant State Government infrastructure projects have necessitated the review and update of the strategy to reflect the changing circumstances and priorities.

The study area

The study area includes six local government areas (Banyule City Council, Darebin City Council, Hume City Council, Merri-bek City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council and the City of Whittlesea) on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Taungurung people of the Kulin Nation.

The study area covers approximately 159,100 hectares and includes a mix of urban, suburban and rural areas. The current population of the area is a little over one million, stretching from the inner-city suburbs of Brunswick, Northcote, Alphington and Ivanhoe, to the outer areas of Craigieburn and Sunbury, and to the Kinglake National Park and rural and interface communities of Whittlesea and St Andrews.

Regional trails

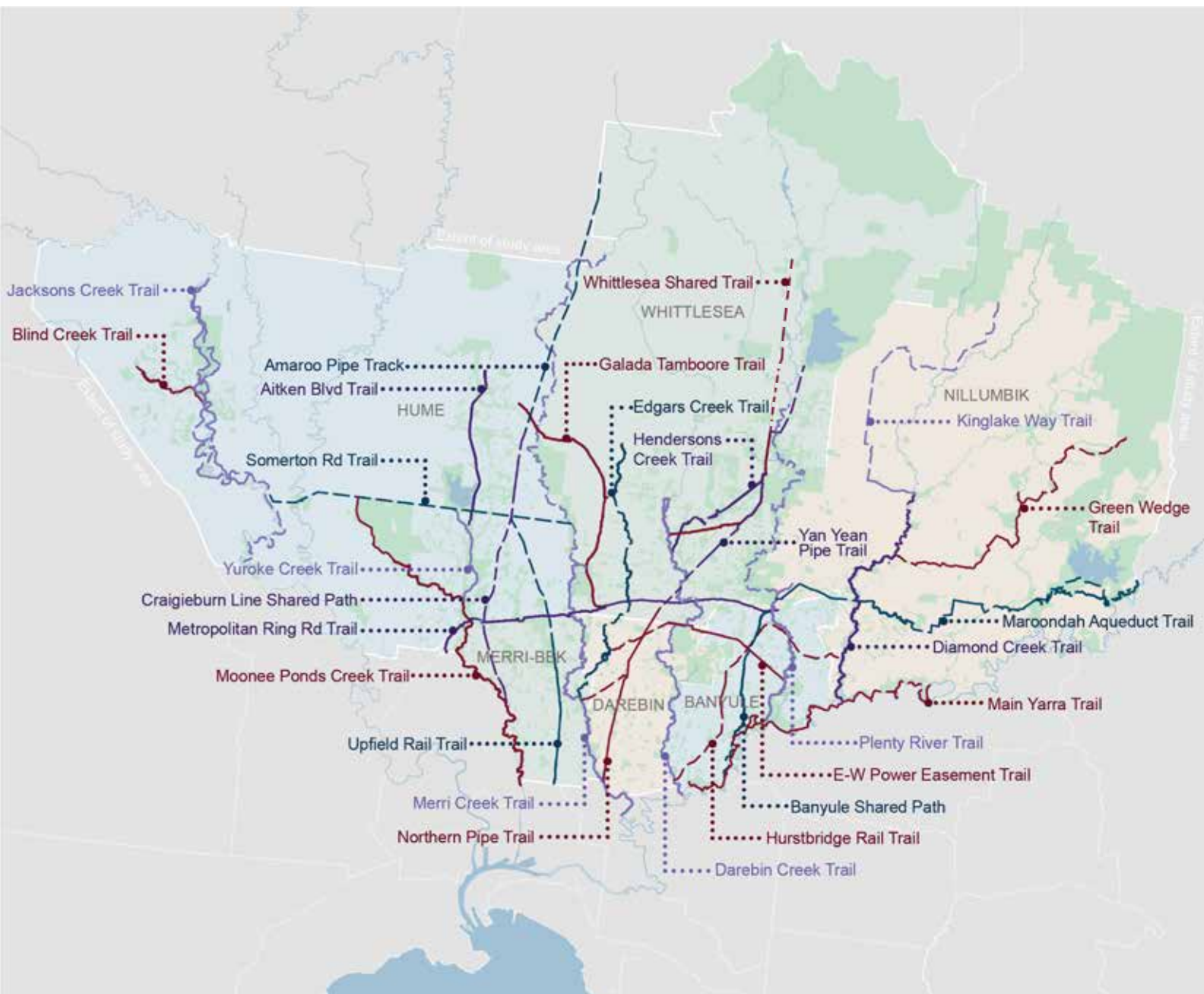
For the purposes of this study, trails have been defined as having the following characteristics:

- multiple potential user groups
- an off-road location
- a relatively long and continuous length.

This study focusses upon ‘regional trails’, which are defined as being higher order trails that have a regional scale, purpose and/or impact.

Twenty seven existing and potential regional trails have been identified within the study area. They are listed below in alphabetical order, and are located on the accompanying map.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| • Aitken Boulevard Shared Trail | • Kinglake Way Trail |
| • Amaroo Pipe Track | • Maroondah Aqueduct Trail |
| • Banyule Shared Trail | • Merri Creek Trail |
| • Blind Creek Trail | • Metropolitan Ring Road Trail |
| • Craigieburn Line Shared Trail | • Moonee Ponds Creek Trail |
| • Darebin Creek Trail | • Northern Pipe/ St Georges Rd/ Cheddar Rd Trail |
| • Diamond Creek Trail | • Plenty River Trail |
| • East-West Power Easement Trail | • Somerton Road Trail |
| • Edgars Creek Trail | • Upfield Rail Trail |
| • Galada Tamboore Trail | • Whittlesea Shared Trail |
| • Green Wedge Trail | • Yan Yean Pipe Track |
| • Hendersons Creek Trail | • Main Yarra Trail |
| • Hurstbridge Rail Trail | • Yuroke Creek Trail |
| • Jacksons Creek Trail | |



The Northern Melbourne regional trail network

As a part of this project, each of the identified regional trails have been assessed (including a trail auditor riding all of the existing trails) and individually mapped. Investigations into the trails and the auditing process identified recommended trail improvement projects for each trail.

The benefits of regional trails

Regional trails provide a range of benefits to the community that can be broadly grouped into four categories.

- ***Social***

Trails provide cost-free locations where planned and unplanned social interaction occurs. People use trails to exercise together and also have chance interactions with people with shared interests (e.g.. dog walkers). The state government strategy *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* identifies a goal of creating '20 minute neighbourhoods' (where most everyday needs are within a 20 minute walk, ride or public transport trip from a person's home) as a way to improve the quality of life for residents of the city.

Central to this plan is the infrastructure, including trails, that allow people to safely and conveniently move around their 20 minute neighbourhood.

- *Health*

The most common physical activities that people undertake (walking, jogging and cycling) are activities that are highly suited to trails. Trails provide safe, convenient, attractive and cost-free ways for people to exercise, either as a recreational activity, or integrated with their day-to-day life (e.g.. riding to the shops).

- *Environmental*

A high quality regional trail network encourages people to choose to walk or cycle to destinations, rather than using motorised transport modes. This results in reduced vehicle numbers on roads, and the resulting reductions in air pollutants, noise pollution and congestion issues. Trails can also provide access to natural environments which can assist in fostering an appreciation of the environment and help to develop awareness of environmental issues.

- *Economic*

A Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) has been undertaken as a part of this study in order to quantify the economic benefits of regional trail investment. The CBA highlights that the Northern Regional Trails upgrade is expected to generate a net present value of around \$114 million and a benefit cost ratio of 1.6. This indicates that benefits directly attributable to the project will be around 1.6 times that of the investment.

Findings

This strategy makes recommendations regarding a range of factors, grouped into four categories.

- *Trail infrastructure*

Standards and guidelines are provided relating to physical trail infrastructure, including the trails themselves (incorporating width, surface material, and intersection design), signs, facilities (such as drinking fountains and toilets), and trail-side vegetation.

- *Trail management*

Regional trails often cross municipal boundaries, regularly traverse land managed by multiple different organisations and are funded from a range of sources. This document identifies the current management bodies and challenges, and identifies opportunities for improving management processes across organisations for the betterment of the regional trail network.

- *Trail marketing*

While individual regional trails are quite well-known by residents of Northern Melbourne, few know about the extent of the regional trail network. The trail network also provides potential opportunities for greater use by visitors to the region (and the associated potential economic benefits that this can bring). The existing marketing activities and target audiences are examined here, and recommendations made about the most effective ways to communicate to different groups about the trail network.

- *Trail improvement projects*

Trail improvement projects have been identified for all of the 27 regional trails within the study area, ranging from major trail construction works to small-scale improvements to intersections or signage (the list of trail improvement projects are itemised into a schedule which can be found in Appendix B and/or cross referenced to the trail maps in chapter 6).

- *Prioritising trail improvement projects*

Following the identification of trail improvement projects, each action item was assessed using a multi-criteria analysis in order to identify priority projects that provide the most benefit to the region and most closely align with the objectives of this study. The top ten priority projects were determined to be:

No.	Trail action item	Project description	LGA
1	MaroondahAqueduct_01	Construct new section of trail connecting the Plenty River Trail near Lear Court, east along the aqueduct across Diamond Creek Road to the Diamond Creek Trail at Allendale Road.	Nillumbik
2	MerriCreekTrail_08	Complete missing section of trail from the Metropolitan Ring Road to existing section of trail south of Horne Street.	Hume
3	MaroondahAqueduct_02	Extend the Maroondah Aqueduct Trail through to Yarra Glen. Two options have been identified for this extension: i. Construct a new section of trail from the existing Aqueduct Trail at Calwell Road through to Ashmore Road and on to Yarra Glen; or ii. Construct a new section of trail from the existing Aqueduct Trail at Calwell Road via the Melbourne Water Caretakers trail to Ashmore Road and on to Yarra Glen.	Nillumbik
4	EdgarsCreekTrail_01	Construct new section of trail from the Merri Creek Trail to Ronald Street on the west bank.	Merri-bek
5	MerriCreekTrail_02	Partner with Parks Victoria and DELWP to extend the Merri Creek Trail from Merri Concourse (north) to Cooper Street.	Hume
6	UpfieldRail_02	Advocate to Department of Transport to construct a new section of trail from the Metropolitan Ring Road to Somerton Road.	Hume
7	WhittleseaShared_01	Construct a new trail from Mernda station to Whittlesea. Ensure there is provision for horse riders on parts of the trail	Whittlesea
8	MerriCreekTrail_03	Advocate for and investigate the staged extension of the Merri Creek Trail from Cooper Street Somerton/Epping north to OHerns Road as a part of the Upper Merri Creek Regional Parkland Plan.	Hume & Whittlesea
9	MerriCreekTrail_04	Advocate for and investigate the staged extension of the Merri Creek Trail from OHerns Road to Craigieburn Road as a part of the Upper Merri Creek Regional Parkland Plan.	Hume & Whittlesea

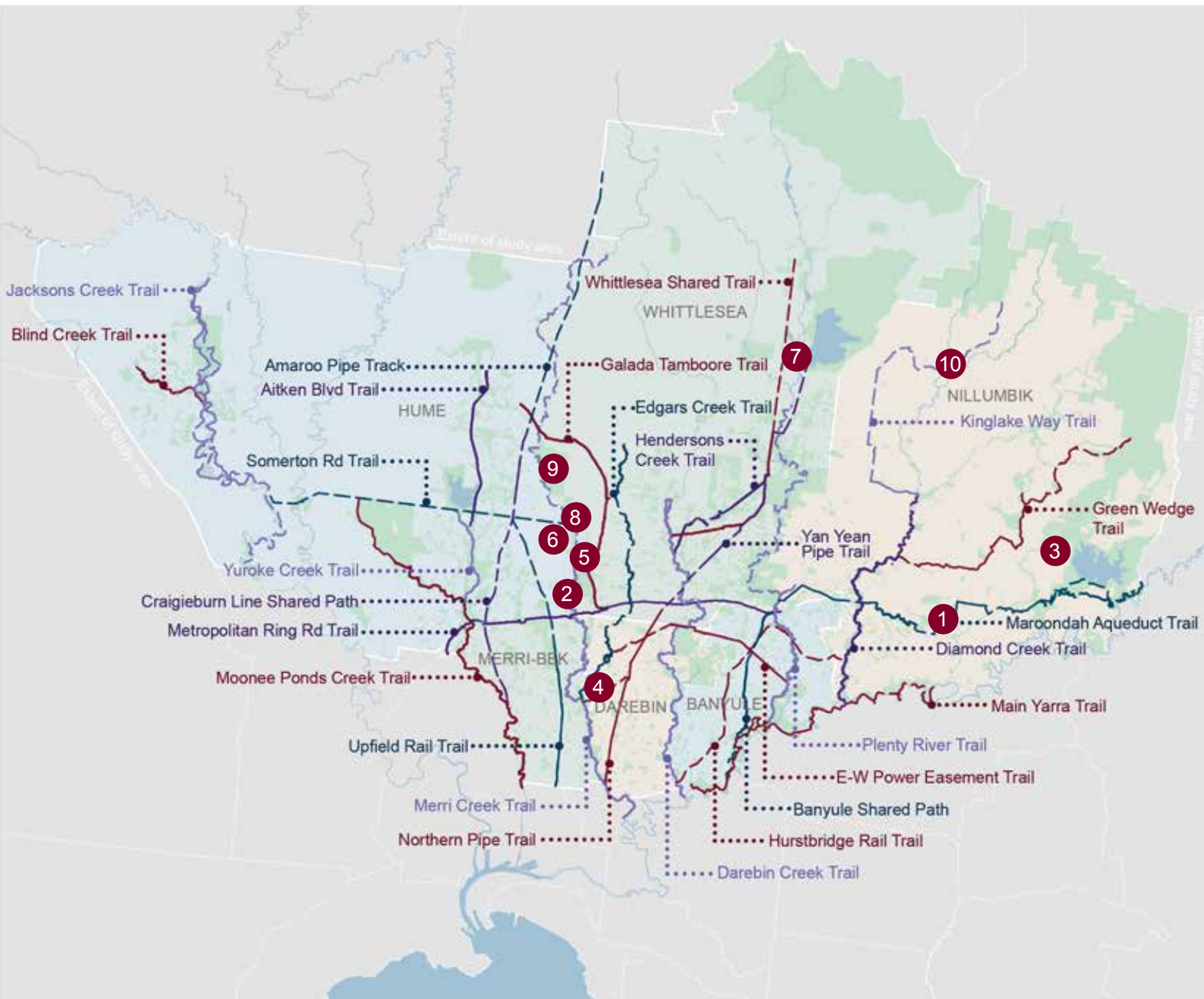
Schedule of top ten unfunded trail action items

In order to undertake the multi-criteria analysis, a series of qualitative and quantitative criteria were developed and assigned a weighting in collaboration with the Project Steering Group. The criteria and the relative weighting used are as follows:

1. Contribution to an integrated and connected network (26%)
2. Encouraging use by spatial location (18%)
3. Potential economic benefits (5%)
4. Contribution to community health and well-being (5%)
5. Contribution to uniqueness and the quality of the natural environment (18%)
6. Encouraging diversity of use through facility quality and maximising usability (5%)
7. Strategic alignment (18%)
8. Ease of implementation (5%)

This criteria, assessment process and the priority action items outline the priorities for the Northern Region and the whole regional trail network, as opposed to individual Councils.

Refer to chapter 10 for more detail on the assessment method and implementation.



Top ten trail action items

- **Trail improvement filters**

Due to the wide variety in project types, and to allow project types to be easily sorted, a series of 'filters' were also developed. Using these filters, a project based on specific requirements regarding the filter categories can be identified.

The top ten projects identified during the multi-criteria analysis process outline the priority projects for the Northern Region however there may be instances where a grant or funding opportunity arises that is suited to an improvement project that is not highly ranked. In these instances, projects can be sorted using the filters to identify suitable projects for implementation or funding applications.

It is important to note that this strategy is high level and as such many of the trail action items require further investigation in order to determine their feasibility and alignment, and to ensure they are in alignment with all relevant authority and land manager acts, strategies, plans and policies. Many of the action items are significant in complexity, i.e. involve multiple land owners or managers or include kilometres of new trail construction, and therefore may present barriers for implementation and take longer than the life of this study to be realised.

1.THE PROJECT	1	7. TRAIL INFRASTRUCTURE	68
1.1 About The Project	2	7.1 Trail Surfaces	69
1.2 Study Area	3	7.2 Trail Signage	73
1.3 Project Objectives	4	7.3 Trail Facilities	75
1.4 Project Approach	4	7.4 Trail-Side Vegetation	77
1.5 Acknowledgments	5	7.5 Intersection Treatments	77
		7.6 Trail Infrastructure Standards And Guidelines	78
2.VISION	6		
2.1 Project Vision	7	8. TRAIL MANAGEMENT	80
2.2 Guiding Principles	7	8.1 Existing Management Structure	81
		8.2 Management Roles	84
3.REGIONAL TRAILS	8	8.3 Trail Management Opportunities	85
3.1 What Are Trails?	9		
3.2 What Are Regional Trails?	9	9. TRAIL MARKETING	86
		9.1 Introduction	87
4. STRATEGIC CONTEXT	12	9.2 Current Marketing Activities	87
4.1 Existing Strategic And Policies	13	9.3 Marketing Types	89
4.2 Strategic Context Overview	13	9.4 Tourism Potential	90
4.3 Northern Regional Trails Strategy 2016	13	9.5 Goals And Potential Target Markets	90
5. TRAIL USERS	17	10. IMPLEMENTATION	92
5.1 Demographics	18	10.1 Introduction	93
5.2 Existing Trail Users	22	10.2 Region-wide action items	93
5.3 Potential Trail Users	26	10.3 Trail-specific action items	94
5.4 Equestrian Use	28	10.4 Cost benefit analysis	103
		10.5 Funding the trails	105
6. THE TRAIL NETWORK	30		
6.1 Aitken Boulevard Shared Trail	33	APPENDICES	113
6.2 Amaroo Pipe Track	34		
6.3 Banyule Shared Trail	35		
6.4 Blind Creek Trail	36		
6.5 Craigieburn Line Shared Path	37		
6.6 Darebin Creek Trail	38		
6.7 Diamond Creek Trail	39		
6.8 East West Power Easement Trail	40		
6.9 Edgars Creek Trail	41		
6.10 Galada Tamboore Trail	42		
6.11 Green Wedge Trail	43		
6.12 Hendersons Creek Trail	45		
6.13 Hurstbridge Rail Trail	46		
6.14 Jacksons Creek Trail	47		
6.15 Kinglake Way Trail	49		
6.16 Maroondah Aqueduct Trail	50		
6.17 Merri Creek Trail	52		
6.18 Metropolitan Ring Road Trail	54		
6.19 Moonee Ponds Creek Trail	56		
6.20 Northern Pipe/ St Georges Rd/ Cheddar Rd Trail	58		
6.21 Plenty River Trail	59		
6.22 Somerton Road Trail	61		
6.23 Upfield Rail Trail	63		
6.24 Whittlesea Shared Trail	64		
6.25 Yan Yean Pipe Track	65		
6.26 Main Yarra Trail	66		
6.27 Yuroke Creek Trail	67		

CONTENTS



1. THE PROJECT

Merri Creek Trail

1.1 ABOUT THE PROJECT

In 2016 the original *Northern Regional Trails Strategy* was developed by the Councils in the Northern Region (Banyule City Council, Darebin City Council, Hume City Council, Merri-bek (formerly Moreland) City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, City of Whittlesea, plus Yarra City Council), to establish a framework for the planning and development of trails to support the increasingly dense urban footprint and population, while providing accessible recreation and active travel opportunities and economic benefits to the communities in Melbourne's north.

The 2016 strategy has successfully leveraged approximately \$11 million of State Government Funding to deliver the key priorities identified in the strategy as well as focusing individual Council's budget allocations into the planning and delivery of priority trail projects. However, since the adoption of the strategy, significant State Government infrastructure projects have changed and will continue to change the physical landscape of the northern region necessitating the review and update of the strategy to reflect the impact these have had and the changing priorities.

This study reviews the 2016 strategy and provides an updated framework for the next ten years and beyond in order to deliver a comprehensive trail network taking into consideration projects already completed, changed Council priorities and the changed landscape as a result of significant state infrastructure projects.

This project provides an in-depth strategic analysis of the network that has been created and seeks to determine the key trails of regional importance, who and why people use these regional trails and how to encourage greater use of the regional trail network. The study will also provide the strategic direction required to allow local government and other land management authorities to work together towards an interconnected and well-used trail network that prioritises accessibility and promotes healthy and active communities.

This is a high-level strategy covering a large study area and many recommended actions dealing with complex sites. Many of the trail action items will require further investigations prior to being realised, including to ensure that any proposed construction works are in alignment with all relevant authority and land manager acts, strategies, plans and policies.



1.2 STUDY AREA

Melbourne's Northern Metropolitan Region stretches from the inner-city suburbs of Brunswick, Northcote, Alphington and Ivanhoe, to the outer areas of Craigieburn and Sunbury, and to the Kinglake National Park and rural and interface communities of Whittlesea and St Andrews. It is a diverse and vibrant region, featuring Melbourne's Tullamarine Airport, arts and cultural precincts, the National Employment and Innovation Cluster in La Trobe and new growth communities on the northern fringe of the city.

The total area of the Northern Region is approximately 159,100 hectares and includes a mix of urban, suburban and rural areas. Much of the study area lies within the Yarra River catchment, including Diamond Creek, Plenty River, Darebin Creek, Merri Creek and the Moonee Ponds Creek. Areas in the north-west of the study area are within the Maribyrnong River catchment.

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and the Taungurung people of the Kulin Nation are the traditional custodians of the land in the Northern region of Metropolitan Melbourne.

The region's population is estimated at approximately 938,000 people and includes a diverse range of communities in terms of age groups, cultural backgrounds and socio-economics. The geography and topography are varied as is the nature of township and urban development.

The six Local Government Authorities in the Northern Region of Metropolitan Melbourne and included in this project are: Banyule City Council, Darebin City Council, Hume City Council, Merri-bek City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, and the City of Whittlesea.

To the north of the study area lie municipalities that are predominantly rural in nature (the Shires of Macedon Ranges, Mitchell and Murrundindi) and currently have no regional trails that link to the regional trail network within the study area. This is likely to change in the future as the southern parts of the Shire of Mitchell, for instance, become more urban. Future strategies should consider extending the study area to accommodate this. The areas to the west and east of the study area are covered by separate regional trail strategies.



Figure 1.1: Project study area

1.3 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The 2016 Northern Regional Trails Strategy was developed by the Councils listed above (plus Yarra City Council) in recognition of the need to plan and deliver appropriate infrastructure to support urban development and population growth while providing accessible recreation facilities, active transport opportunities and economic benefits in Northern Metropolitan Melbourne. The strategy was endorsed by all participating councils (with the exception of Yarra City Council) and whilst considered successful, the development of State Government Infrastructure has impacted the landscape of the region necessitating a review and update of the trails strategy.

The key objectives for this new and revised strategy include:

- Consideration of the recommendations of the existing strategies prepared by each of the participating Councils in the Region, the *Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28*, *Victoria's Trails Strategy 2014-24*, *Northern Regional Trails Strategy 2016* and other relevant state and local strategic plans including State Government's Strategic Cycling Corridors.
- Identification of gaps and opportunities in the provision of an integrated and linked network of trails.
- Development of a strategic framework for establishing, upgrading and maintaining trails across the network.
- Recognition of the changing physical landscape of the Northern Region and the impact and opportunities significant infrastructure projects may have.
- Definition and quantification (where possible) of the economic, social, health and commuter benefits of developing the regional trail network.
- Consideration of the recent impact of COVID-19 on travel patterns and active transport demand.
- Positioning the strategy as a key advocacy document to attract funding to deliver the Northern Region Trail Network.

1.4 PROJECT APPROACH

There have been a number of key steps undertaken in the completion of this project, as briefly outlined below.

- **Trail desktop assessment**
Identifying the locations of key existing and proposed trails from maps and relevant Council strategies.
- **Trail audit**
Riding each of the existing trails on a bicycle, providing an accurate map of the existing trails and an understanding of the network, including trail surfaces, navigational signs and trail character.
- **Initial community engagement**
Including an on-line questionnaire prior to the preparation of the strategy, promoted by the Councils as well as through a wide range of organisations with a potential interest in regional trails. The questionnaire was open for five weeks over July and August 2021 and received 923 responses.
- **Strategic context review**
Strategic documents relevant to regional trail provision at a local, regional and state level were reviewed. The information from these, particularly the recommendations from local government strategies, provided a starting point for trail improvement measures assessed in the Action Plan.
- **Action plan**
Potential trail improvements were identified through various phases of the project and were assessed against a set of criteria allowing them to be prioritised.
- **Community review of draft**
An additional engagement process ran between 26th July and 26th September 2022 allowing people to provide feedback on a draft version of this document. There were 371 individual contributors to this engagement process, with a strong alignment evident between the region wide strategy priorities with those of the community.



1.5 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was undertaken by a consultant team lead by *Fitzgerald Frisby Landscape Architecture*, with specialist inputs from *Quentin Frayne*, who undertook the trail auditing and *SGS Economics & Planning* who prepared the Cost Benefit Analysis.

This study was undertaken with extensive and invaluable input from the Project Working Group, led by Banyule City Council, and with representatives from (in alphabetical order):

- Banyule City Council
- Darebin City Council
- Hume City Council
- Merri-bek City Council
- Nillumbik Shire Council
- City of Whittlesea

This project also benefited greatly from the input of a very broad range of people and organisations including government departments, authorities, advocacy groups, clubs and the hundreds of individuals who responded to the questionnaire undertaken as a part of this project.



2.VISION

Edgars Creek Trail,

2.1 PROJECT VISION

The Northern Trails: Connecting People, Places and Spaces

The Northern Trails Strategy will document a realistic planning framework and implementable action plan to establish a high quality network of integrated and connected shared trails sensitively linking communities, destinations and a diverse range of urban and natural environments.

The regional trail network will provide desirable, safe and accessible transport and recreation opportunities for residents and collectively reinforce the region as a world class trails destination for visitors.

2.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Complementing the project vision, this Strategy is guided by the following principles:

1. Connected:

The trail network must create useful and convenient routes that link communities, destinations and environments.

2. Integrated:

Individual regional trails must link with other trails to create a continuous network, and also link to other networks and transport modes where possible.

3. Multi-use:

The trail network must be designed to cater for the widest possible range of user modes and types, including commuting and recreational use, and including consideration of equestrian where appropriate.

4. Universal access:

The trail network must be designed to ensure that it is accessible and usable by as many people as possible, including the young, old, people with limited mobility and people from diverse cultural and social backgrounds.

5. User safety:

The trail network must be safe to use, including compliance with standards and the appropriate application of guidelines relating to trail design, construction and management.

6. User experience:

The trail network must provide appropriate facilities and settings, and be managed in a way that facilitates usage, including the provision of navigational signs, shade, trail-side vegetation, drinking fountains and toilets where possible.

7. Longevity/robustness:

The trail network must be constructed and managed in a sustainable way to ensure that it continues to provide appropriate standards of safety, usability and presentation into the future.

8. Environment:

The trail network must be designed and constructed to minimise negative environmental impacts from both construction and ongoing use.

9. Cultural Heritage:

The trail network must be designed and constructed to ensure cultural heritage values are retained and protected.



3. REGIONAL TRAILS

Yuroke Creek Trail

3.1 WHAT ARE TRAILS?

The *Victorian Trails Strategy 2014-2024* defines a trail as:

‘an established path, route or track which often traverses natural areas and is used by people for non-motorised recreation, such as walking, running, cycling, mountain biking and horse riding.’

Key characteristics of a trail include:

- multiple potential user groups, but with a recreational and restorative focus
- an off-road location
- a relatively long and continuous length.

These definitions, with a focus on off-road routes and connections to nature, fit comfortably with many trails within the study area. However, trails in urban areas may also be used to provide links to schools and shopping centres, rather than connections to nature. Similarly, the establishment of long and continuous trails in densely-developed urban areas very often requires the incorporation of routes of a more urban nature, including road-side shared paths and on-road bicycle lanes. To accommodate the full range of conditions found across the study area, the term ‘trails’ in this document incorporates these kinds of urban trail characteristics.

The *Victorian Trails Strategy* definition notes horse riders as a trail user group. While equestrian use of urban trails is not as common as other use modes, consideration of equestrian trail use is included within this study.

3.2 WHAT ARE REGIONAL TRAILS?

‘Regional trails’ fit the definition of trails developed above, and also have a regional scale, purpose and/or impact. Other key defining characteristics of regional trails are:

- **Connecting regionally important locations:** the provision of routes accessing and linking key civic/commercial destinations, activities and natural/cultural features of regional importance.
- **Integrated:** Regional trails in a metropolitan context do not exist in isolation, and must be integrated with a network of other regional and local trails.
- **Recreation:** the provision of recreation opportunities that are both accessible and attractive to a group of users of a regional scale and/or distribution.
- **Economic benefit:** the potential to deliver economic benefits of regional importance (including promoting economic development and/or tourism)
- **Ease of access:** the ability to be readily accessed by the community living and working within the region, as well as by visitors. Trails that require special skills or equipment to access (e.g. trails only accessible by mountain bikes) are not defined as regional trails for the purposes of this study.

Therefore, the kinds of facilities not defined as regional trails for the purposes of this study include local footpaths (i.e. roadside pedestrian-only paths that serve a very local function), on-road cycling opportunities, and informal mountain biking routes.

3.3 THE BENEFITS OF REGIONAL TRAILS

Regional trails provide a range of benefits to the community that can be grouped into four categories:

- Social
- Health (including active transport)
- Environmental, and
- Economic.

There are strong inter-relationships between these categories, as can be seen in the discussion of these benefits below.

3.3.1 Social

Regional trails create spaces for people to exercise with others, facilitating community connection and health benefits. Approximately half of the respondents to a questionnaire undertaken as a part of this study indicated that they regularly use the regional trail network with friends and family.

These project-specific findings about the prevalence of people exercising in groups are backed up by broader analysis. The Victorian Government health promotion foundation, VicHealth, undertakes regular analyses of public health in the state. The *VicHealth Indicators Survey 2015* found that;

just under a third (31.8%) of all Victorians (45.1% of those who participated in non-organised activities) reported that they participated in non-organised activities with someone else.

Unplanned social interactions also occur, particularly where there is a shared interest (such as dog walkers, families, or neighbours). These chance encounters provide opportunities for social interaction for people who may otherwise be socially isolated. Importantly, these opportunities for social interaction are available to all members of the community, regardless of social or economic standing.

The state government strategy *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050* identifies a goal of creating '20 minute neighbourhoods' (where most everyday needs are within a 20 minute walk, ride or public transport trip from a person's home) as a way to improve the quality of life for residents of the city. Trails can play an important role in realising this goal, by providing infrastructure to facilitate active transport modes.

3.3.2 Health

The *VicHealth Indicators Survey 2015* identifies 'physical activity and sedentary behaviour' as one of five key public health indicators. The top non-organised physical activities that Victorians participate in are all activities highly suited to regional trails: walking (51.2%), jogging/running (14%), and cycling (11.8%).

The *VicHealth Indicators Survey 2011* identified three key reasons for lack of physical activity and sedentary behaviour within the population:

- an increased reliance on cars for transportation
- leisure activities have become more sedentary in nature
- many workplaces require people to sit for long periods
(*VicHealth Indicators Survey 2011, Selected Findings, page 55*)

A high-quality trail network in an urban environment has the potential to strongly influence the choices people make regarding two out of three of these reasons for inactivity.

- Trails can make active transport options more attractive, by providing locations for safe, convenient and desirable alternatives to vehicles for personal transport.
- Trails can stimulate participation in active recreation activities, by providing allocation for a range of cost-free, convenient and attractive leisure opportunities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the health and well-being benefits derived from visiting green and blue spaces (i.e.. open space and spaces in proximity to water bodies), enabling not only exercise but also opportunities for respite and connection. In *Time for 'Green' during COVID-19? Inequities in Green and Blue Space Access, Visitation and Felt Benefits* (Burt & Feng, 2021) Australian residents surveyed reported greater levels of green and/or blue space visitation and felt benefits during the pandemic. However, these benefits were not equally distributed. People with greater socio-economic disadvantage reported lower levels of visitation and felt benefits. This highlights the value of strengthening our trail network as a strategy to equalise access to green/blue spaces and their associated health and wellness benefits.

Trails also often provide shady routes, often in vegetated areas and along waterways, that provide valuable refuges from the 'urban heat island' (i.e.. higher temperatures in urban areas caused by high densities of hard-paved surfaces).

3.3.3 Environmental

A high quality regional trail network encourages people to choose to walk or cycle to destinations, rather than using motorised transport modes. This results in reduced vehicle numbers on roads, and the resulting reductions in air pollutants, noise pollution and congestion issues.

Trails can also provide access to natural environments which can assist in fostering an appreciation of the environment and help to develop awareness of environmental issues. The 2017 State Government strategy *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037* identifies increasing opportunities for all Victorians to have daily connections with nature as a priority action.

Trails are regularly located in sensitive environments (e.g. along waterways). Care needs to be taken in developing trails in sensitive locations to limit negative environmental and cultural heritage impacts. It should also be noted that creating trail access into such spaces can drive positive environmental outcomes by making problems (such as weed infestations) more visible. Trails can also make these areas easier to access for weed control and native vegetation management activities.

3.3.4 Economic

Some aspects of economic and tourism benefits of regional trails are closely linked, especially if a relatively broad definition of tourism is applied. Most of the visitors to the regional trails in Northern Melbourne live in Melbourne themselves. These local tourists have the same potential to provide economic advantage as those travelling greater distances before arrival.

There are also strong relationships between economic benefits of trails and the two previous categories (social and health benefits). The cost to the community of ill health is very large, and a portion of this can be attributed to physical inactivity. Mental illness also has an associated economic cost, which includes the costs from loss of productivity and absence from the workforce. Regular participation in physical activity has been shown to improve mental and physical health, and regional trails are a direct way to invest in improving that participation.

In addition to providing a healthy transport alternative, regional trails can also prove to be time-efficient, reducing costs such as lost productivity associated with transport congestion. Commuting time is also associated with negative health effects. The *VicHealth Indicators Survey 2015* noted that 'perceived stress during or immediately after commuting increases with commute time, lack of predictability or control associated with commuting, and crowding during the commute journey'. It also noted that commuting is also linked with negative health outcomes not directly related to the commute itself, such as time spent commuting resulting in less time available for health-promoting behaviours such as physical activity and relaxation.



4. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Edgars Creek Trail

4.1 EXISTING STRATEGIC AND POLICIES

Given the large geographical size of the study area and the multitude of benefits associated with regional trails, there are a large number of existing strategies and policies that are relevant to this study. Relevant documents have been reviewed as a part of this study and are summarised in Appendix A.

The documents reviewed can be broadly grouped into the following categories.

- Municipal cycling and walking strategies
- Municipal open space strategies
- Municipal integrated transport strategies
- Municipal road management plan/ safe travel strategies
- Miscellaneous municipal strategies
(including feasibility studies and Master Plans for trails).
- Northern Melbourne regional strategies
(including the *Northern Horizons – 50 Year Infrastructure Strategy for Melbourne’s North 2016*, *Northern Metro Region Five Year Plan for Jobs, Services and Infrastructure 2018–2022*, and the *Northern Regional Trails Strategy* completed in 2016, which is a significant precursor to this study).
- Higher-level strategic documents
(typically state government strategies relating to particular issues, including open space provision, waterways, cycling, trails, infrastructure plans and tourism).

4.2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT OVERVIEW

The review of existing strategies and policies highlights the strong alignment between the objectives of this study and broader strategic directions at all levels of government. These strategic directions include:

- Identification of cycling and walking infrastructure as an important part of an integrated transport network for Melbourne in state government plans and strategies (including *Open Space for Everyone 2021*, *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050*, the *Victorian Cycling Action Plan 2013-2023* and the *Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28*).
- Strong support for trail infrastructure development in local government strategies across the study area, including relating to transport, recreation, and health and wellbeing.
- The identification of regional trails as key recreational facilities for the region in the *Northern Horizons – 50 Year Infrastructure Strategy for Melbourne’s North 2016* and the *Northern Regional Trails Strategy 2016*.

4.3 NORTHERN REGIONAL TRAILS STRATEGY 2016

Completed in 2016, the *Northern Regional Trails Strategy* was undertaken to facilitate the implementation of an effective and integrated trail network to support an expanding, increasingly dense urban footprint and population, provide accessible recreation opportunities and promote and support a diverse range of employment and economic opportunities for the residents of Melbourne’s north and beyond.

The aim of the 2016 strategy was to develop a trail network that is a highly connected, functional off-road network with regional-scale economic, social and environmental value. To date, the strategy has been effective in leveraging approximately \$11 million of State Government funding to deliver key priorities identified in the strategy as well as focusing individual Councils’ budget allocations into the planning and delivery of priority trail projects.

The following table outlines the recommendations and key priorities identified in the 2016 strategy and their current status.

Trail	Project description	Status
Banyule Shared Trail	Two sections of new trail construction (2km) adjacent to the Greensborough Highway: 1. Wattle Drive north to Watsonia Station 2. Watsonia Station north to Grimshaw Street	High level concept design completed. Funded
East-West Power Easement Trail	Two sections of new trail construction (1.7km): 1. From Plenty Road to Watsonia Road / Railway Station / Greensborough Highway precinct 2. From the Greensborough Highway to the Plenty River Trail	Concept design partially completed. Partially funded
Main Yarra Trail	Bridge crossing over the Yarra River to Banksia Park at Vine Street, Heidelberg	Feasibility study is required. Funded
Main Yarra Trail	Realignment of the Main Yarra Trail through the Banyule Flats	On hold, pending further investigations and consultation. Not funded
Banyule Shared Trail	New trail construction (2.1km) from Banksia Street south to the Yarra Trail just north of McArthur Road	Concept design
Darebin Creek Trail	Bridge Crossing over the Darebin Creek at Tee Street providing a link between the existing Darebin Creek Trail and Beenak/ McMahon Reserve Path	Constructed
La Trobe University Shared Path	New trail construction (1.97km) from the La Trobe University at Plenty Road/ Main Drive to the existing Shared Path at Kingsbury Drive	Construction commenced
Plenty Road Shared Path	New trail construction (1.61km) along Plenty Road from Drive Road north to Arthur Street	No design undertaken to date
Aitken Boulevard Trail	Three sections of new trail construction (2.97km): 1. Along Kirkham Drive from the Yuroke Creek north to Kirkham Drive Reserve 2. Along Aitken Boulevard from Somerton Road to James Mirams Drive 3. From Fairways Boulevard north to Aitken Creek	1. Concept design 2. Constructed 3. Constructed
Aitken Creek Trail	New trail construction (0.58km) from Hothlyn Drive east to join the proposed Merri Creek Shared Trail.	Concept design developed for Stage 1
Blind Creek Trail	New trail construction (0.6km) from the rail line in Sunbury, east to the Jacksons Creek	Partial detailed design
Greenvale Reservoir Park Trail	New trail construction (1.2km) from Mickleham Road/ Garibaldi Road, east along Venezia Promenade to the Greenvale Reservoir Park	No design undertaken to date
Meadowlink Shared Pathway	Two sections of new trail construction (2.55km): 1. Through Rotary Park/ Johnstone Street Reserve to Johnstone Street 2. From Dimboola Road, along Tanderrum Way, Pascoe Vale Road then east to Merlynston Creek	1. Detailed design 2. Constructed
Yuroke Creek Trail	New trail construction (0.55km) along the Melbourne Water Pipe Track from Greenvale Reservoir Park south to the existing Yuroke Creek Trail	No design undertaken to date
Merri Creek Trail	Major trail extension (24.51km) from the north side of Barry Road to the far northern border of Hume.	Concept Design between Barry Road and Cooper Street
Upfield Rail Trail	New trail construction (1.4km) from Box Forest Road north to Metropolitan Ring Road	Funded - Construction commencing

Trail	Project description	Status
Upfield Rail Trail	Six sections of new trail construction (1.16km): 1. Missing section at Jewell Station 2. From Reynard Street to Munro Street 3. Missing section south of Gaffney Street 4. Missing section at Batman Station 5. Missing section at Ararat Avenue 6. Missing section at Merlynston Station	1. Constructed 2. Under construction 3. Constructed 4. Concept Design 5. No design 6. Some sections planned via car park upgrade.
Edgars Creek Trail	Three sections of new trail construction (2.19km): 1. From the Merri Creek Trail to Ronald Street 2. From Ronald Street to Photography Drive 3. From Photography Drive to Carrington Road	1. Partially constructed 2. No design undertaken to date 3. No design undertaken to date
Diamond Creek Trail	New trail construction (7.34km) along the Diamond Creek from Luscombe Drive to Ferguson's Paddock	Partially constructed
Aqueduct Trail	Three sections of new trail construction (20.63km): 1. From the Plenty River Trail, over the Metropolitan Ring Road to the existing Banyule Diamond Creek Trail 2. Eltham-Yarra Glen Road to Henley Road 3. From Warrandyte Kinglake Road, north along Westering, Ridge and Muir Roads to Skyline Road	Concept design, partial detailed design
Green Wedge Trail	Four sections of new trail construction (8.22km): 1. From the proposed Diamond Creek Trail (Wattle Glen Station) to existing trail on Watery Gully Road 2. Missing section at Alma Road and Eltham-Yarra Glen Road 3. Missing section at Motschalls Road 4. Missing section from Spanish Gully Road to Kinglake	No design undertaken to date
Edgars Creek Trail	Four sections of new trail construction (7.98km): 1. North of Metropolitan Ring Road, from Spring Street to Main Street 2. Between Cooper Street and Tramoo Street 3. From Willandra Drive to Rockfield Street 4. From Gammage Boulevard to Craigieburn Road	1. Constructed 2. No design 3. Constructed 4. Partially constructed
Merri Creek Trail	New trail construction (0.34km) from the Merri Creek Trail to the Whittlesea Public Gardens.	Constructed
Whittlesea Rail Trail (also known as the Whittlesea Shared Trail)	New trail construction (16.8km) along the train line from Mernda Station to Whittlesea.	No design undertaken to date
Yan Yean Pipe Track	Three sections of new trail construction (6.88km): 1. From the Western Ring Road north to Childs Road 2. From Moorhead Drive to Williamson Road 3. From Vincent Drive to Gordons Road	Partially constructed
Plenty Road Shared Path	New Trail Construction (0.43km) from Centenary Drive, Mill Park to the proposed Yan Yean Pipe Track at Hickey Court	No design undertaken to date
Darebin Creek Trail	Upgrade existing trail from M80 to Childs Road and Childs Road to Findon Road from granitic sand to concrete	Partially constructed
Merri Creek Trail	Upgrade existing trail in the City of Whittlesea from granitic sand to concrete	
Hendersons Road Drain Trail	Upgrade existing trail in the City of Whittlesea from granitic sand to concrete	Partially constructed

South Morang Pipe Trail	Upgrade existing trail in the City of Whittlesea from granitic sand to concrete	Detailed design
Craigieburn Line Shared Path	Construct 8 new sections of trail (15.65km): 1. From Moonee Ponds Creek Trail to Gaffney Street 2. From Gaffney Street to Bothwell Street, on the western side 3. From Bothwell Street to Devon Road, on the western side 4. From Devon Road to Cartwright Street, on the western side 5. From Cartwright Street to Glenroy Road, on the western side 6. From Glenroy Road to Glenroy Station 7. From Glenroy Station to Jacana Station, on the eastern side 8. From Jacana Station to Craigieburn Station	1. Strategic Plan 2. Funded for construction 3. Design underway 4. Completed 5. Design underway 6. Construction underway 7. Strategic Plan 8. No design undertaken to date

Since the adoption of the *Northern Regional Trails Strategy (2016)*, significant State Government infrastructure projects have changed and will continue to change the physical landscape of the northern region necessitating the review and update of the 2016 strategy to reflect the impact these have had and the changing priorities. This updated strategy considers the recommendations and priorities outlined in the table above and establish an updated framework for the future development, prioritisation and maintenance for off road trails in the Northern Region of Metropolitan Melbourne.



5. TRAIL USERS

Merri Creek Trail

5.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

The study area for this project is very diverse ranging from established inner-suburban areas to rural townships. The population of Northern Melbourne is similarly diverse. Figures 5.1 to 5.5 illustrate the key population characteristics of the study area, including land area, population numbers, population change and population density. These figures demonstrate that:

- The municipalities that make up the Northern Melbourne study area range in population size (from approximately 65,000 to 241,000 residents).
- The density of the population is heavily weighted to the south of the study area
- The area to the north of the region has the highest population, but low population densities. The growth areas have the fastest growing populations with their population densities projected to increase.
- The far eastern side of the study area has the lowest population and lowest density and due to the green wedge and larger rural lots.

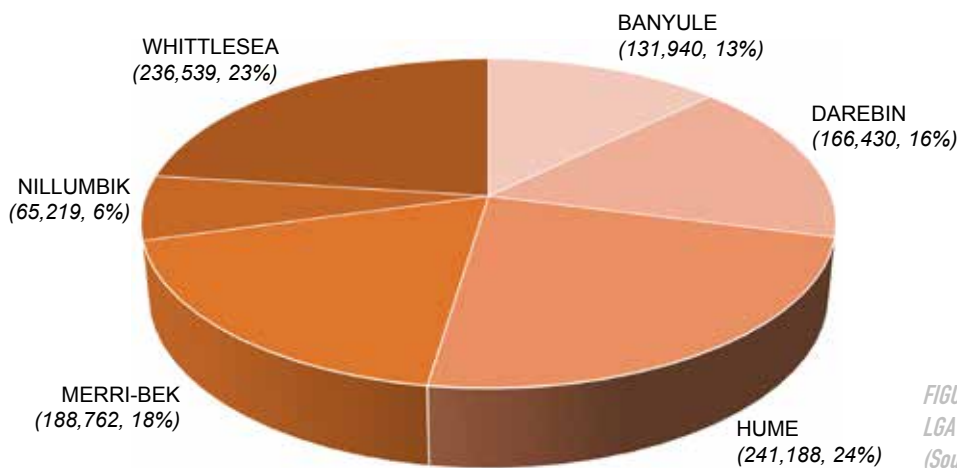


FIGURE 5.1:
LGA ABS Estimated Resident Population 2020
(Source: www.profile.id.com.au)

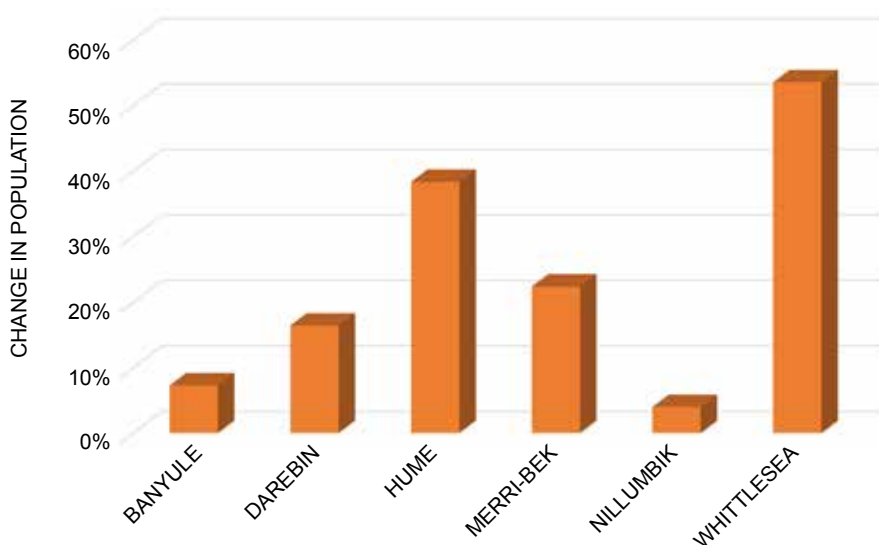


FIGURE 5.2:
Change in Estimated Resident Population from
2011 to 2020 by Local Government Area
(Source: www.profile.id.com.au)

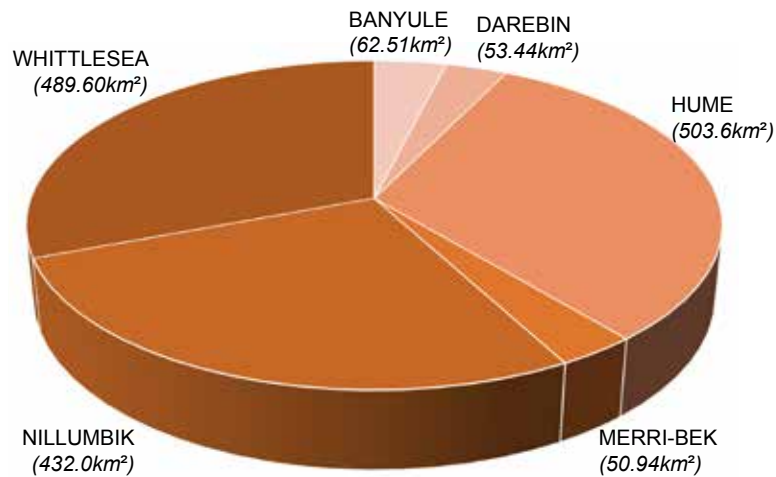


FIGURE 5.3:
LGA Land Area
(Source: www.profile.id.com.au)

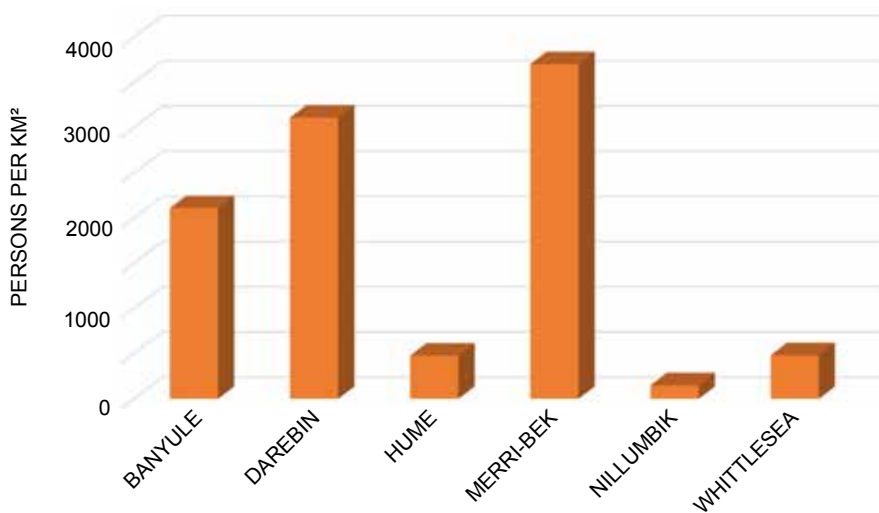
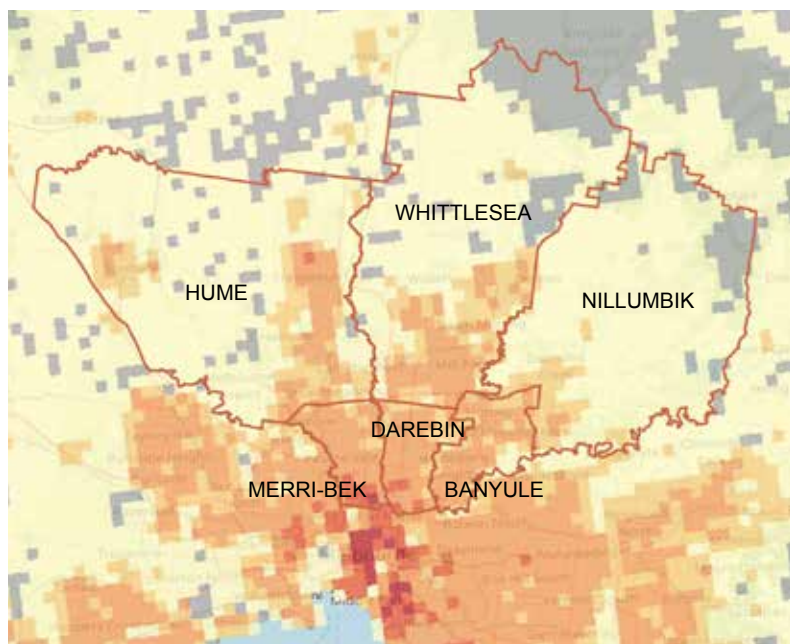


FIGURE 5.4:
Population Density by Local Government Area 2020
(Source: www.profile.id.com.au)



**Approximate population
per square kilometre**

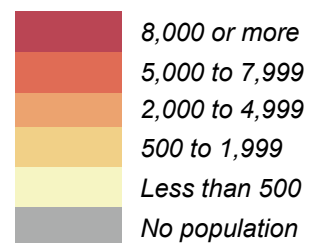


FIGURE 5.5:
Study area population density map grid (2020)
(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics,
Population Grid, 2020)

It can also be seen that all of the Councils within the study area are recording population growth and that this is projected to continue over the coming decades, particularly within the growth areas.

Figure 5.6 shows the age distribution for each of the Councils within the study area and a comparison to the Greater Melbourne average. The study area as a whole has high numbers of residents in the 35-49 year age bracket.

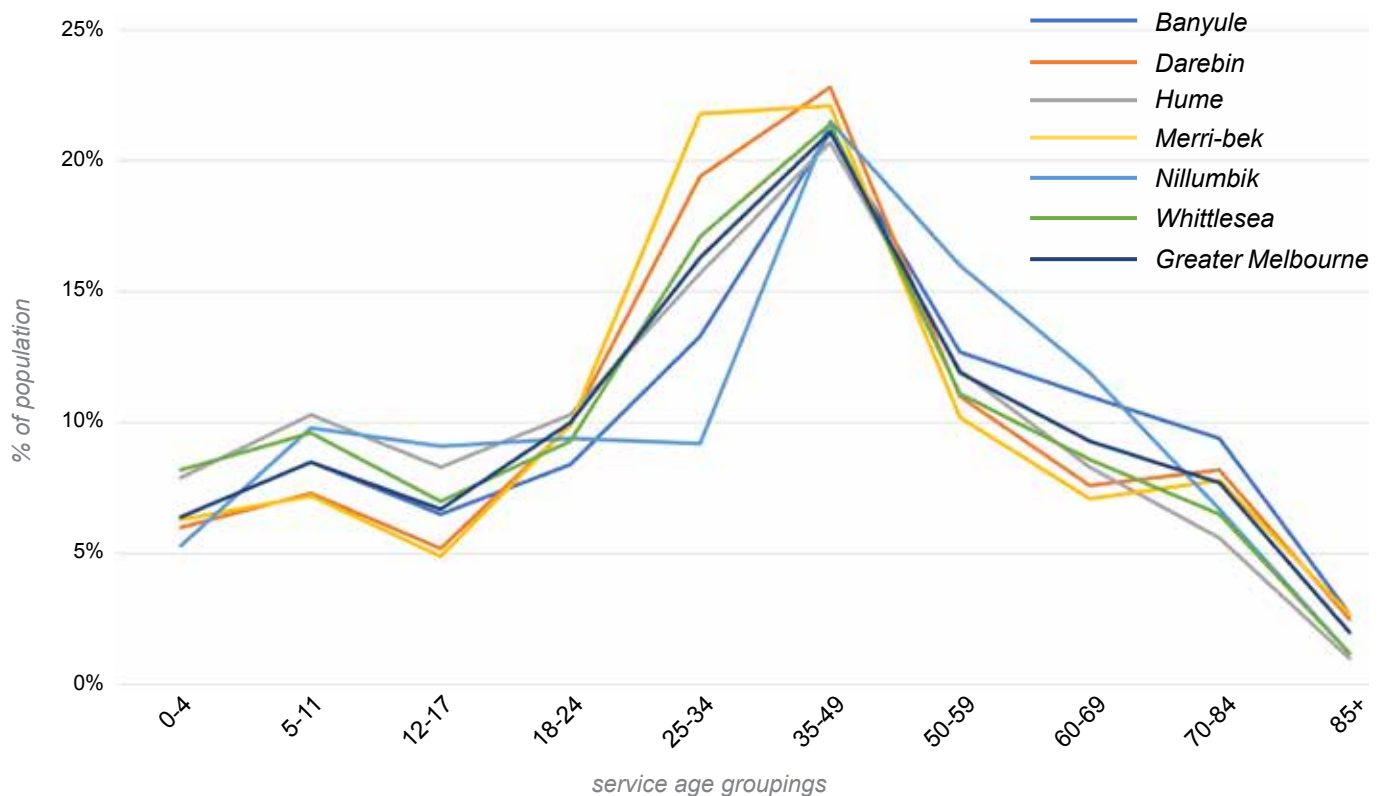


FIGURE 5.6:

Service age group distribution by Council within study area, compared to the Greater Melbourne population (2016)

(Source: www.profile.id.com.au)

Figure 5.7 shows the relative socio-economic disadvantage by suburb measured against the Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-economic indexes for areas (SEIFA) measures. This dataset broadly defines socio-economic advantage and disadvantage through an assessment of people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society.

Within our study area the majority of the key population centres within the study area are ranked as having low levels of disadvantage. The areas of disadvantage identified are predominantly in the centre of the study area.

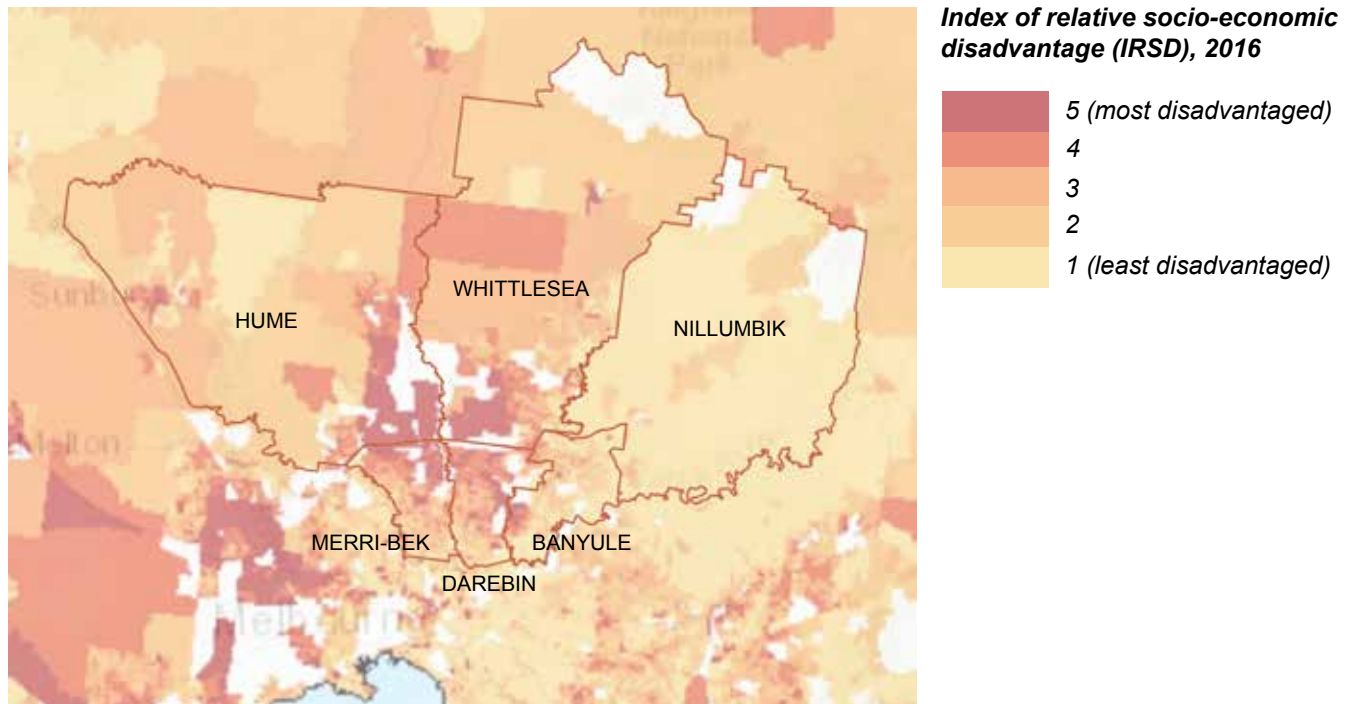


FIGURE 5.7:
Relative socio-economic disadvantage by suburb (2016)
(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Socio-economic indexes for areas, SEIFA, 2016)

The implications of this demographic data on regional trail provision in the study area include:

- Population growth in the study area is inconsistent, with growth areas experiencing major growth in past decade, a trend that is likely to continue. There is potential to take advantage of new trail projects being delivered as a part of growth corridor planning and broad-scale land development activities.
- Increasing populations across the study area create a strong argument for investment in community infrastructure, including regional trails.
- The high densities of population in the southern part of the study area create demand for regional trails, but also make the construction of new regional trails very difficult (due to the constraints that come with density).
- There are currently no regional trails within the far-eastern and northern portions of the study area due to the low population densities. These areas are unlikely to become a priority for regional trail construction, with the exception of tourism-focused, nature based trails.
- Consideration should be given to prioritising regional trail improvement in areas identified as being socio-economically disadvantaged. Regional trails provide a free and accessible recreation resource, and also contribute to the feasibility and attractiveness of low-cost transport options.

5.2 EXISTING TRAIL USERS

There is no comprehensive information available about regional trail network use and users in the Northern Melbourne study area. In this section, information has been compiled from a number of sources in order to build a picture of regional trail use:

- The *Super Tuesday Commuter Bike Count* (undertaken annually by the bicycle advocacy organisation *Bicycle Network*).
- The *Super Sunday Recreational Count* (also undertaken annually by *Bicycle Network*).
- Individual count data provided by some Councils.
- The on-line questionnaire undertaken as a part of this project. Please note that this open questionnaire went out to Bicycle Network members, which may weight results towards this interest group.

The purpose of understanding existing trail use is to determine:

- Who is using the regional trail network, and why? This provides a framework for trail planning, management and focuses potential improvements to meet their needs of these users.
- Who isn't using the regional trail network, and why? This provides a framework for improvements that appeal to a broader demographic and increase usage.

Regional trail network use and users were established through three key questions:

- Quantity/location - how many people are using the regional trails, and which trails are they using?
- Mode - how are people using the trails?
- Function - why are people using the trails?

5.2.1 Quantity/location

How many people use the regional trails of Northern Melbourne, and which trails are they using?

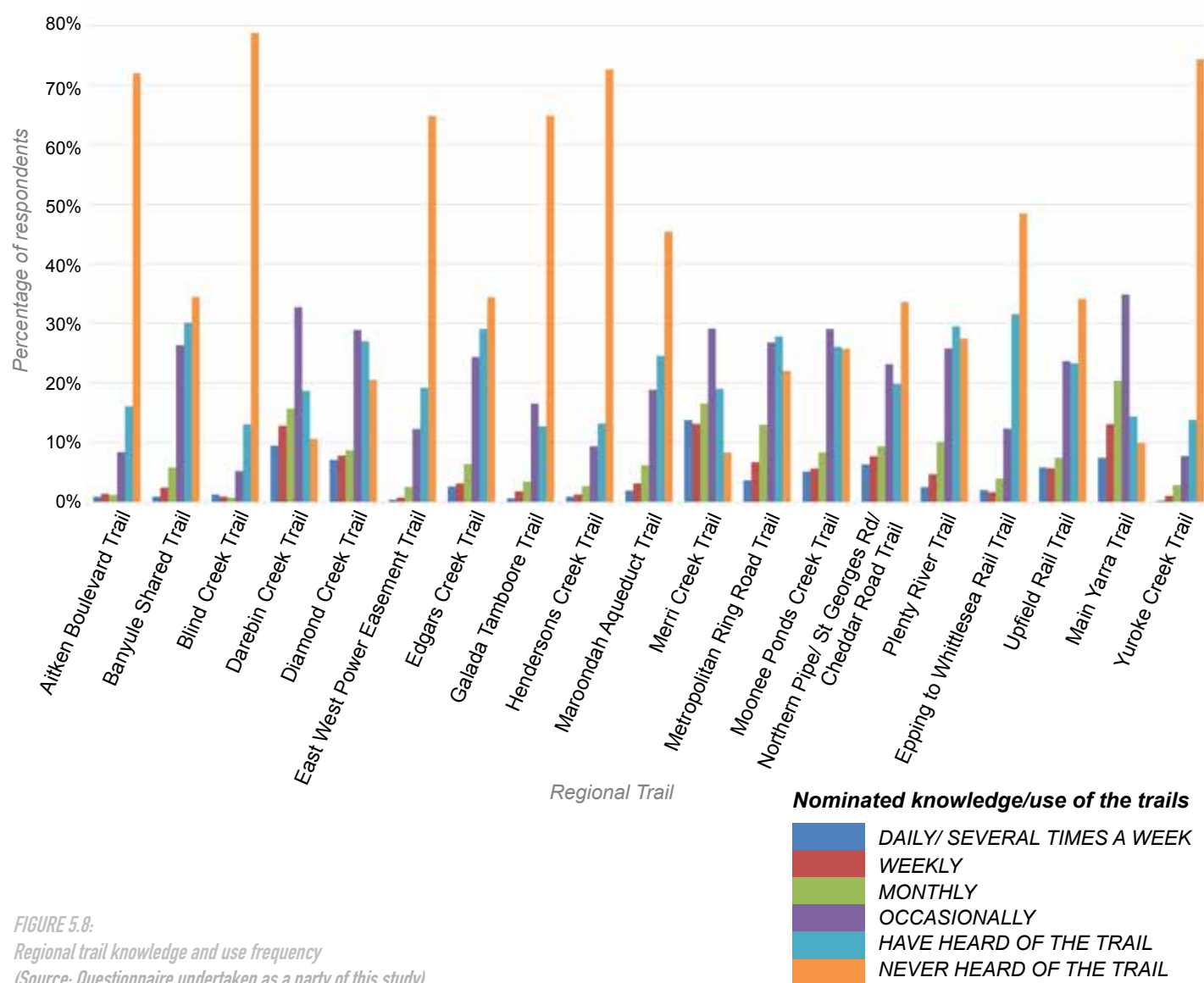
An indication hierarchy of use is provided via the questionnaire undertaken as a part of this study in which we asked people to identify which of the regional trails in the study area they had used, and how often (see figure 5.8).

The Merri Creek Trail recorded the highest level of use with over 13% of respondents indicating that they use the Merri Creek Trail 'daily or several times a week'. This trail is located within the most densely populated areas of the northern region. Its north-south alignment and position within a creek corridor supports both commuter and recreational use. Bicycle Network Victoria's Super Tuesday count data from 2019 recorded over 300 trips per hour on the Merri Creek Trail. The impact on commuter traffic from the COVID-19 lock downs is demonstrated in the 2020 count data which recorded only 125 trips per hour.

The Darebin Creek Trail, another north-south trail with both commuter and recreational appeal, recorded the second highest level of usage with almost 10% of respondents indicating they use the trail 'daily or several times a week'. Bicycle Network Victoria's Super Tuesday count data from 2020 saw an increase of usage of up to 60% for the section of trail located within Whittlesea. Due to its relative distance from the CBD this section is more commonly used for its recreational benefits. It could be inferred that this spike in usage during the COVID-19 lock downs demonstrates an increase in residents turning to trails for exercise, socialising and relaxation.

Lack of name recognition of the Northern Trails network is demonstrated by over one third of respondents reporting that they have 'never heard of' 11 of the 19 listed trails. This indicates a need to broaden public awareness of the Northern Trails network to increase user diversity and frequency of use.

An indication of trail use frequency is provided by the on-line questionnaire. Figure 5.9 illustrates how often respondents indicated they use the regional trails. Close to three quarters of the respondents indicated they used the regional trails at least weekly ('several times a week', 36%, 'weekly' 21% and 'daily', 17%).



5.2.2 Mode and function

Why are people using the regional trails of Northern Melbourne?

The questionnaire undertaken as a part of this project asked people to identify how they most often used regional trails in the study area (see figure 5.10). Bike riding was the most common response, being selected by over 52% of respondents, followed by walking (23%) and walking with a dog (almost 10%). It is recognised that there is often significant cross-over in reasons for trails use. Being able to use trails for multiple purposes is one of their key benefits.

Regarding the dominant recreation and exercise categories, supporting this are the findings of the *VicHealth Indicators Survey 2015* that notes at a state-wide level, walking (51%), jogging/running (14%) and cycling (12%) are the highest participation non-organised physical activities.

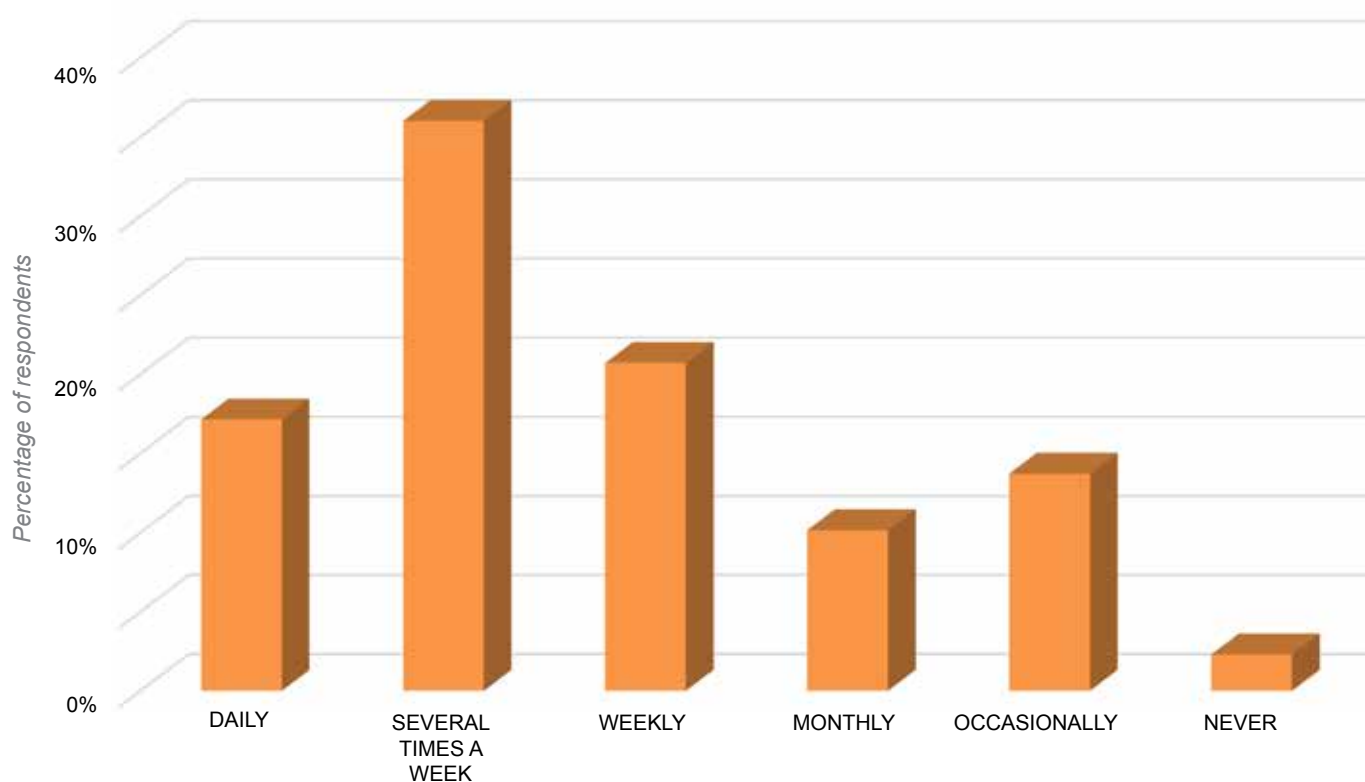


FIGURE 5.9:

Regional trail use frequency: 'How often do you currently use the regional trails in Northern Melbourne?'

(Source: Questionnaire undertaken as a party of this study)

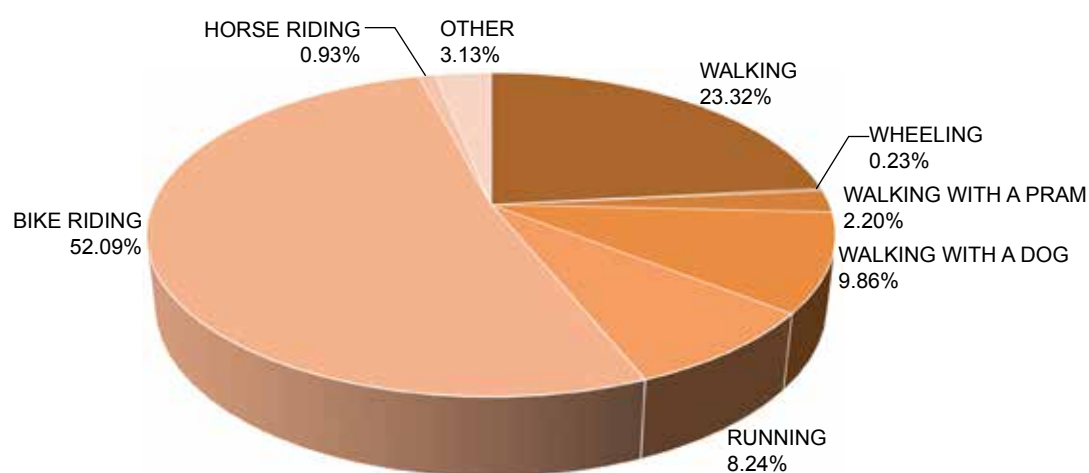


FIGURE 5.10:

Primary use mode of the regional trails: 'How do you most often use the regional trails in Northern Melbourne?'

Source: Questionnaire undertaken as a party of this study)

Cycling for transport is an important function of many regional trails in Northern Melbourne. The questionnaire was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic. The increase in people working from home and the reduced movement experienced under lock down conditions may mean that this use is not accurately represented in the findings (figure 5.11). At a population level the *Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28* reports that cycling makes up just 2% of daily trips to work in Melbourne (compared to 4% walking, 18% public transport, and 74% private vehicle).

Trails are traditionally perceived as rural or natural in setting. This perception is reflected in the alignment of many existing urban trails, which are more likely to connect to parkland and natural reserves than to centres of activity and employment. This may also impact the prevalence of cycling for transport as a reason for using regional trails. As active transport routes, regional trails have room for improvement.

The questionnaire identified that many respondents used trails with family and/or friends (refer to figure 5.12) indicating that the trails play an important role in facilitating social engagement and interaction. Anecdotal evidence suggests that COVID-19 restrictions amplified the importance of trails as a public and locally accessible facility where the community can gather and interact with family and friends.

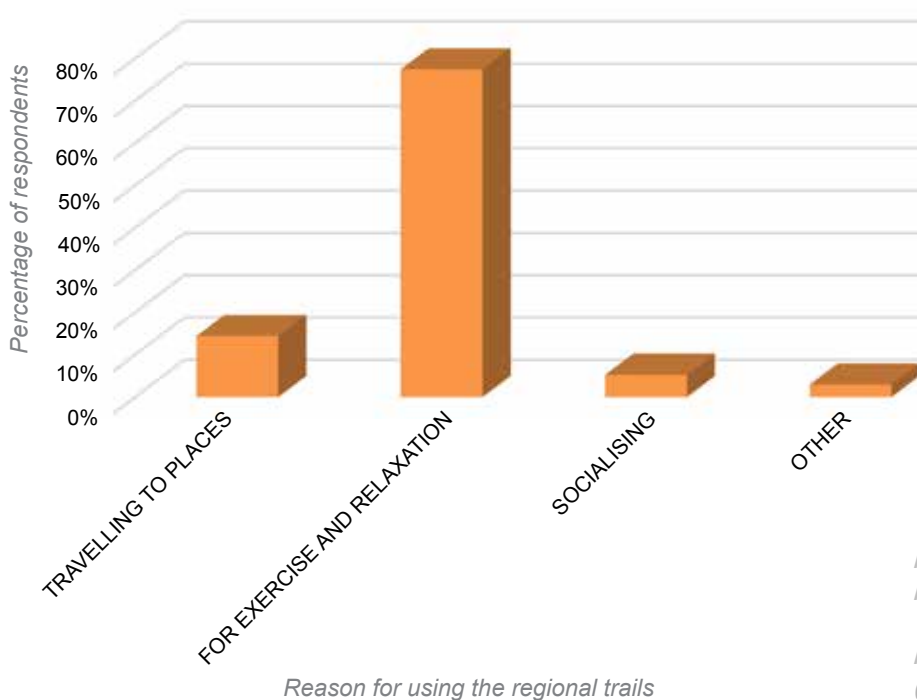


FIGURE 5.11:
Reason for trail use:
'Why do you most often use regional trails in Northern Melbourne?'
(Source: Questionnaire undertaken as a party of this study)

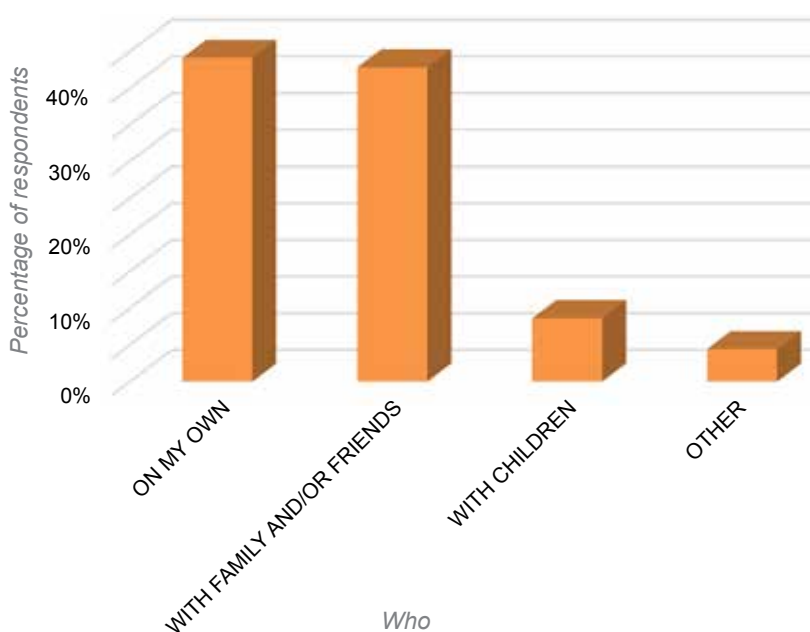


FIGURE 5.12:
Who do you use the regional trails with?
'Who do you most often use the regional trails in Northern Melbourne with?'
(Source: Questionnaire undertaken as a party of this study)

5.3 POTENTIAL TRAIL USERS

One of the key measures of success for a regional trail network is the number of users. A growing regional trail network should prioritise attracting additional users.

External factors that are likely to effect regional trail usage include:

- Population growth within the region (as identified within the demographics section earlier in this chapter), and in Melbourne as a whole.
- Usage trends relating to exercise and active transport.
- Increase in the use of electric bikes which allow broader access to trails, where route length or gradient may be prohibitive for standard cycling.
- The growth of dockless share bike schemes.

Trail improvements impact usage. A key focus of this project is to identify and examine which improvements are most valued among current and potential users. Within our on-line questionnaire the most valued preference to 'increase your usage of the trails' was 'improved connectivity between the trails,' with 77% of respondents citing it as a preference (see figure 5.13).

The popular support for improved connectivity between trails reflects the broad user benefits this would have. For recreational users, connecting trails create the potential for circuits and loops, which provide a more interesting and varied user experience, and allows users to set goals and challenges relating to circuits of a particular length. For people using regional trails for transport, inter-connecting trails open up a larger range of destinations which increases the likelihood of frequent use.

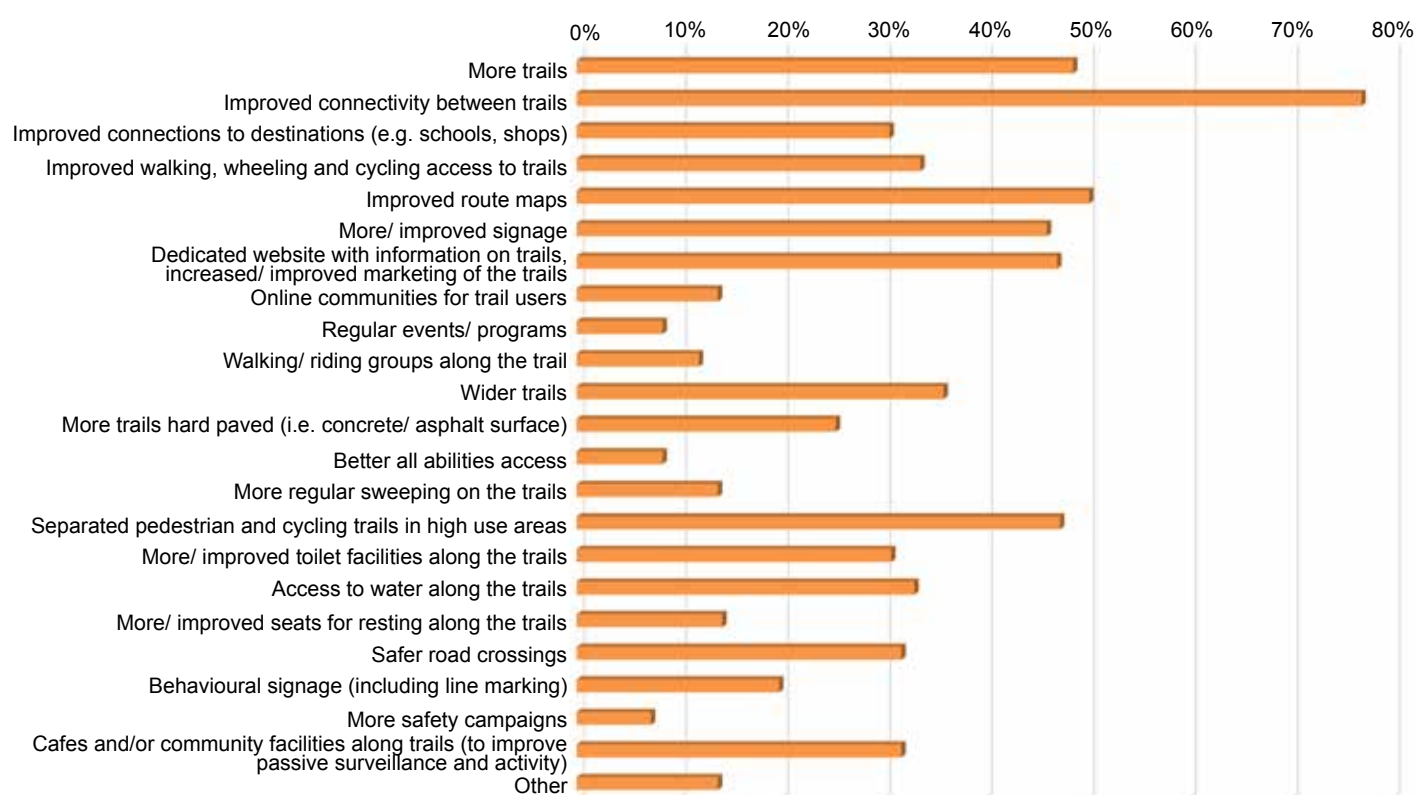


FIGURE 5.13:

Trail improvement preferences:

'Which of the following could increase your usage of the trails? (Tick all that apply)'

(Source: Questionnaire undertaken as a part of this study)

'Separated pedestrian and cycling trails in high use areas' also had popular support. This reflects the concern for conflicts that arise on shared-use trails. A key issue here is the difference in speed between cyclists and pedestrians using the trails. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7: Trail Infrastructure.

The responses regarding trail improvements provide useful insights into user perceptions of the existing trail network. The respondents to the questionnaire are, in general, people who already use the regional trails. How can new users be attracted to use regional trails?

The *Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28* identifies four groups of people relating to their propensity to cycle:

- *'Strong and fearless' cyclists will cycle regardless of road conditions and are ready to mix with traffic.*
- *'Enthused and confident' cyclists are already riding, but they could ride more and their riding experience could be better*
- *'Interested but concerned' cyclists are the largest group, and they vary in age and cycling ability. They are curious about cycling and like to ride but are afraid to do so and put off by the need to ride close to motor vehicles and pedestrians, especially on higher-speed, higher-volume roads or where conflicts are more likely.*
- *'No way, no how' people will not cycle because they can't, because the terrain is unsuitable or because they have no interest whatsoever in it.*

The 'interested but concerned' category are estimated to make up 60% of the population (compared to only 1% who are 'strong and fearless', and 7% 'enthused and confident'). The off-road condition of regional trails make them an attractive option for this safety conscious group. To increase regional trail usage within the 'interested but concerned' category, a focus should be placed on improvements that make trails more convenient, safe, and easy to navigate.

Tourism-related use has strong potential to introduce new users to regional trails. While not all regional trails are scenic or adjacent to tourist-attracting destinations, an interconnecting network means that visitors can utilise the network to access the more scenic trails and destinations.

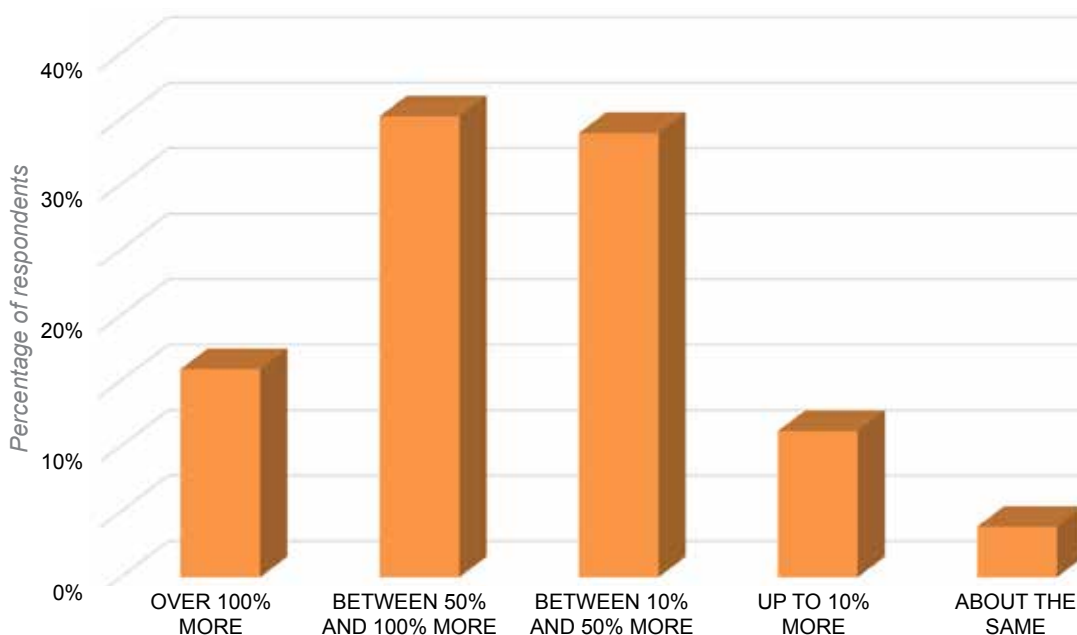


FIGURE 5.14:

Regional trail use frequency if improvements undertaken:

'If the improvements that you identified (listed above) were implemented, how much more often do you think you would use the trails?'

(Source: Questionnaire undertaken as a party of this study)

5.4 EQUESTRIAN USE

For the purposes of this study, regional trails have been defined as trails providing opportunities for multiple user types. However, there are challenges in accommodating all potential trail users, and these challenges are perhaps most pronounced with equestrian use.

Whilst horse riding on the northern regional trails is relatively limited at present, the feasibility of equestrian use of the entire trail network should be considered. Should trail users be able to ride horses from the rural fringes to the city centre on off-road trails? This level of equestrian use of regional trails in Northern Melbourne is hindered by a number of factors including:

- **Suitability of surfaces:** many urban shared trails are hard paved (for all-weather access, accessibility for people of all abilities, and the minimisation of ongoing maintenance requirements) which makes many trails unsuitable for equestrian use.
- **Width of trail corridors:** many trails within the network are highly constrained due to adjacent waterways, rail lines or sensitive environments and cannot accommodate the additional width required for a second parallel path for equestrian use.
- **External stakeholders:** many trail corridors are owned or managed by external stakeholders who may not be supportive of equestrian use on their land due to increased risk to trail users (which as land owners, they share some responsibility for), and the potential for environmental damage.
- **Low demand:** the numbers of regular horse riders are very low compared to pedestrian and cycling numbers. The 2017 Equestrian Victoria *State Facility Plan* estimates that there are 53,246 participants in equestrian sport in Victoria. This equates to less than 1% of the total population. Of these participants, many are involved in the competitive aspects of horse riding, including dressage, show jumping and eventing. These activities are undertaken at purpose-built facilities, not on trails.
- **Conflict of use:** Shared-use trails can create issues for horse riders, including the potential for horses to be troubled by other trail users and dogs. This makes shared trail use less desirable than riding on private land (such as at the many commercial equestrian facilities within the region) or on quieter bushland trails.

For these reasons, equestrian use of trails needs to be targeted rather than broadly applied. There are three types of equestrian use of trails that seem most likely to be attractive to riders and compatible with broader regional trail planning objectives.

- **Off-road horse riding opportunities**, particularly in rural areas. As the population of Melbourne has grown, once-rural areas have become more developed and quiet roads have been progressively upgraded to accommodate increased populations. The quiet country roads that used to be ideal for horse-riding (either on unmade roads, or on the grassy verges of made roads) are becoming busier and less suited to equestrian use. Regional trails that are more rural in nature have the potential to provide the kind of riding opportunities being lost through road upgrades.
- **Trail connections to equestrian facilities.** As noted previously, many horse riders prefer experiences other than riding on shared use trails. However, there is the potential for them to access these experiences via a shared trail network. The potential benefits to riders is that they can ride between equestrian facilities and places of agistment, rather than needing to transport riders and horses by vehicle.
- **Tourism use.** Trails with a tourism focus can benefit from accommodating equestrian use. The presence of horses on a trail can add to the rural experience being sought by other users. There is also the potential for economic benefit through commercial operators providing tourism experiences based around horse riding on the trails.

If equestrian use is to be accommodated on the regional trails, which trails should be targeted? One method for targeting regional trails for equestrian use is to identify existing trails that are aligned closely to the areas of existing equestrian activity. The 2017 Equestrian Victoria *State Facility Plan* identifies five key venues for equestrian events within the study area (out of 55 venues identified state-wide). These, along with other equestrian facilities identified as a part of this project, are mapped in figure 5.15 with the regional trail network. It can be seen that there are many equestrian facilities that are located in close proximity to regional trails, providing the potential for a relationship between them.

Trails where equestrian use and tourism activities could be mutually beneficial are those concentrated in the northern and more rural parts of the study area. Consideration should be given to the following trails in terms of accommodating equestrian use:

- the proposed extension of the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail within Hume on Parks Victoria land
- the Main Yarra Trail within Banyule
- the proposed extension of the Maroondah Aqueduct Trail
- the Green Wedge Trail
- the Diamond Creek Trail
- the Kinglake Way Trail

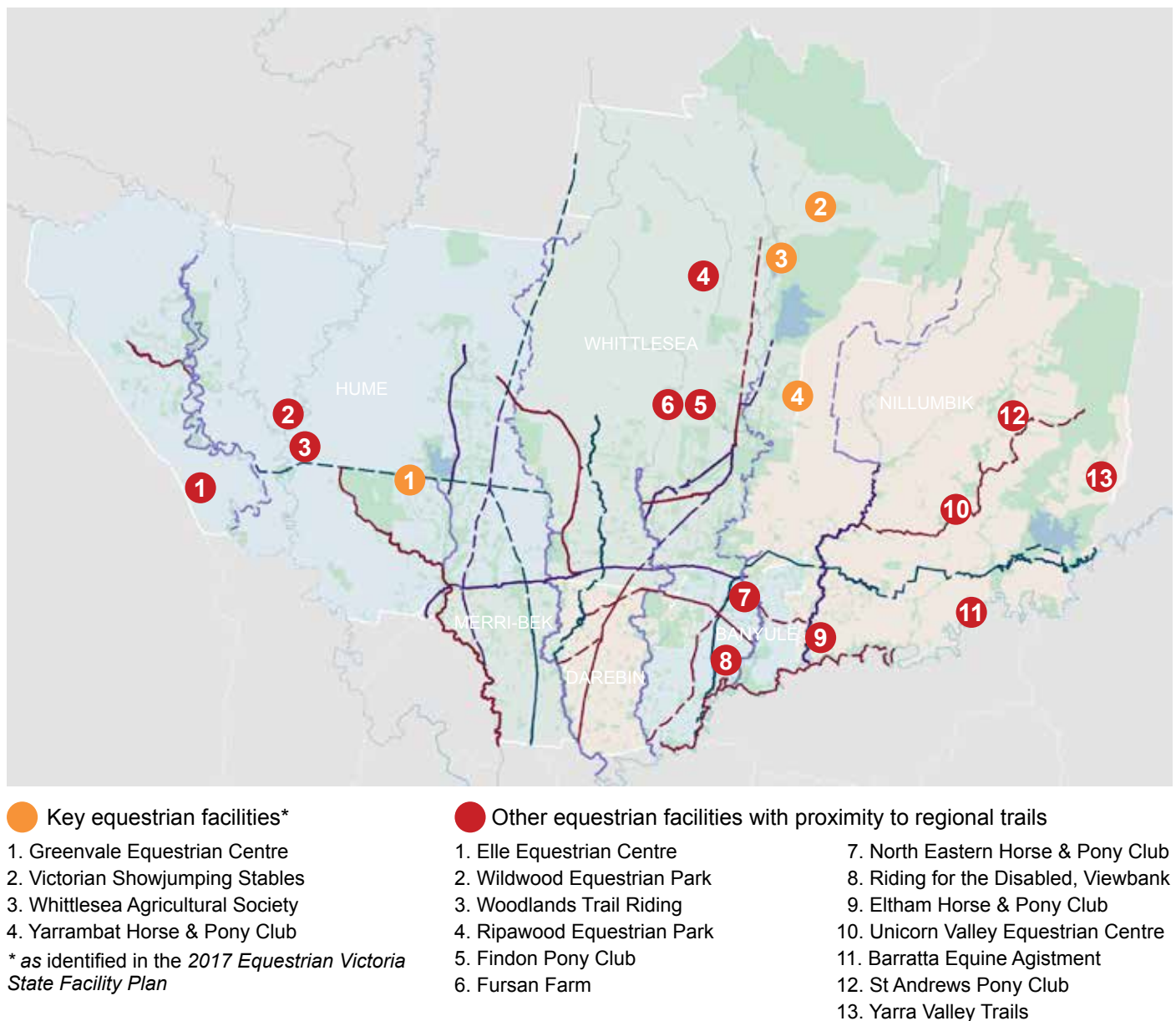


FIGURE 5.15:

Location of key equestrian facilities in relation to the regional trail network

(Source: key equestrian facilities are as identified in the 2017 Equestrian Victoria State Facility Plan)



6. THE TRAIL NETWORK

Edgars Creek Trail

A number of steps were undertaken to determine which of the many paths that exist in the study area should be incorporated in this study as regional trails:

- **Northern Trails Strategy (2016) review** - a review of the 2016 study identified the major trails within the study area.
- **Desktop review** - a review of available local government, regional level and State Government strategic documents
- **Trail audit** - the major trails identified were audited, including riding all of the identified trails with a GPS device to map the trail extent and characteristics.
- **Action Plan** - potential trail improvements for each of the major trails were identified through various phases of the project. Because of the strategic nature and proposed lifespan of this study, trails were assessed not just on their existing condition, but also taking into account the proposed and potential future development of the trails.

Of the trails identified as a part of the desktop review, 27 were assessed to be, or have the potential to be, regional trails. These trails are shown in figure 6.1, and individually mapped in this chapter, along with descriptions of the trails and the recommended trail improvement projects for each.

Of the 27 regional trails, eight were either non-existent or have a substantial potential for expansion. They are:

- **Jacksons Creek Trail** - The Jacksons Creek Trail is proposed to run along the length of the Jacksons Creek in Sunbury to eventually connect with the Organ Pipes National Park (outside the study area).
- **Somerton Road Trail** - this proposed trail is expected to be implemented with the Somerton Road Duplication Project and will connect the Jacksons Creek Trail in the west to the Merri Creek Trail in the east.
- **Merri Creek Trail** - Whilst a substantial length of this trail exists, mostly within Darebin, plans to extend the trail north along the creek corridor will more than double it's length.
- **Plenty River Trail** - The proposed extension of the Plenty River Trail will provide a connection from the southern end of the region to Mernda. It will also provide connections in to Nillumbik from Greensborough in the south and Mernda in the north
- **Maroondah Aqueduct Trail** - Whilst sections of this trail exists, the proposed extension east would provide a route to the Sugarloaf Reservoir.
- **Kinglake Way Trail** - This proposed trail of approximately 20km in length provides a connection from the existing Diamond Creek Trail to Kinglake National Park.
- **Craigieburn Line Shared Path** - With construction having already commenced, the completed Craigieburn Line Shared Path will run from the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail in the south to Craigieburn Station in the north, providing over 15km of new trail along the rail corridor.
- **Amaroo Pipe Track** - The Amaroo Pipe Track, once realised, will provide a direct trail from Craigieburn Station in the south through to the proposed train station in Beveridge

Any summary of regional trails will always be a snapshot in time and a work in progress. Priorities will change over time, new opportunities will arise, and the planning and management of regional trails will need to respond to these changes.

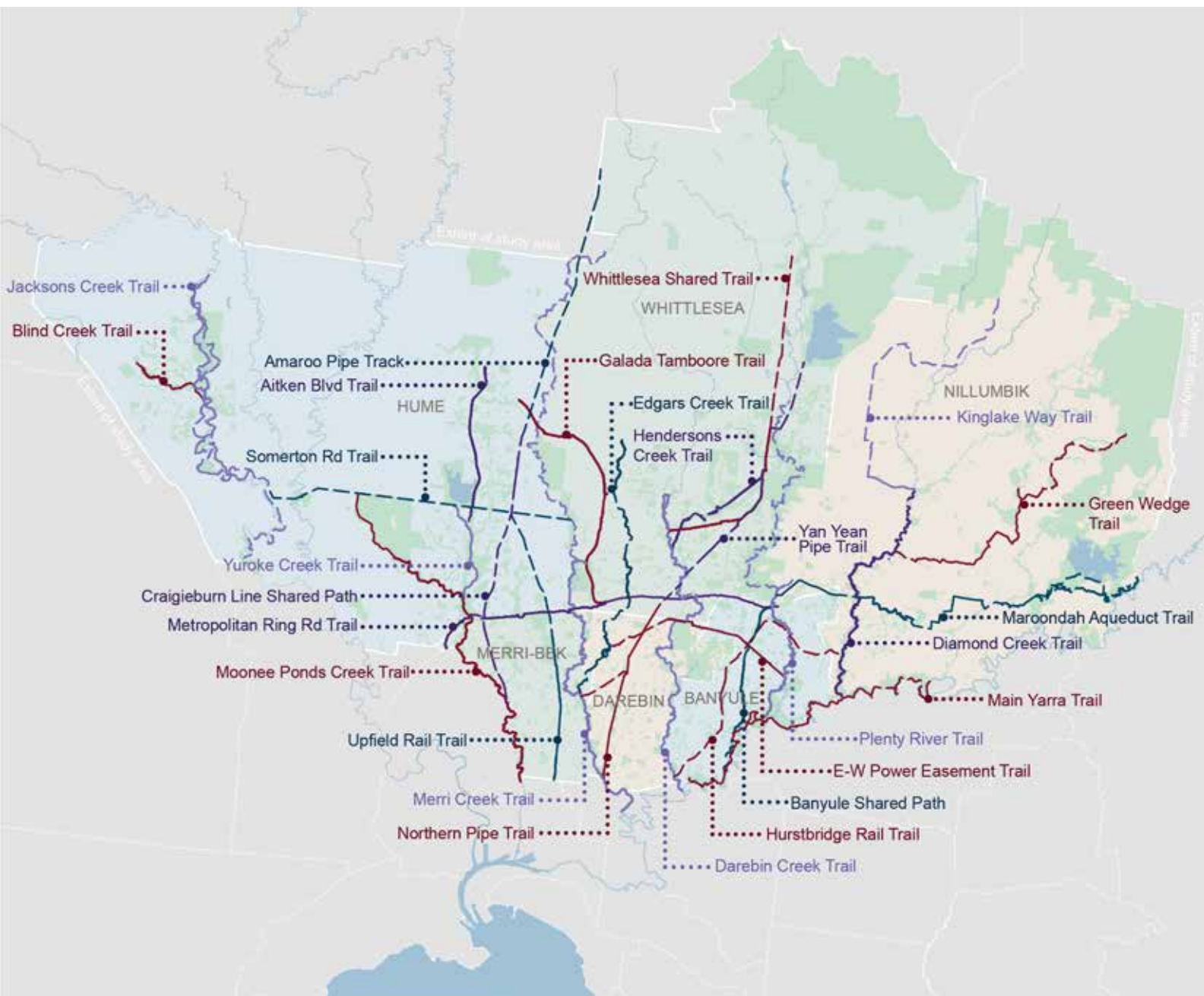


FIGURE 6.1:
The Northern Melbourne regional trail network

6.1 AITKEN BOULEVARD SHARED TRAIL

Trail information

Length: 9.6km
 SCC: Yes

Location:

The Aitken Boulevard Trail follows Aitken Boulevard from the Yuroke Creek Trail through Roxburgh Park and Craigieburn, to Mt Ridley Road

Local Government Area:

Hume

Additional Stakeholders:

-

Auditor comments:

"Basically a wide footpath with access issues at the south end and major gaps in the northern sections"



Priority Actions

- 1 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail
- 2 Construct new section of trail on the eastern side of Aitken Boulevard from the Aitken Creek to Craigieburn Road
- 3 Construct new section of trail from Brookfield Boulevard to Highlands Shopping Centre
- 4 Construct new section of trail from the Yuroke Creek Trail to Somerton Road following duplication of Somerton Road and a safe crossing point being constructed

6.2 AMAROO PIPE TRACK

Trail information

Length: 14.5km SCC: Yes

Location:

The Amaroo Pipe Track is a direct trail from Craigieburn Station in the south through to the City of Whittlesea and beyond the study area to Mitchell Shire

Local Government Area:
Hume & Whittlesea

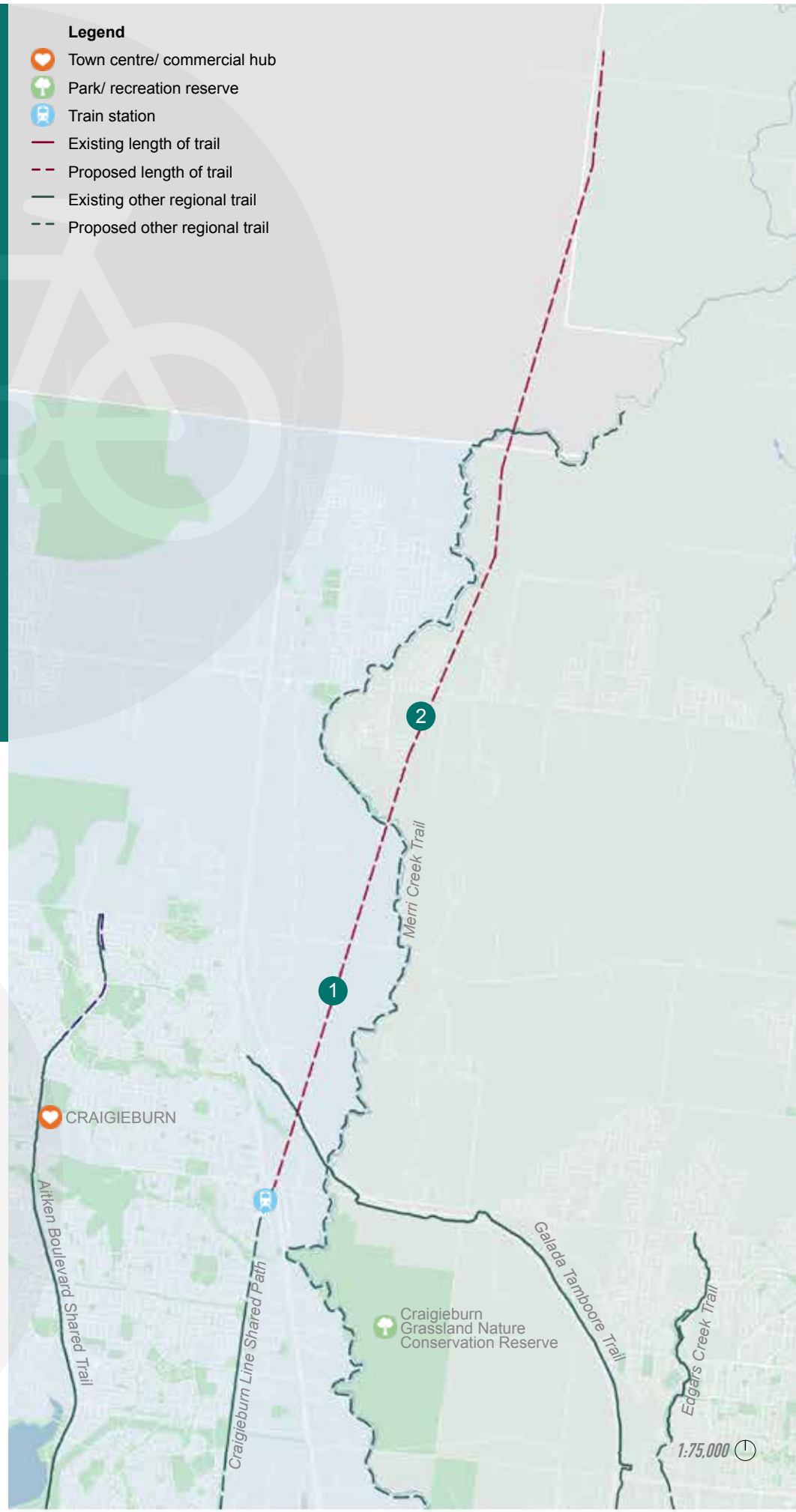
Additional Stakeholders:
Mitchell Shire and Yarra Valley Water

Legend

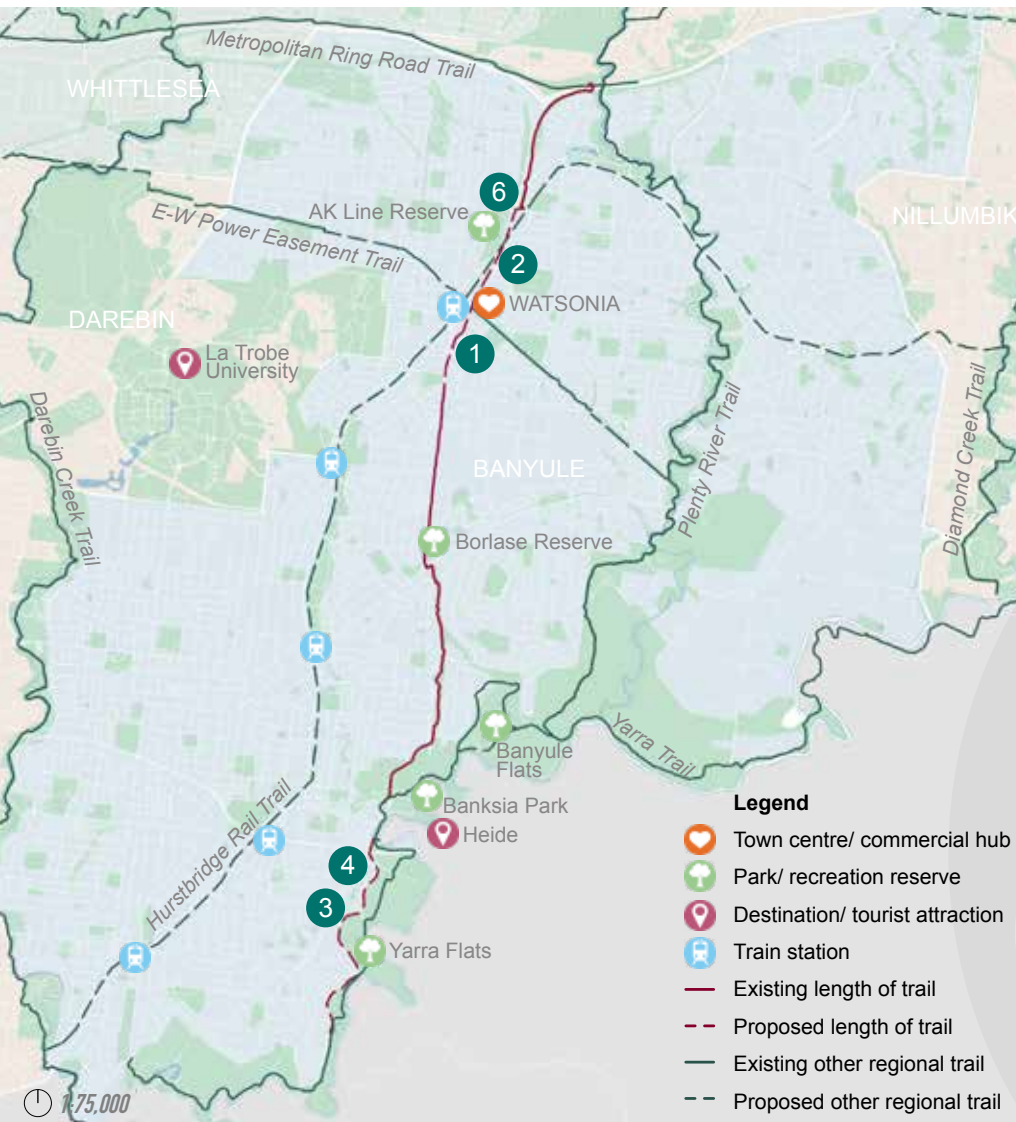
-  Town centre/ commercial hub
-  Park/ recreation reserve
-  Train station
-  Existing length of trail
-  Proposed length of trail
-  Existing other regional trail
-  Proposed other regional trail

Priority Actions

- 1 Advocate for a new trail along the sewer easement from Craigieburn Station north toward Beveridge (within Hume)
- 2 Advocate for a new trail along the sewer easement north to Beveridge (within Whittlesea)



6.3 BANYULE SHARED TRAIL



Trail information

Length:
10.6km

SCC:
Yes

Location:

The Banyule Shared Path runs in a north-south direction through Watsonia and Rosanna from the Metropolitan Ring Road Trail to the Yarra Trail

Local Government Area:

Banyule

Additional Stakeholders:

Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, VicRoads

Auditor comments:

"A potentially effective commuter trail if some major improvements are made to address the gaps in continuity"

Priority Actions

- 1 Construct new section of trail from Wattle Drive north to Watsonia Station
- 2 Construct new section of trail from Watsonia Station north to Grimshaw Street
- 3 Construct new section of the trail from Banksia Street south to the Yarra Trail just north of McArthur Road
- 4 Realign trail at playground on River Gum Walk to reduce incline
- 5 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail
- 6 Provide a grade separated north-south walking and cycling link across Grimshaw Street at the Greensborough Bypass

6.4 BLIND CREEK TRAIL

Trail information

Length: 7km
SCC: No

Location:

The Blind Creek Trail follows the creek through parkland across Sunbury and will connect with the future Jacksons Creek biik wurrdha Regional Parklands in the east (in accordance with the *Jacksons Creek biik wurrdha Regional Parklands Plan*)

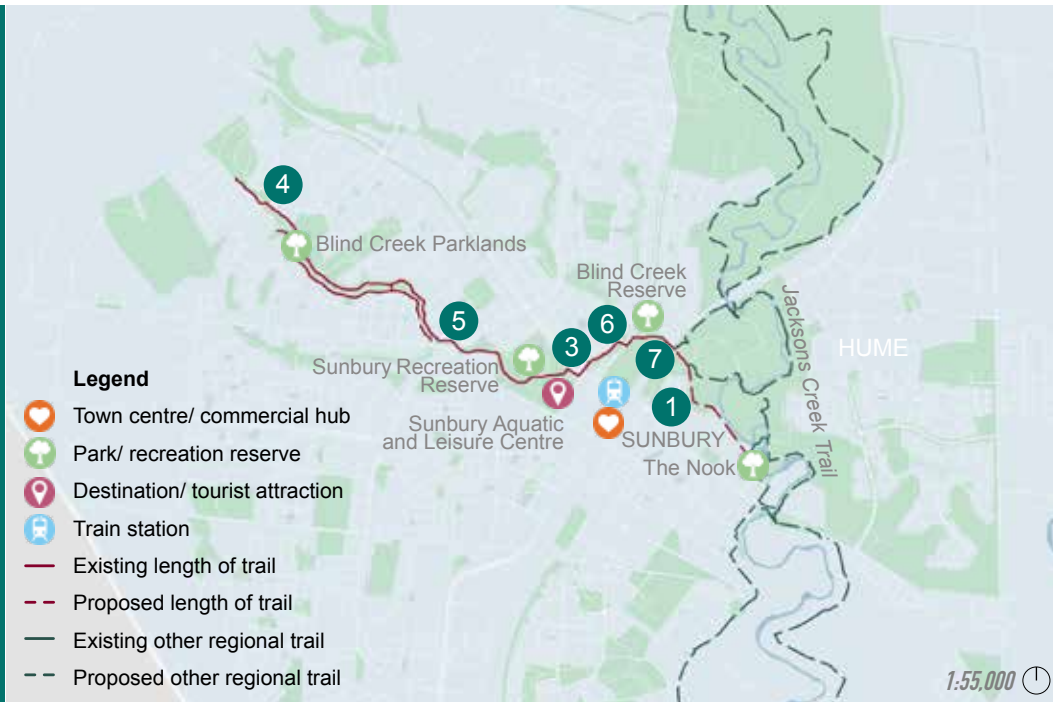
Local Government Area: Hume

Additional Stakeholders:

Major Road Projects Victoria, Melbourne Water, private landowners, Salesian College Sunbury, VicRoads

Auditor comments:

"Pleasant trail of good quality marred by lack of signage and general waymarking."



Priority Actions

- 1 Advocate and plan for a new section of trail from the rail line in Sunbury east to Jacksons Creek and The Nook/Bicentennial Park
- 2 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail
- 3 Investigate the feasibility of realigning the underpass at Riddell Road to cater to all users (cyclists) and improve access and safety
- 4 Investigate a pedestrian priority crossing with wayfinding signage at Phillip Drive
- 5 Investigate a pedestrian priority crossing at Elizabeth Drive
- 6 Investigate a pedestrian priority crossing with wayfinding signage at Racecourse Road
- 7 In partnership with Salesian College construct trail on southwest side of the Dam to connect with Ardcloney Drive.

6.5 CRAIGIEBURN LINE SHARED PATH

Trail information

Length: 15.65km
 SCC: Yes

Location:

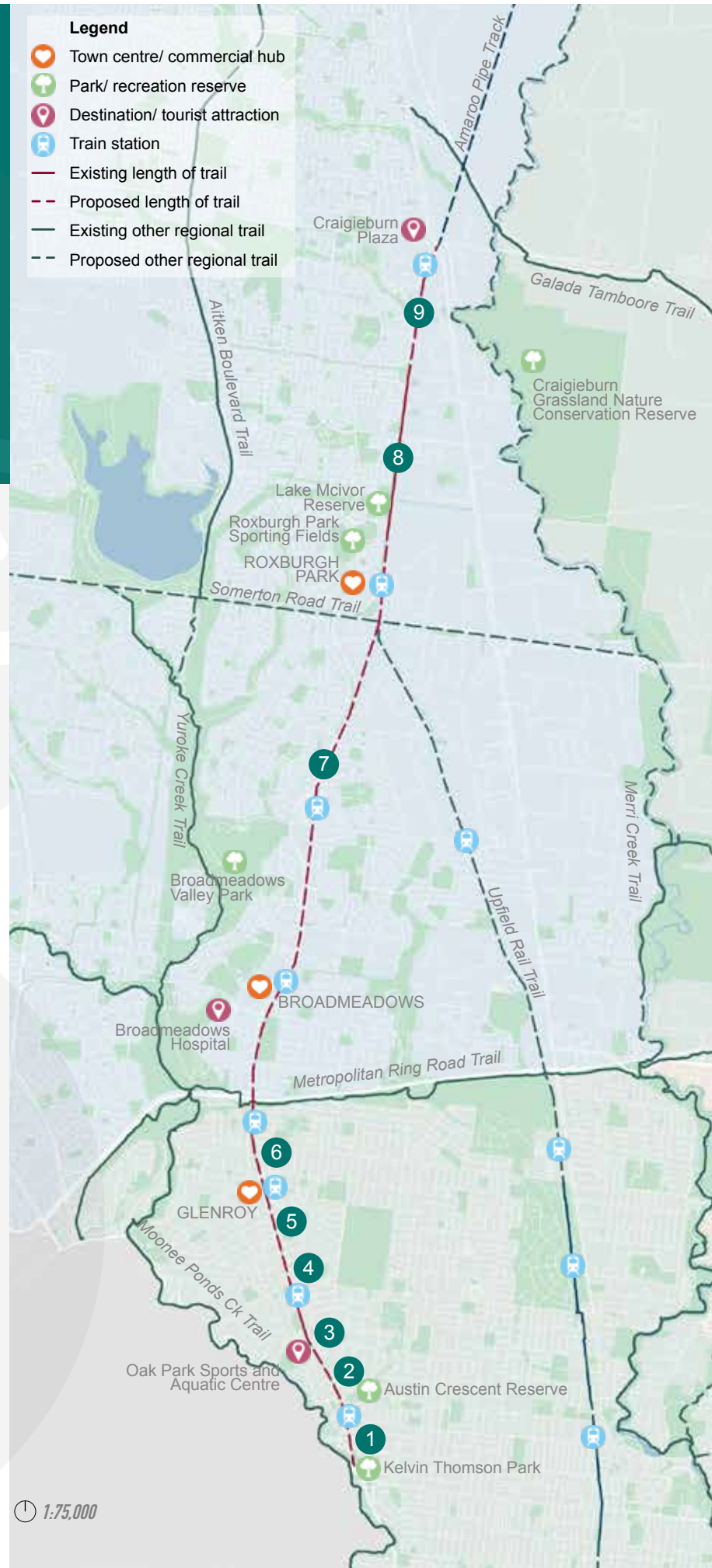
The Craigieburn Line Shared Path runs along the rail corridor from the Moonee Ponds Creek in the South through to Craigieburn Station

Local Government Area:
 Hume & Merri-bek

Additional Stakeholders:
 VicTrack

Priority Actions

- 1 Construct new section of trail from the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail to Gaffney Street
- 2 Construct a new section of trail, on the western side of the train line, from Gaffney Street to Bothwell Street including fencing and lighting
- 3 Construct a new section of trail, on the western side of the train line, from Bothwell Street to Devon Road including retaining, fencing and lighting
- 4 Construct a new section of trail, on the western side of the train line, from Cartwright Street to Glenroy Road including fencing and lighting
- 5 Construct a new section of trail from Glenroy Road to Glenroy Station
- 6 Construct a new section of trail, on the eastern side of the train line, from Glenroy Station to Jacana Station including fencing and lighting
- 7 Advocate for a feasibility study for a new continuous shared path from Jacana Station to McConnell Crescent (north of Roxburgh Park Station)
- 8 Widen the existing section of trail from McConnell Crescent to Zambezi Court Reserve
- 9 Advocate for a feasibility study for a new continuous shared path from Zambezi Court Reserve to Craigieburn Station



6.6 DAREBIN CREEK TRAIL

Trail information

Length:
30km (extends beyond study area)

SCC:
No

Location:
This trail runs along the Darebin Creek Trail from Ivanhoe in the south to Epping in the north.

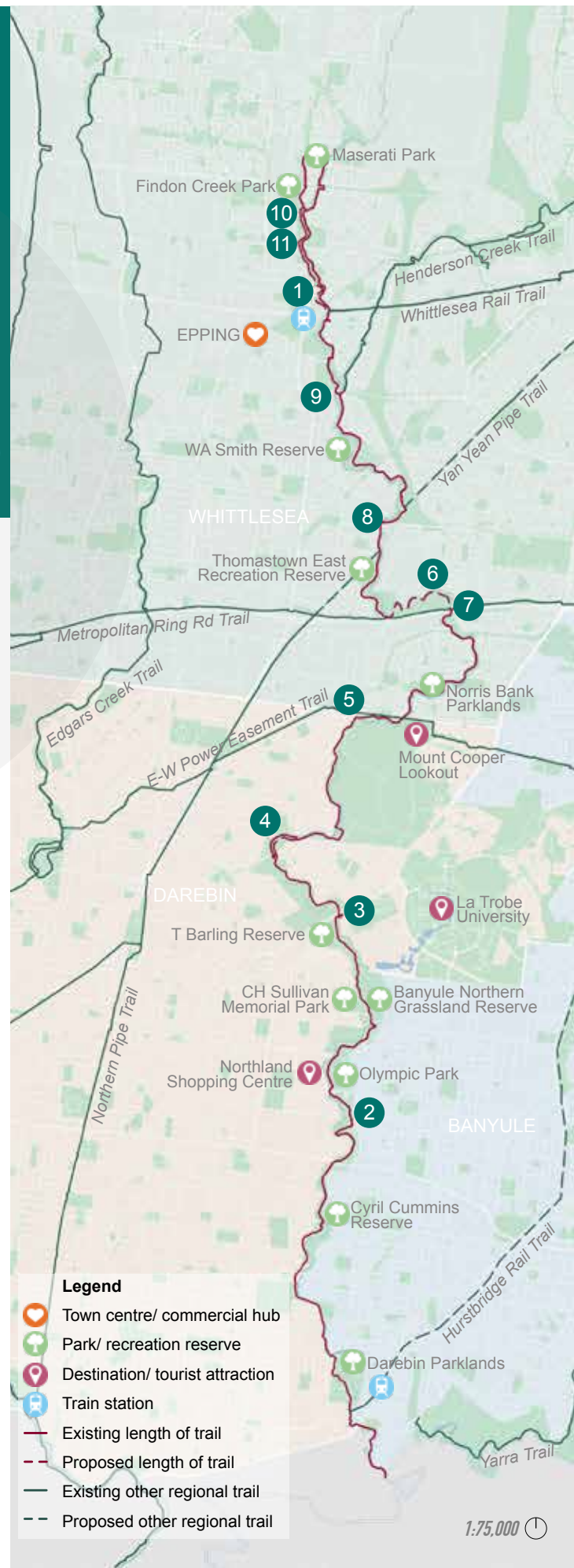
Local Government Area:
Banyule, Darebin, Whittlesea

Additional Stakeholders:
La Trobe University, Major Road Projects Victoria, Melbourne Water, VicRoads

Auditor comments:
“A generally first class trail that utilises the creek’s green margins to excellent effect, with only a few minor sections that require upgrading/attention”

Priority Actions

- 1 Construct new section of trail on the western side of the creek from the train underpass east of Epping Station to Greenbrook Drive
- 2 Upgrade section of trail between Gona Street and Southern Road
- 3 Investigate the feasibility of an underpass or bridge crossing Plenty Road intersection to avoid section of trail on Plenty Road footpath
- 4 Construct a new section of trail on the eastern side of the Darebin Creek from Dunne Street to Chenies Street including an underpass at Dunne Street and Chenies Street
- 5 Investigate the feasibility of an underpass or signalised pedestrian crossing at Settlement Road to improve trail continuity
- 6 Construct a new section of trail that follows the creek from the Metropolitan Ring Road through the Darebin Creek Linear Reserve to connect to the new section of trail
- 7 Elevate the section of the Darebin Creek Trail where it passes beneath the Western Ring Road to avoid flooding
- 8 Investigate the feasibility of an underpass and bridge crossing at McKimmies Road to avoid section of trail on McKimmies Road bridge
- 9 Investigate the feasibility of an underpass and bridge crossing at Childs Road to avoid section of trail on Childs Road bridge
- 10 Investigate the feasibility of an underpass and bridge crossing at Findon Road to avoid section of trail on Findon Road
- 11 Provide a pedestrian priority crossing at McDonalds Road roundabout



6.7 DIAMOND CREEK TRAIL

Trail information

Length: 20.2km SCC: Yes

Location:

Following the creek corridor, the trail begins at the Yarra Trail in Lower Eltham and continues north to Hurstbridge

Local Government Area:

Nillumbik

Additional Stakeholders:

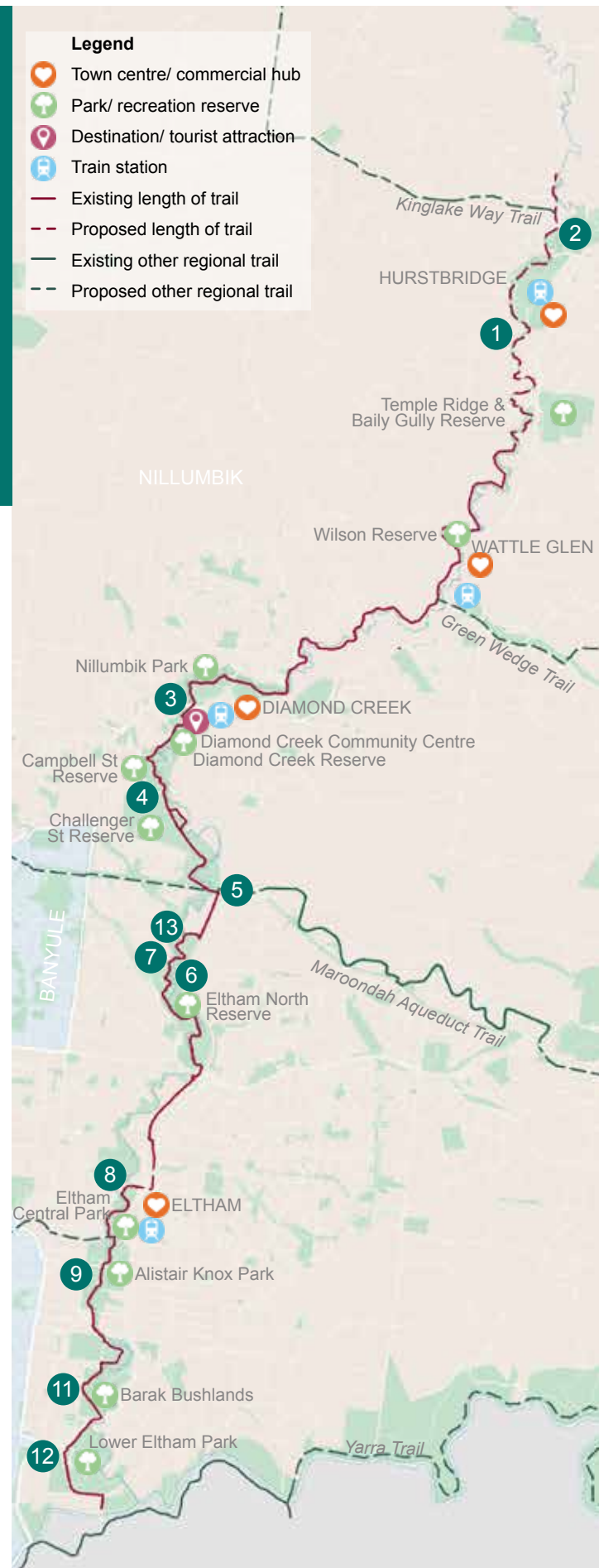
Melbourne Water, VicRoads

Auditor comments:

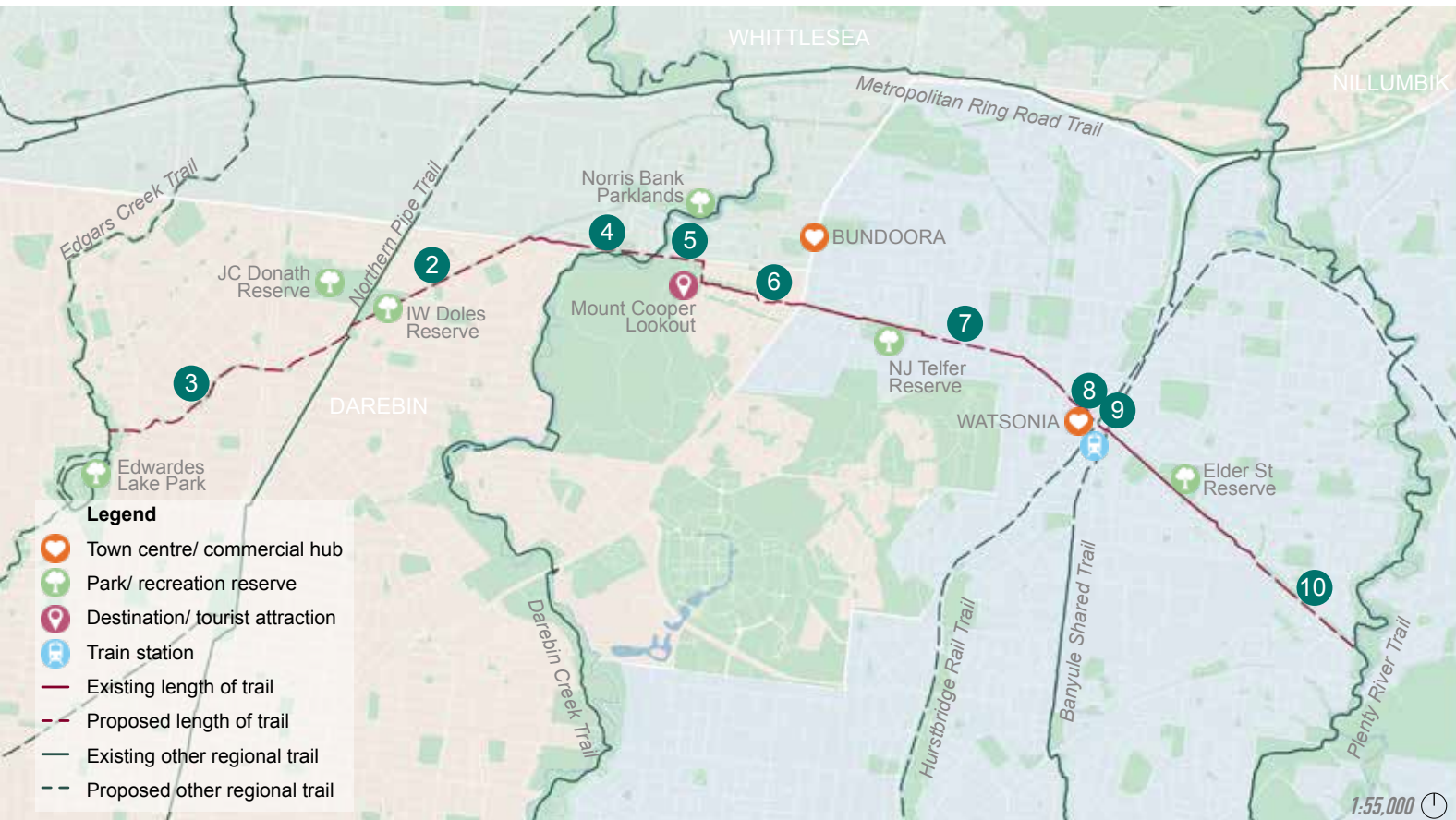
“A reasonably complete trail through some quite scenic areas, with a superb new extension to Wattle Glen but marred badly by a gaping hole in Eltham.”

Priority Actions

- 1 Construct new section of trail from Wilson Road to Graysharps Road, Hurstbridge.
- 2 Construct new section of trail from Graysharps Road to Fergusons Paddock
- 3 Construct an underpass at Main Hurstbridge Road, Diamond Creek to avoid busy traffic crossing
- 4 Widen trail surface from Allendale Road north to Main Hurstbridge Road
- 5 Install a signalised/ pedestrian priority crossing at Allendale Road
- 6 Maintain/ upgrade sections of bitumen trail surface through Eltham North Reserve, Research Gully, Eltham North Playground, and Edendale Community Farm
- 7 Realign the section of trail at the Wattletree Road and Gastons Road underpass to create a gentler grade and wider trail surface
- 8 Construct new section of trail with wayfinding signage around Main Road and Diamond Street, Eltham to fill the gap in the trail and direct users to the continuation of the trail
- 9 Upgrade surface of existing trail between Susan Street Oval and Ely St, with wayfinding or linemarking to create a consistent and legible trail
- 10 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail
- 11 Maintain/ upgrade sections of bitumen trail surface through Eltham Bushland Reserve alongside Main Road
- 12 Realign/ enhance the section of trail through the Eltham Lower Park.
- 13 Realign the sharp bend in the trail between Laurel Hill Drive and Allendale Road



6.8 EAST WEST POWER EASEMENT TRAIL



Trail information

Length: 11.6km
SCC: No

Location:

This trail runs from the Edgars Creek Trail in the west to the Plenty River Trail in the east, following an existing power easement through Reservoir, Bundoora and Watsonia.

Local Government Area:

Banyule, Darebin, Whittlesea

Additional Stakeholders:

AusNet, Melbourne Water, Private landowners, VicRoads

Auditor comments:

“A somewhat odd amalgamation of sections, ranging in quality from poor to excellent, and several glaring gaps that seem to make an effective and enjoyable trail an impossibility.”

Priority Actions

- 1 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail
- 2 Construct a section of trail from the Northern Pipe/ St Georges Rd/ Cheddar Road Trail north west along the vacant pipe reserve
- 3 Construct a section of trail from the Northern Pipe/ St Georges Rd/ Cheddar Road Trail south east along the vacant pipe reserve to Edwardes Lake Park
- 4 Construct a section of trail along Holt Parade to connect to the Darebin Creek Trail (at Valley Road)
- 5 Investigate the feasibility of a new section of trail, including a new bridge crossing, from the Darebin Creek Trail, at Holt Parade, around Mount Cooper to connect to the existing section of trail at Snake Gully Drive
- 6 Construct a section of trail from Reedy Rise to Plenty Road including a new pedestrian priority crossing at Plenty Road
- 7 Investigate options for providing a new section of trail from Dilkara Avenue to Gleeson Drive
- 8 Construct a section of trail from the existing trail on Morwell Avenue to Watsonia Station
- 9 Upgrade existing footbridge over the rail line at Watsonia Station including an underpass/ overpass at Greensborough Road to avoid footpath and multiple road crossings
- 10 Construct a new section of trail along Wendover Place and Yallambie Road, along the easement to the Plenty River Trail

6.9 EDGARS CREEK TRAIL

Trail information

Length: 20.9km
SCC: No

Location:

Beginning in Coburg at the Merri Creek Trail, this trail follows the creek north through Thomastown and Epping.

Local Government Area:

Darebin, Merri-bek, Whittlesea

Additional Stakeholders:

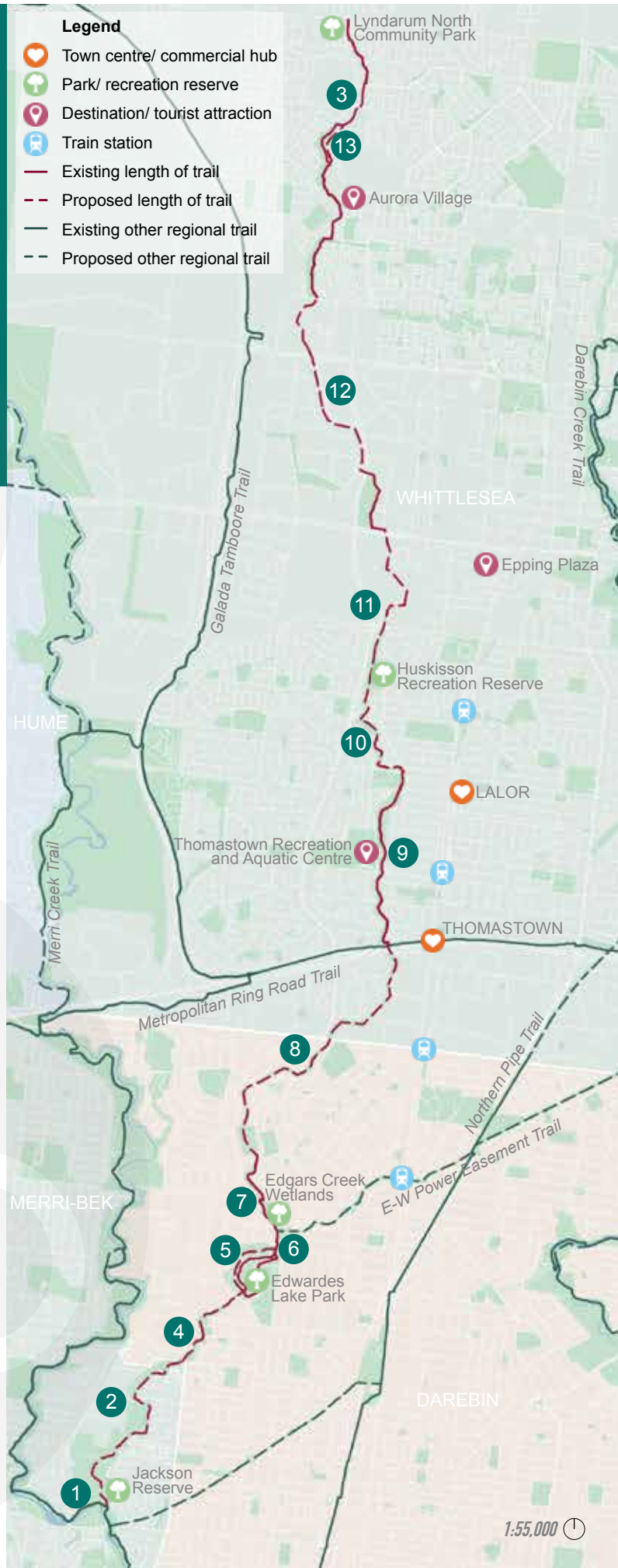
Melbourne Water, VicRoads

Auditor comments:

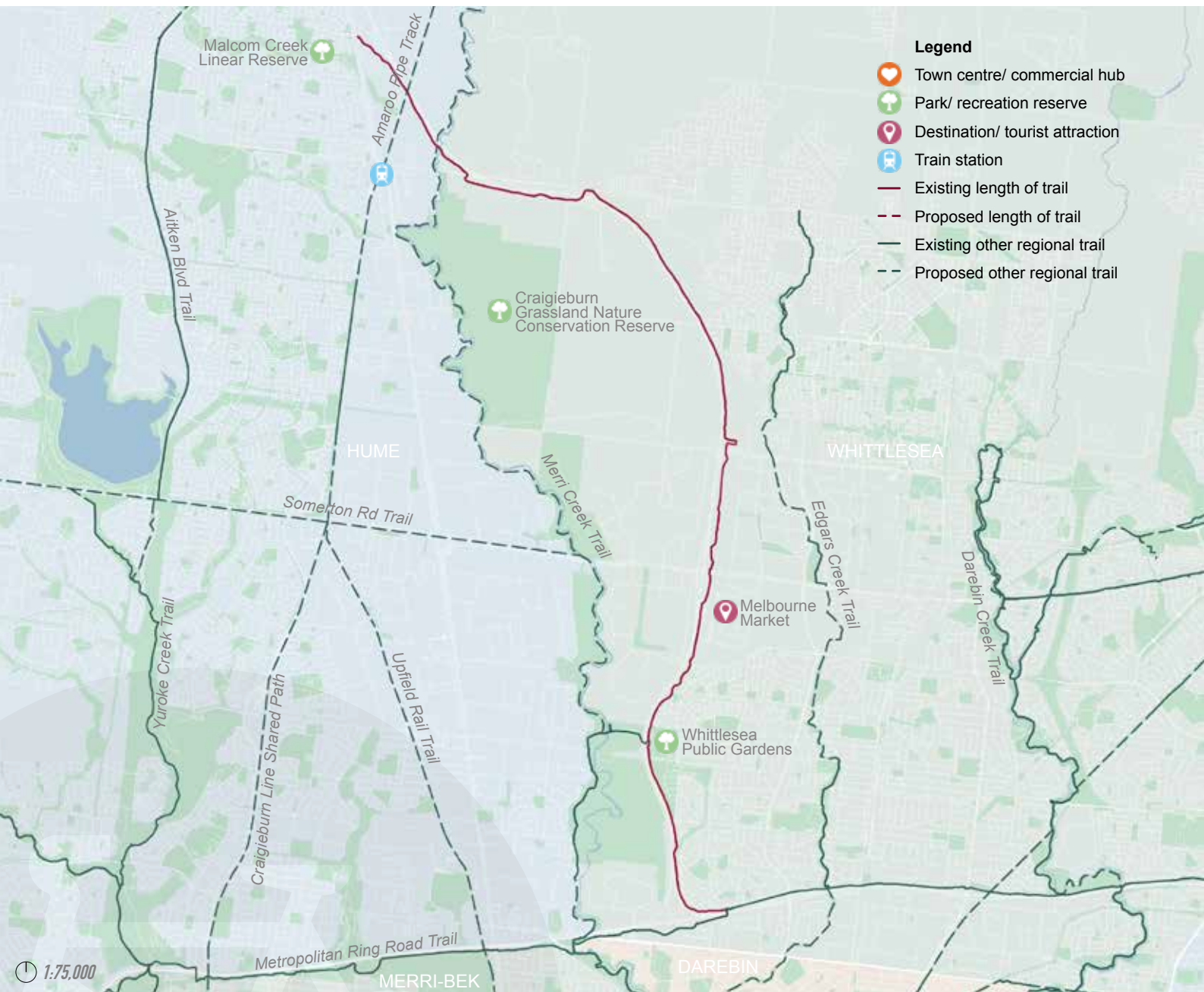
"A potentially useful and rewarding trail along Edgars Creek that is at this time, a long way short of that."

Priority Actions

- 1 Construct new section of trail from the Merri Creek Trail to Ronald Street on the west bank
- 2 Construct new section of trail from Ronald Street to Carrington Road. Consider keeping the trail away from the creek and along development frontages
- 3 Construct new section of trail from Strahalbyn Chase to Contempo Boulevard
- 4 Investigate a new section of trail along the creek from Carrington Road to Edwardes Lake. Explore the feasibility of a trail between Kia Ora Road and Henty Street on the east bank.
- 5 Construct a separate cycling only trail through Edwardes Lake Park
- 6 Construct a dedicated shared trail from the public toilets in Edwardes Lake Park, around the car park and over Leamington Street
- 7 Investigate the feasibility of an underpass and bridge crossing at Broadhurst Avenue
- 8 Construct a section of trail along the creek from Glasgow Avenue to the Metropolitan Ring Road
- 9 Upgrade surface of trail between Main Street and Melaleuca Drive
- 10 Construct section of trail between German Lane and Kingsway Drive, Lalor
- 11 Construct section of trail along the street from Deveny Road to Cooper Street, Epping
- 12 Construct a section of trail along the creek from Jersey Drive to Rockfield Street
- 13 Construct section of trail along the creek from Sheba Way to Snowy Place
- 14 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail



6.10 GALADA TAMBOORE TRAIL



Trail information

Length: 15.5km
SCC: No

Location:
 Running along the Hume Freeway/ Craigieburn Bypass, this trail begins at the Metropolitan Ring Road Trail in the south and continues north to Craigieburn.

Local Government Area:
 Hume, Whittlesea

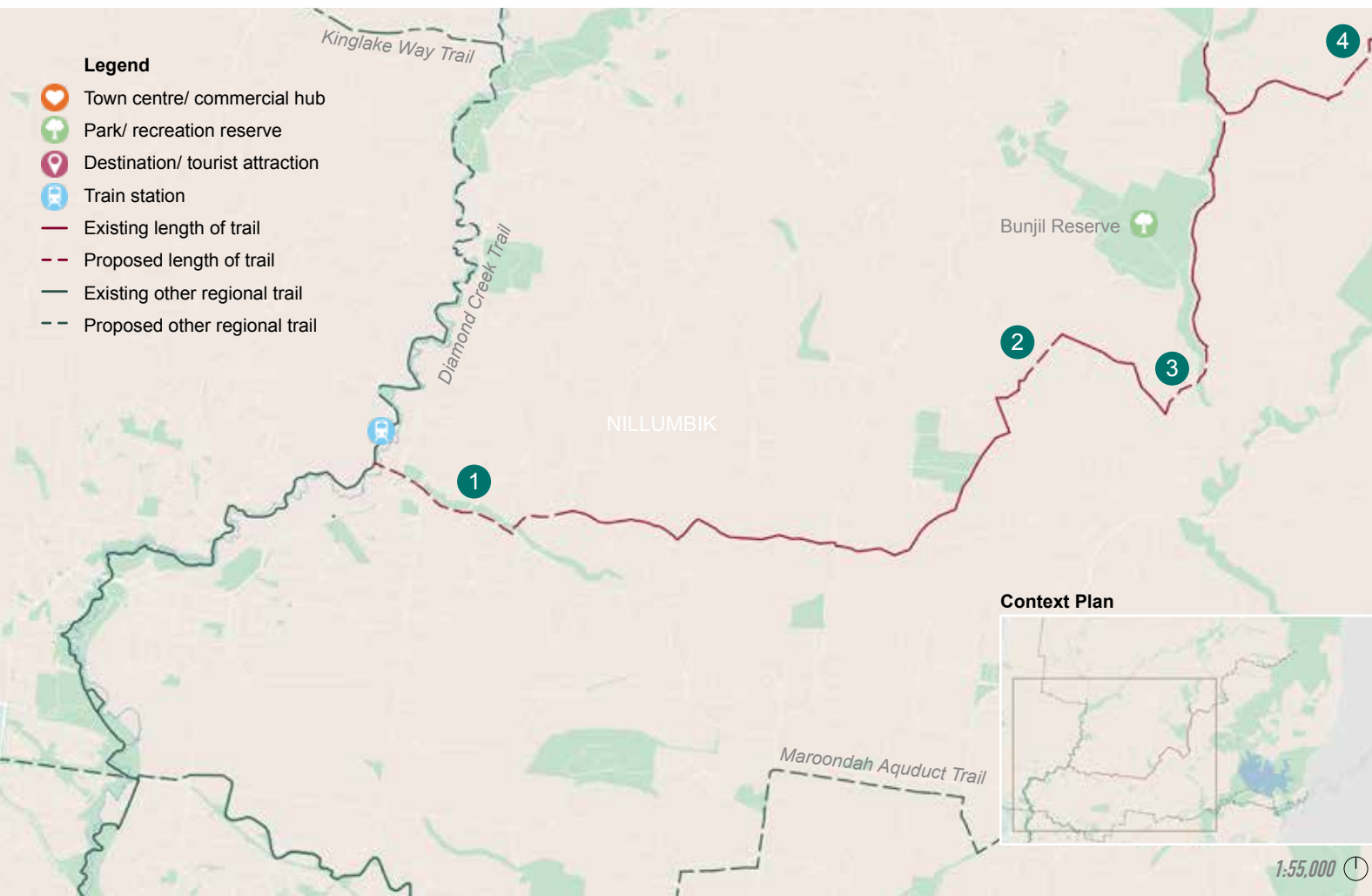
Additional Stakeholders:
 Merri Creek Management Committee, VicRoads

Auditor comments:
 "An effective path that offers reasonable off-road bicycle exercise options or, for the hearty long-range cycle commuter, a direct route from Melbourne's northern urban reaches to the city-access trails."

Priority Actions

- 1 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail
- 2 Reinstate centre linemarking along the trail

6.11 GREEN WEDGE TRAIL



Trail information

Length: 21.5km
SCC: No

Location:

Located entirely within Nillumbik, this trail begins at the Diamond Creek Trail in Wattle Glen to Kinglake National Park

Local Government Area:

Nillumbik

Additional Stakeholders:

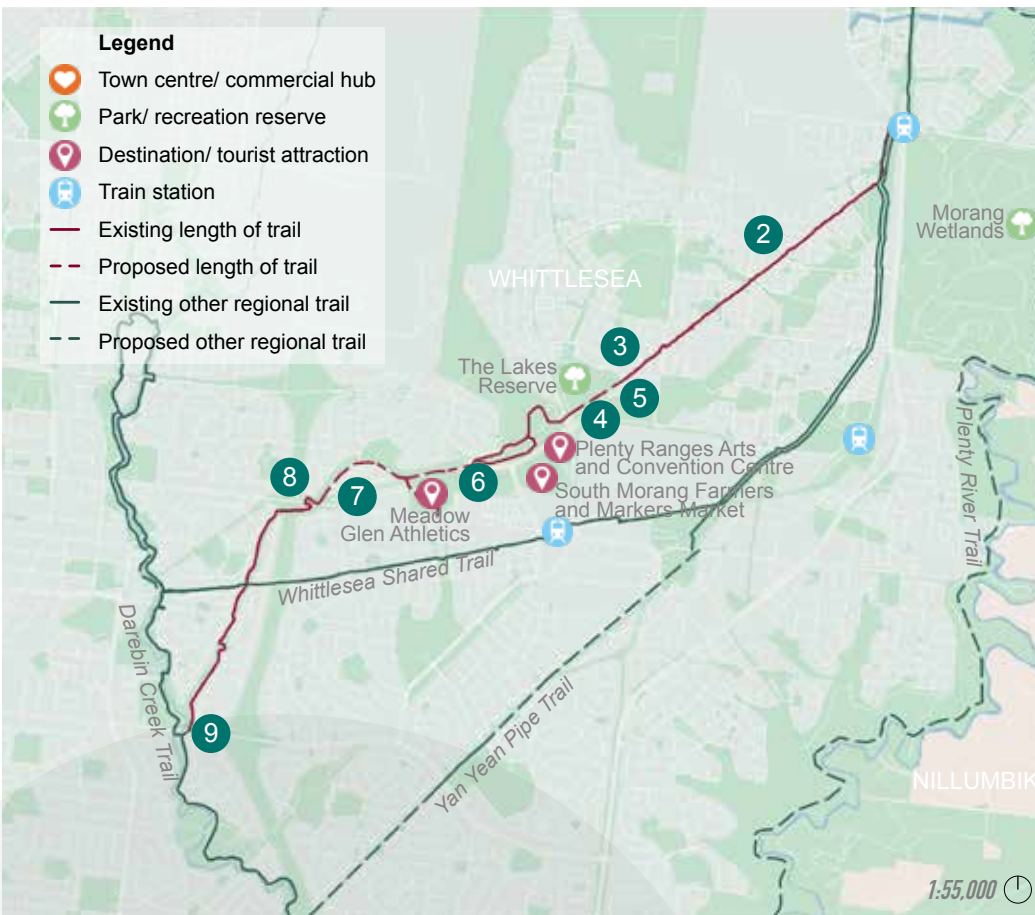
Parks Victoria



Priority Actions

- 1 Construct a new section of trail east from the Diamond Creek Trail at Wattle Glen Station along Watery Gully Creek to existing trail on Watery Gully Road
- 2 Construct a new section of trail from Couties Road to Alma Road
- 3 Construct a new section of trail along Long Gully Road from Alma Road to Turnung Road
- 4 Construct an extension of the trail from the intersection of Clintons Road and Spanish Gully Road to the Marshalls Road car park within the Kinglake National Park
- 5 Upgrade existing sections of the trail surface to match width and material treatment of new sections
- 6 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail

6.12 HENDERSONS CREEK TRAIL



Trail information

Length: 8.6km
SCC: No

Location:

Following the Henderson Road Drain and The Henderson Creek, this trail begins at the Darebin Creek Trail in Lalor and heads in a north-east direction to Yan Yean Trail in South Morang.

Local Government Area: Whittlesea

Additional Stakeholders:

Major Road Projects Victoria, Melbourne Water, VicRoads

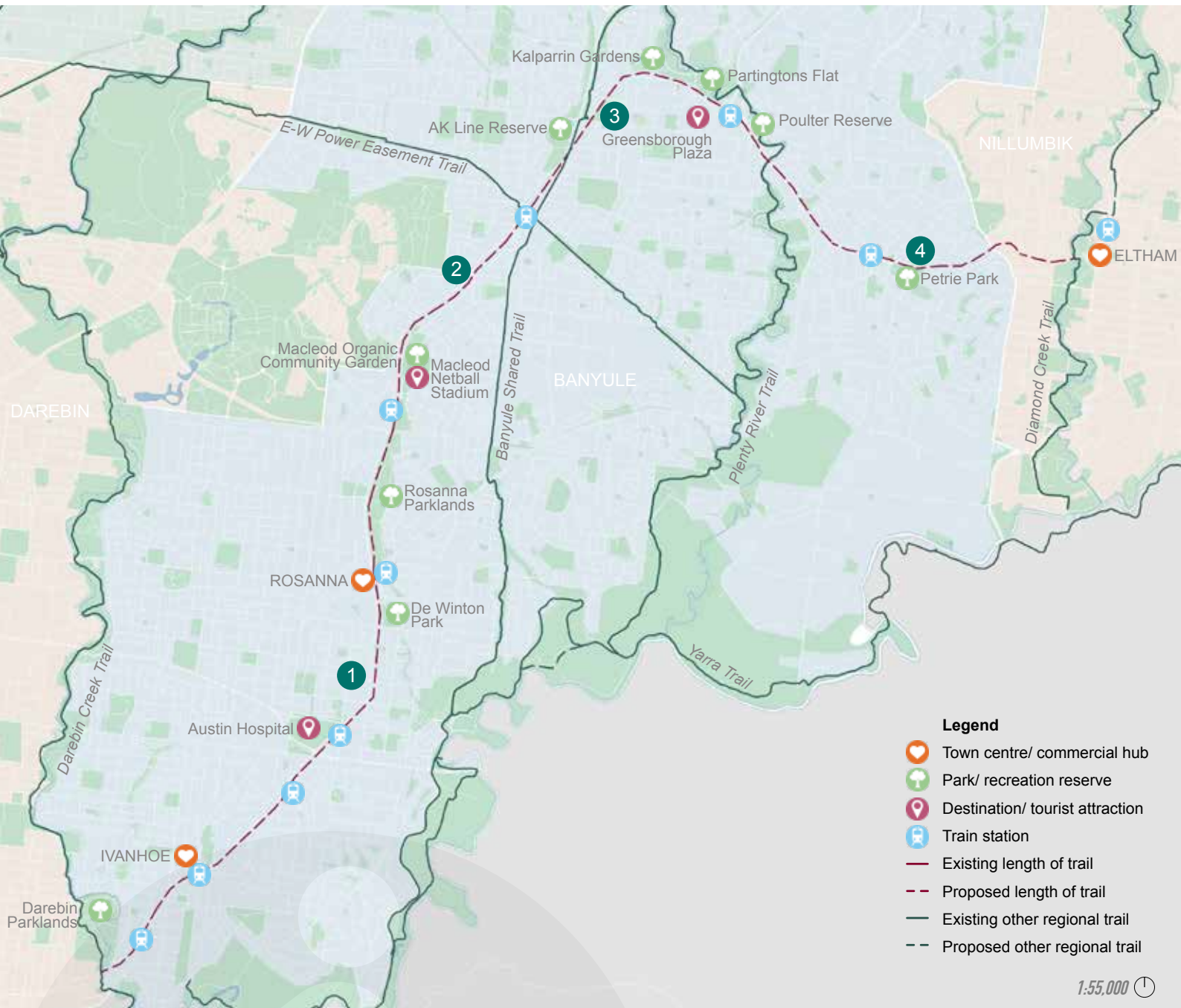
Auditor comments:

"A trail of two parts where the southern half makes sense and is easy to follow, and the northern half, where virtually nothing makes sense."

Priority Actions

- 1 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail
- 2 Provide a signalised/ pedestrian priority crossing over The Lakes Boulevard and Glenorchy Way
- 3 Upgrade trail surface from Gordons Road to Darius Terrace
- 4 Construct a section of trail from Darius Terrace to The Lakes Boulevard (at Findon Road) including a bridge crossing to connect to existing trail
- 5 Provide a signalised/ pedestrian priority crossing over The Great Eastern Way
- 6 Provide a signalised/ pedestrian priority crossing at Findon Road
- 7 Upgrade trail surface from Findon Road to McDonalds Road
- 8 Provide a signalised/ pedestrian priority crossing at McDonalds Road
- 9 Provide a signalised/ pedestrian priority crossing or Underpass at Childs Road to connect to the Darebin Creek Trail

6.13 HURSTBRIDGE RAIL TRAIL



Trail information

Length: 16.1km
SCC: Yes

Location:

This trail begins at the Darebin Creek Trail in Ivanhoe follows the Hurstbridge rail line to the Diamond Creek Trail in Eltham.

Local Government Area:
Banyule and Nillumbik

Additional Stakeholders:
Metro Trains, VicTrack

Auditor comments:

Priority Actions

- 1 Construct a new section of trail along the Hurstbridge rail line from the Darebin Creek Trail north to Macleod Station
- 2 Construct a new section of trail along the Hurstbridge rail line from Macleod Station to Elder Street
- 3 Construct a new section of trail along the Hurstbridge rail line from Elder Street to the Plenty River Trail
- 4 Construct a new section of trail along the Hurstbridge rail line from the Plenty River Trail to the Diamond Creek Trail

6.14 JACKSONS CREEK TRAIL

Trail information

Length: 50.3km (potential to extend beyond study area)
SCC: No

Location:

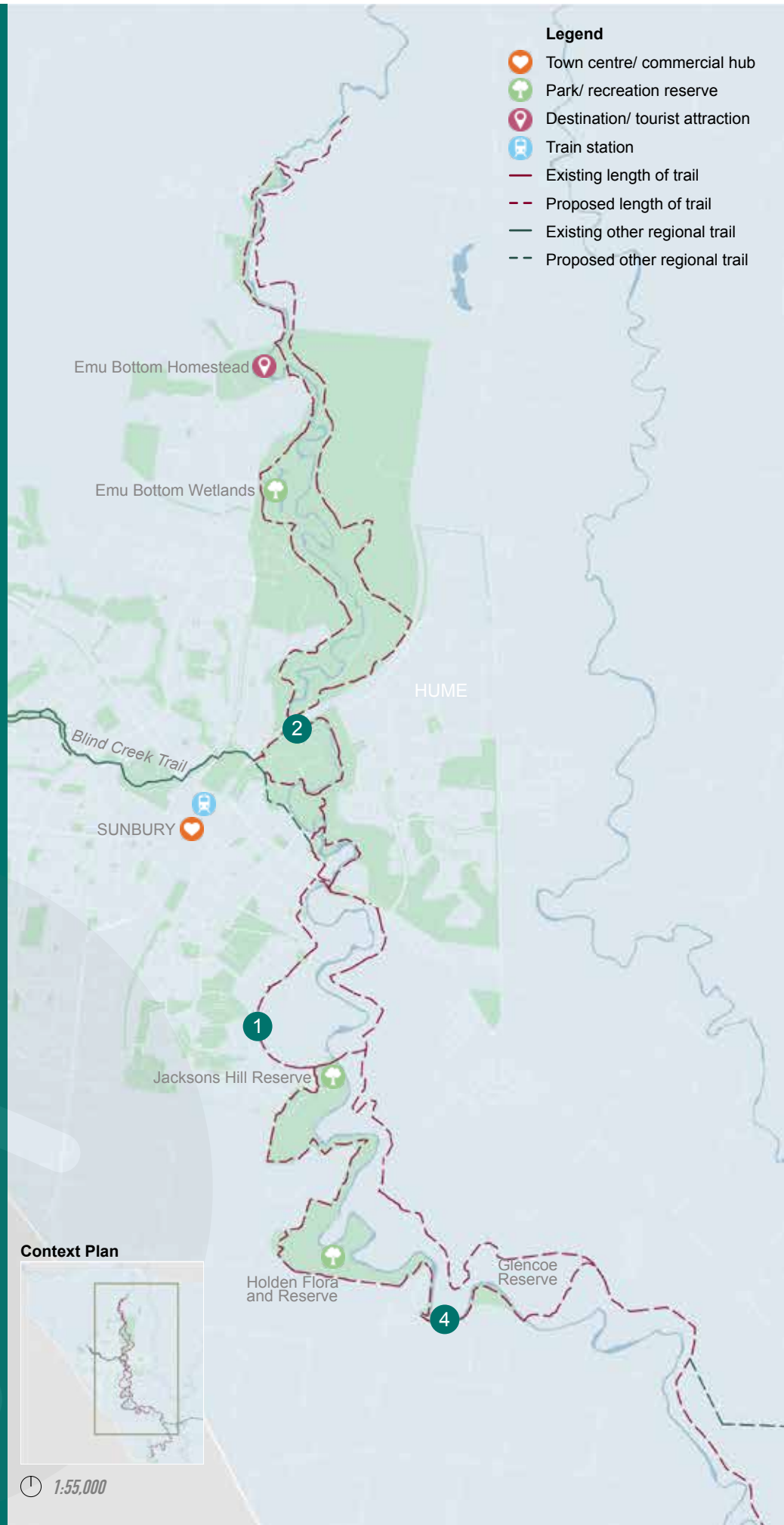
This proposed trail runs through the Jacksons Creek corridor in Sunbury and continues south to the border of Hume and the Organ Pipes National Park

Local Government Area:

Hume

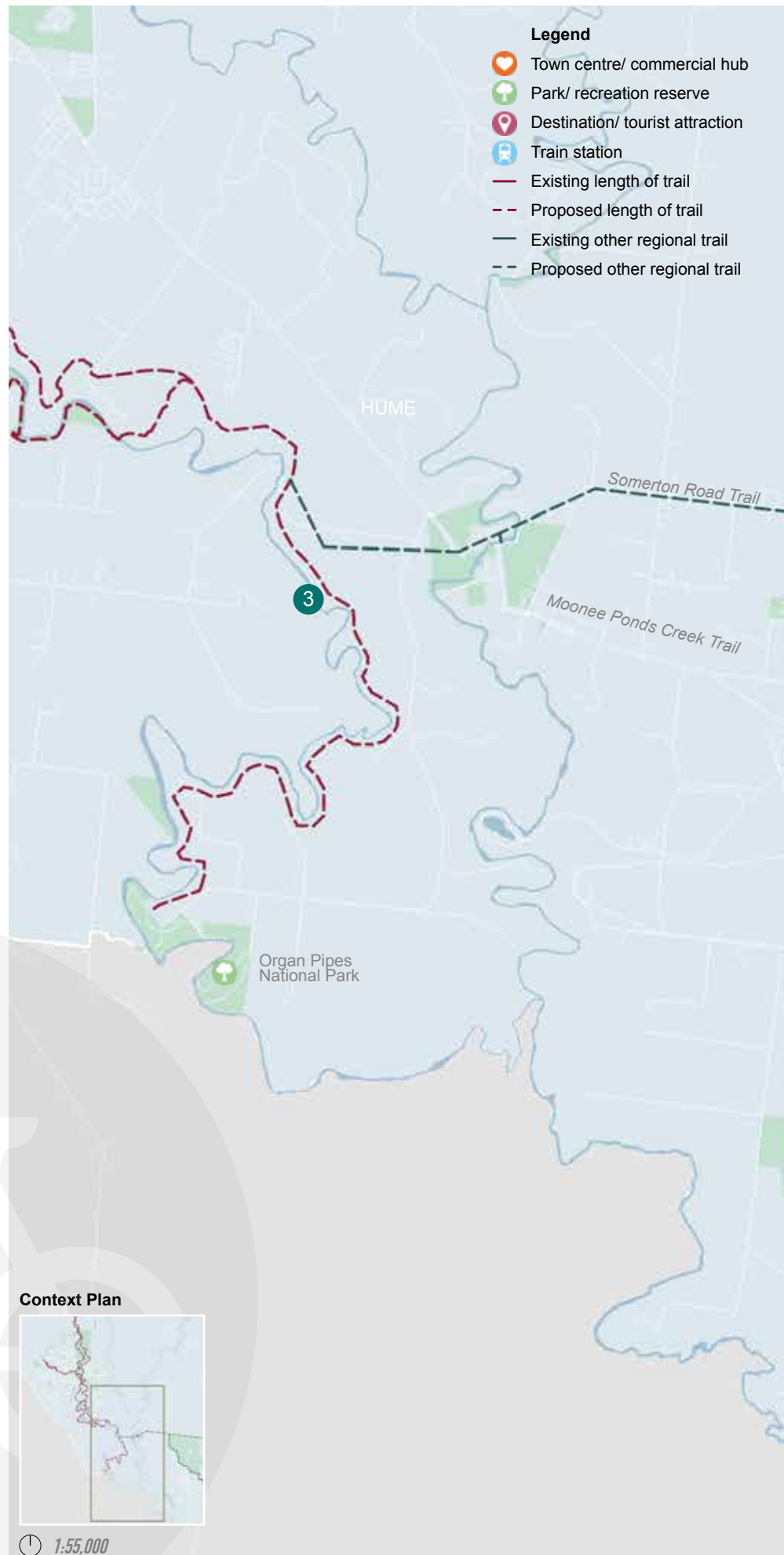
Additional Stakeholders:

DELWP, Greater Western Water, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, Wurundjeri Land Council



Priority Actions

- 1 Construct new section of trail from Harker Street to Hammersmith Court
- 2 Plan and investigate the staged construction of trails on both sides of the Jacksons Creek with project partners and other landholders in line with the priorities of the Jacksons Creek biik wurrdha Regional Parklands Plan
- 3 Investigate opportunities to construct a new section of trail from Bulla-Diggers Rest Road to Organ Pipes National Park in partnership with Parks Victoria and Brimbank City Council
- 4 Construct a new section of trail from Duncans Lane to Glencoe Reserve along the south side of the creek



6.15 KINGLAKE WAY TRAIL



Trail information

Length: 20.8km
SCC: No

Location:
Located entirely within Nillumbik, this trail begins at the Diamond Creek Trail in Hurstbridge and heads north to Arthurs Creek

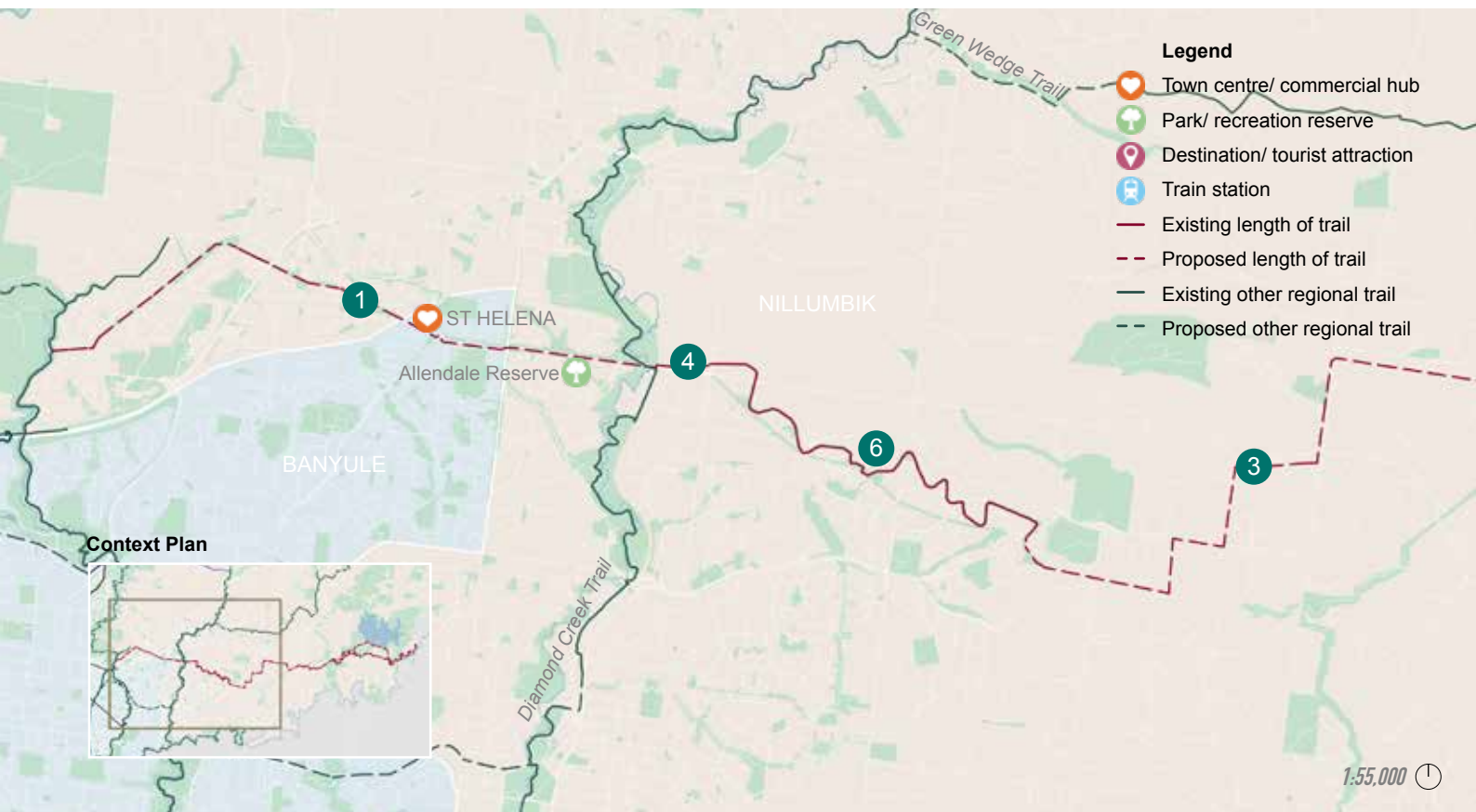
Local Government Area:
Nillumbik

Additional Stakeholders:
ParksVic

Priority Actions

- 1 Establish a new trail from Hurstbridge to Arthurs Creek

6.16 MAROONDAH AQUEDUCT TRAIL



Trail information

Length: 24.1km SCC: No

Location:

This trail runs in an east west direction from the Diamond Creek Trail in Greensborough in the west to the Sugarloaf Reservoir in the east.

Local Government Area:

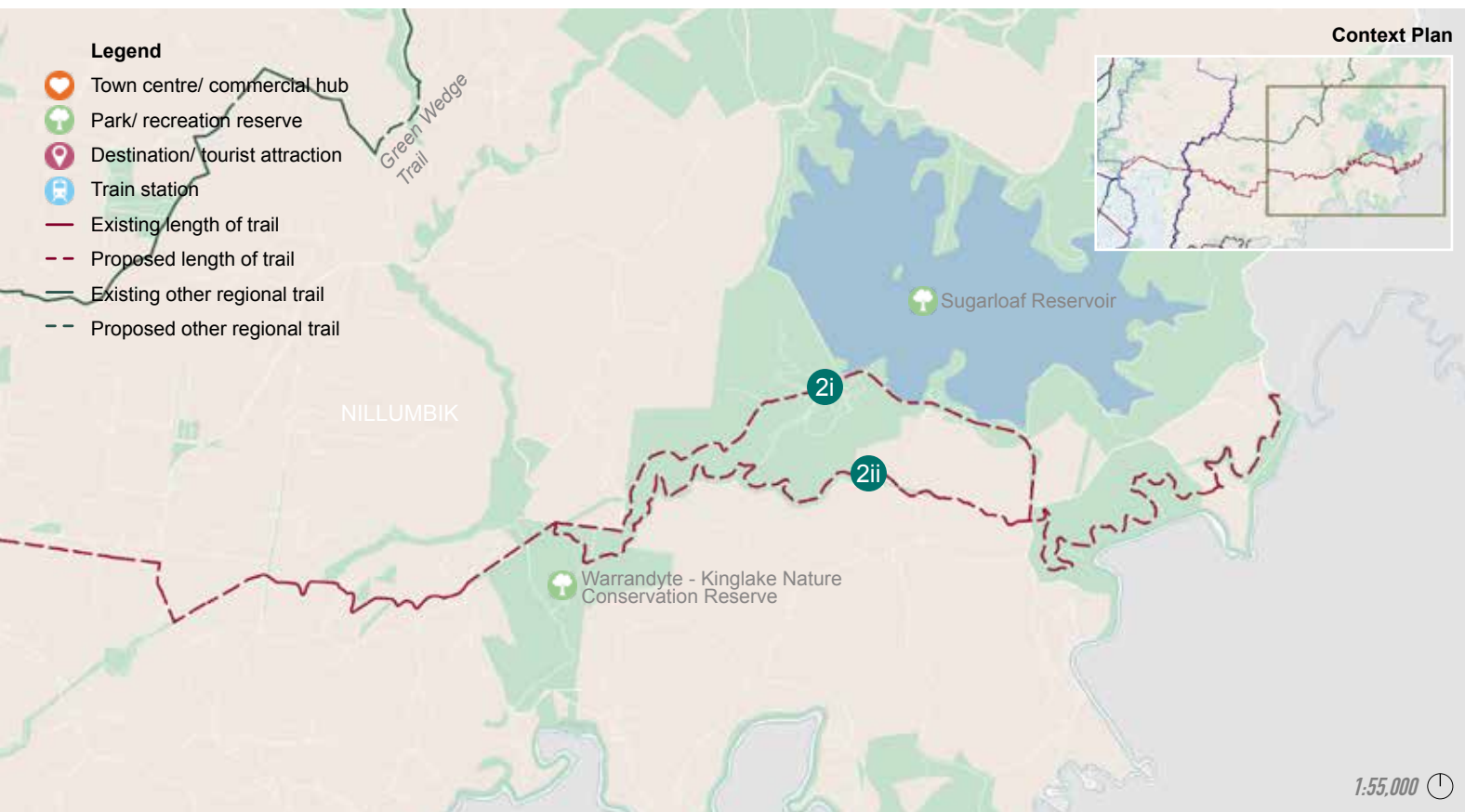
Banyule, Nillumbik

Additional Stakeholders:

Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, VicRoads

Auditor comments:

"A very pleasant trail that has mostly a neutral gradient, marred only by very steep access at the west end and a busy main road at the east end."



Priority Actions

- 1 Construct new section of trail connecting the Plenty River Trail near Lear Court, east along the aqueduct across Diamond Creek Road to the Diamond Creek Trail at Allendale Road.
- 2 Extend the Maroondah Aqueduct Trail through to Yarra Glen. Two options have been identified for this extension:
 - 2i Construct a new section of trail from the existing Aqueduct Trail at Calwell Road through to Ashmore Road and on to Yarra Glen; or
 - 2ii Construct a new section of trail from the existing Aqueduct Trail at Calwell Road via the Melbourne Water Caretakers trail to Ashmore Road and on to Yarra Glen.
- 3 Construct new section of trail from existing Aqueduct Trail at Main Road. New trail to head south east to cross over Bells Hill Road, continuing east then north to meet to Eltham-Yarra Glen Road. Head east along Eltham-Yarra Glen Road, north alongside New Road, then east alongside Donaldson Road. The trail then continues north alongside Eltham-Yarra Glen Road before turning south alongside Henley Road where it will connect with the existing Aqueduct Trail.
- 4 Extend the trail west from Godber Road to connect to the Diamond Creek Trail
- 5 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail
- 6 Realign section of trail either side of Afton Street to reduce grade

6.17 MERRI CREEK TRAIL

Trail information

Length: 35.1km (extends beyond study area)
SCC: No

Location:

The Merri Creek Trail follows the creek corridor from Northcote in the south through Coburg, Thomastown, Craigieburn and onto Donnybrook in the north (in accordance with the future *Merri Creek Regional Parklands Plan*).

Local Government Area:

Darebin, Hume, Merri-bek, Whittlesea

Additional Stakeholders:

City of Yarra, Mitchell Shire, Developers, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, VicRoads, DELWP, MCMC

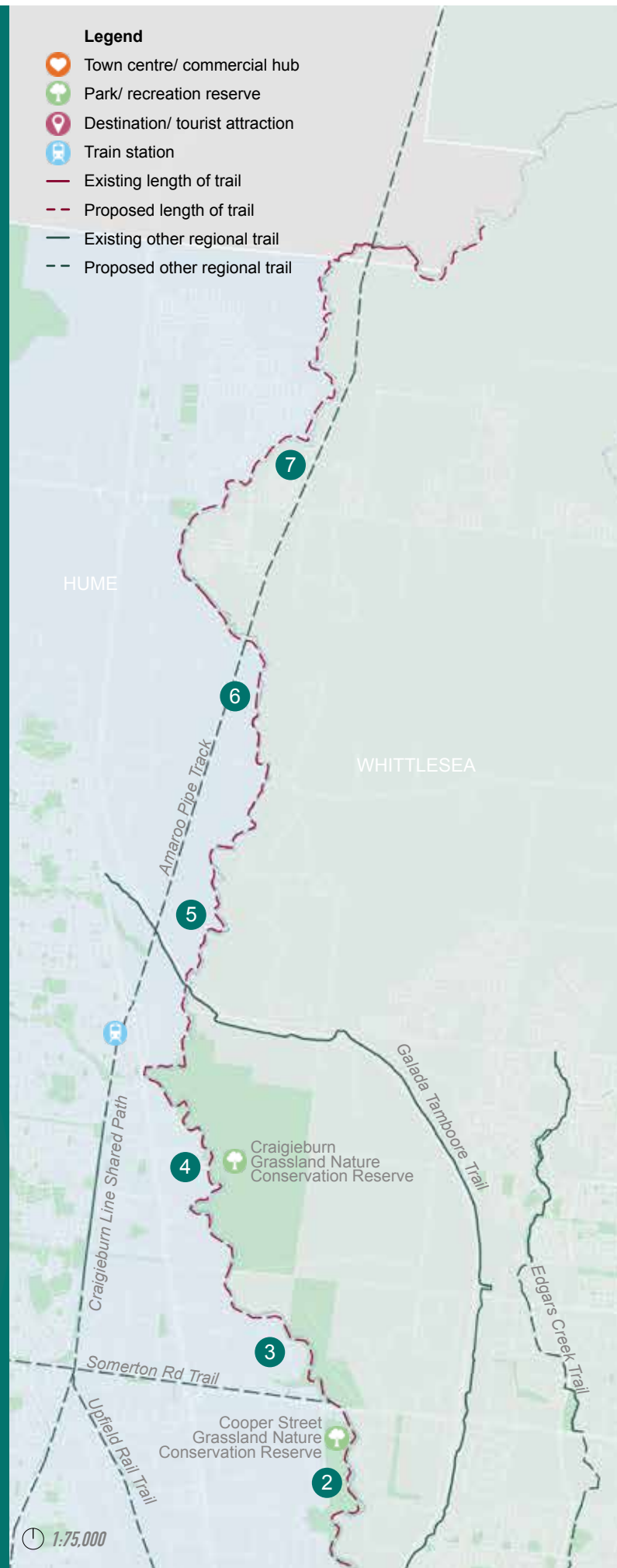
Auditor comments:

"An excellent off-road trail that serves both local and commuter cycle traffic and walkers, with fundamental continuity issues."

Notes:

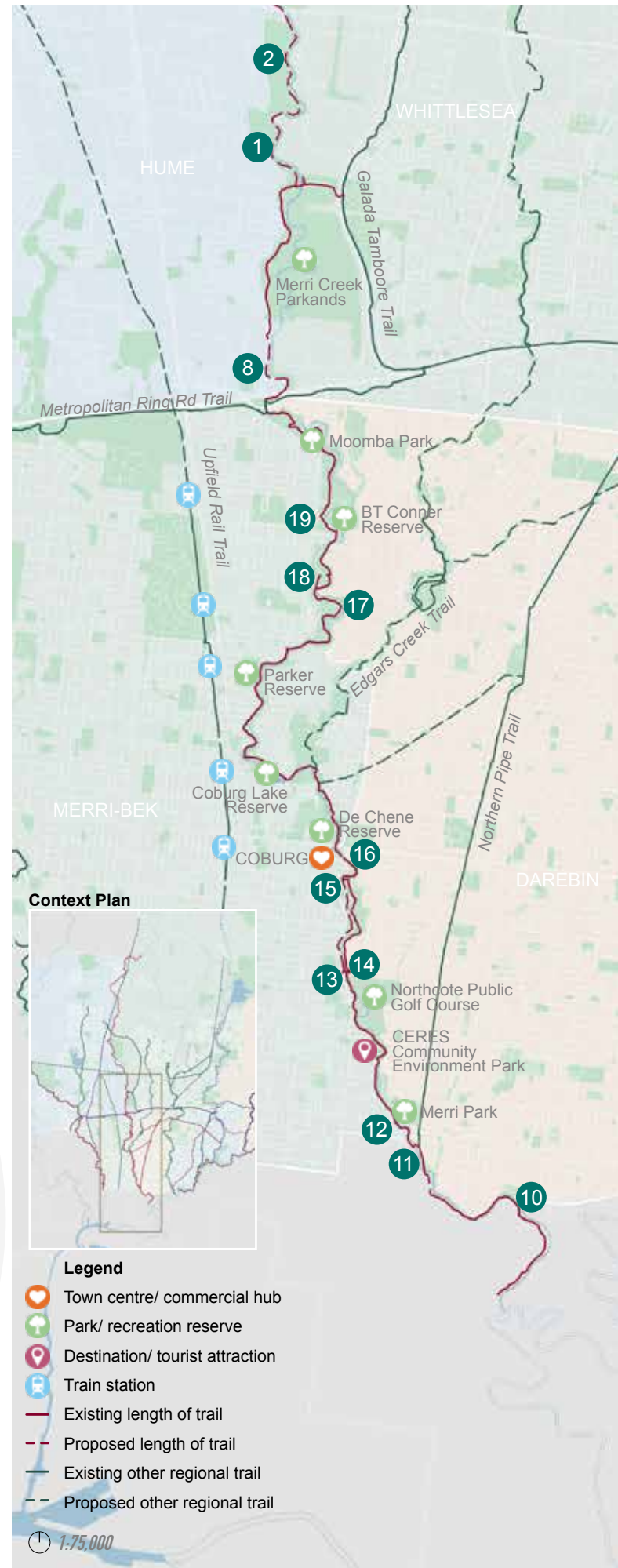
Whilst sitting outside the study area in the City of Yarra, it should be noted that an additional section of trail is required at Rushall Station to improve the continuity in this area.

Context Plan

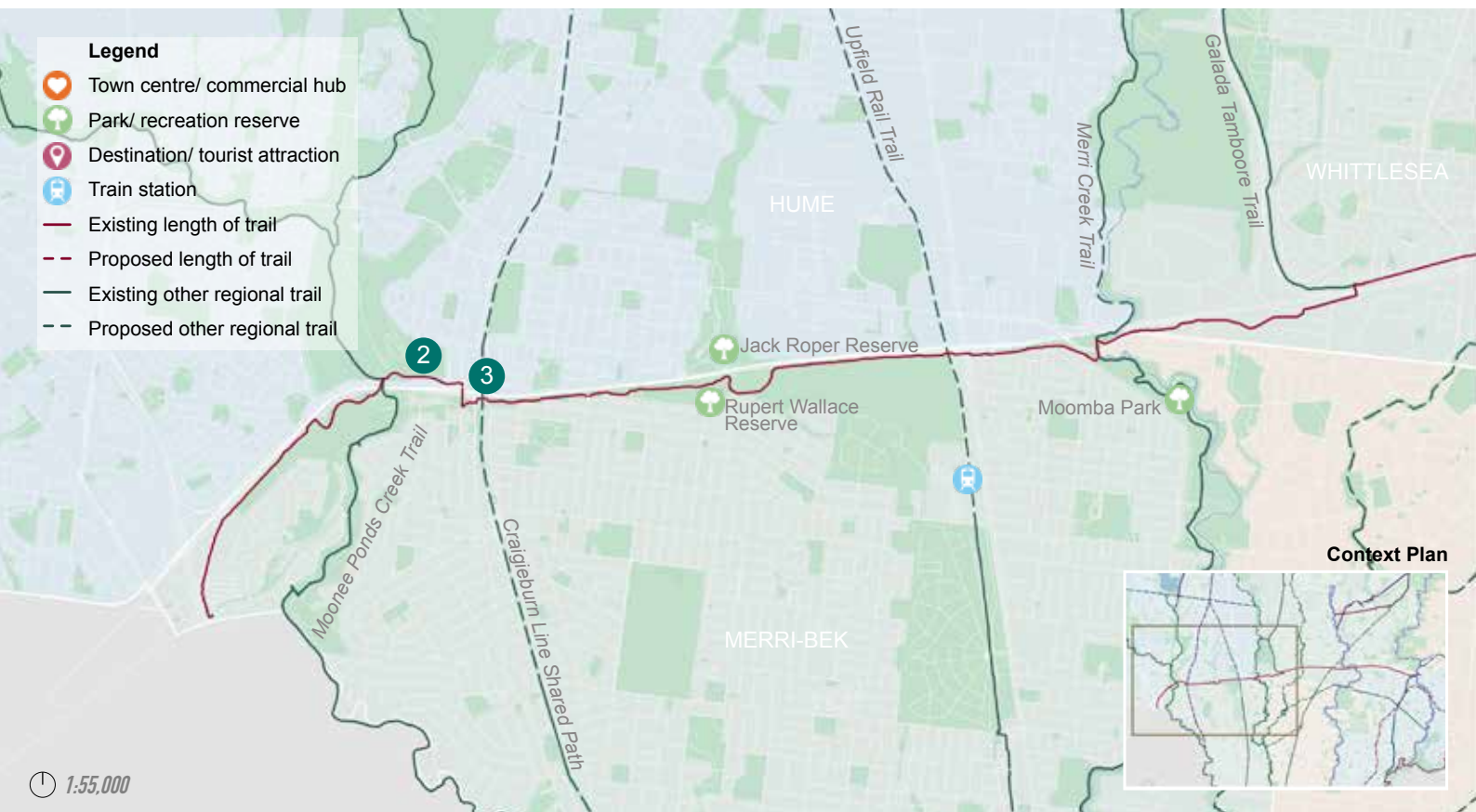


Priority Actions

- 1 Extend the Merri Creek Trail from the south end of Merri Concourse to Premier Drive
- 2 Partner with Parks Victoria and DELWP to extend the Merri Creek Trail from Merri Concourse (north) to Cooper Street
- 3 Advocate for and investigate the staged extension of the Merri Creek Trail from Coopers Street Somerton/Epping north to OHerns Road as part of the Upper Merri Creek Regional Parkland Plan
- 4 Advocate for and investigate the staged extension of the Merri Creek Trail from Oherns Road to Craigieburn Road as part of the Upper Merri Creek Regional Parkland Plan
- 5 Advocate for and investigate the extension of the Merri Creek Trail from Craigieburn Road to Summerhill Road as part of the Upper Merri Creek Regional Parkland Plan
- 6 Extend the Merri Creek Trail from Summerhill Road to Donnybrook Road
- 7 Extend the Merri Creek Trail from Donnybrook Road to the Northern End of Moxham Drive
- 8 Complete missing section of trail from the Metropolitan Ring Rd to existing section of trail south of Horne Street
- 9 Provide and upgrade line-marking to ensure continuous white lines indicating trail flow/ direction in high traffic areas
- 10 Realign section of trail south of Heidelberg Road to reduce steep grade
- 11 Provide a bridge crossing over the creek near the St Georges Road Bridge
- 12 Relocate and widen trail from Merri Creek Primary School to Sumner Park outside of the flood zone
- 13 Realign and widen trail north and south of Moreland Road
- 14 Modify existing bridge alongside Moreland Road vehicular bridge to better serve pedestrians and cyclists
- 15 Replace the Harding Street Bridge to cater for shared use
- 16 Widen and reduce the steepness of the boardwalk section of trail from Edna Grove to Bell Street and create a new connection at Bell Street
- 17 Widen and realign path outside of flood zone between Basil Nursing Home and Parker Reserve
- 18 Construct a new section of trail from Vervale Avenue to the bridge crossing to the north to provide an alternative route with a gentler grade
- 19 Provide wayfinding signage for Fawcner section of the Merri Creek (as per Moreland's Merri Creek Action Plan)
- 20 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail



6.18 METROPOLITAN RING ROAD TRAIL



Trail information

Length: 11.3km (extends beyond study area)
SCC: No

Location:

Following the Metropolitan Ring Road, this trail connects a number of regional trails as it runs east-west from Greensborough to Gowanbrae within the Northern Region. Beyond the study area, the trail extends further west to Altona North.

Local Government Area:

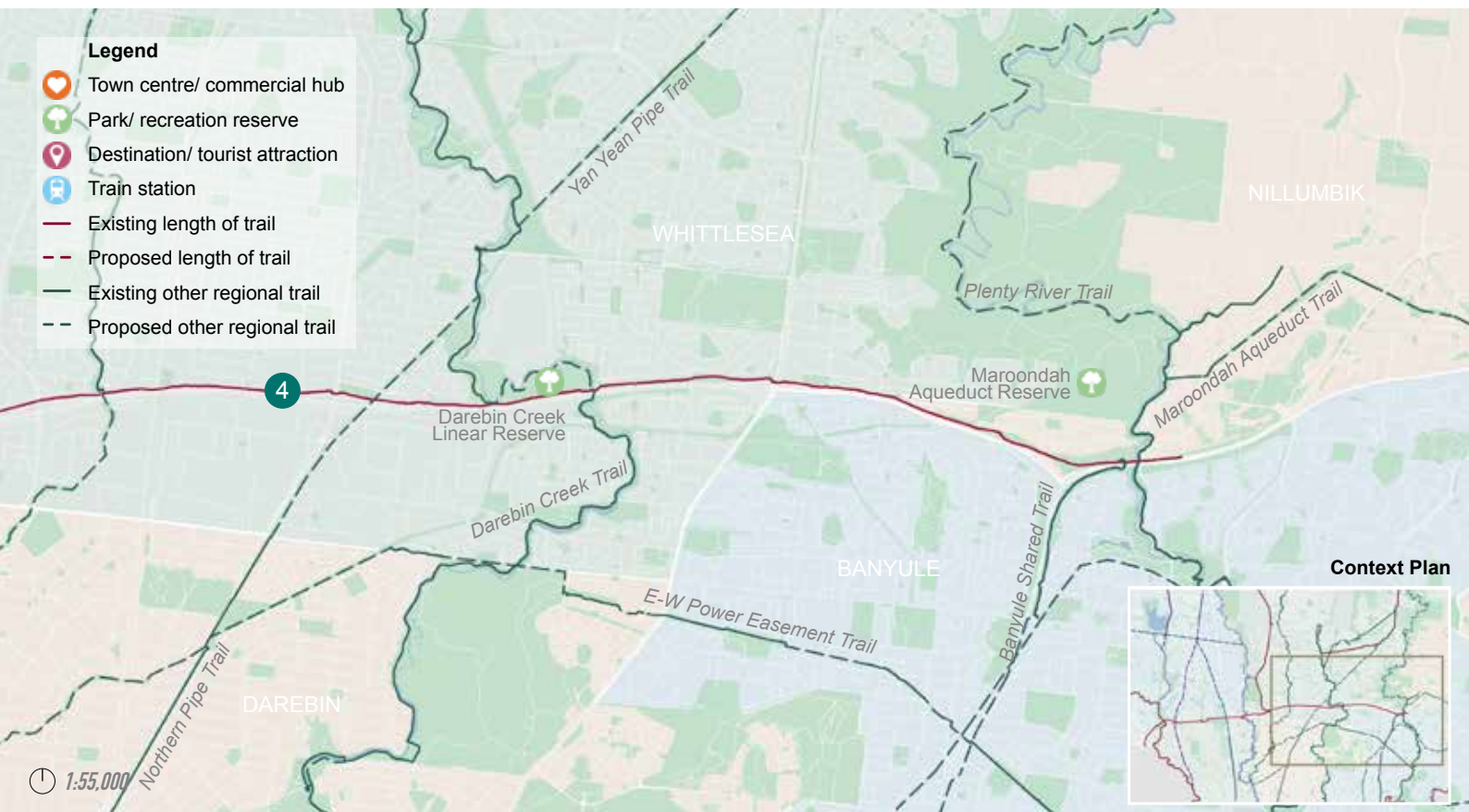
Banyule, Hume, Merri-bek, Nillumbik, Whittlesea

Additional Stakeholders:

Major Road Projects Victoria, Melbourne Water, Metro Trains, VicRoads, VicTrack

Auditor comments:

"A highly effective transportation/ commuting route with excellent capacity for direct passage east-west, where few or no alternatives are available"



Priority Actions

- 1 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail
- 2 Investigate the feasibility of realigning the section of trail east of the section of trail east of the Moonee Ponds Creek towards Jacana to reduce the incline
- 3 Advocate for an upgrade to the existing overpass at Jacana Station with wayfinding signage to improve connectivity and continuity
- 4 Upgrade section of trail between High Street and Dalton Road



6.19 MOONEE PONDS CREEK TRAIL

Trail information

Length: 29.8km (extends beyond study area)
SCC: Yes

Location:

The Moonee Ponds Creek Trail follows the creek corridor from Woodlands Historic Park in Greenvale, in the north, to Brunswick West in the south. The trail extends beyond the study area in the south to Docklands.

Local Government Area:

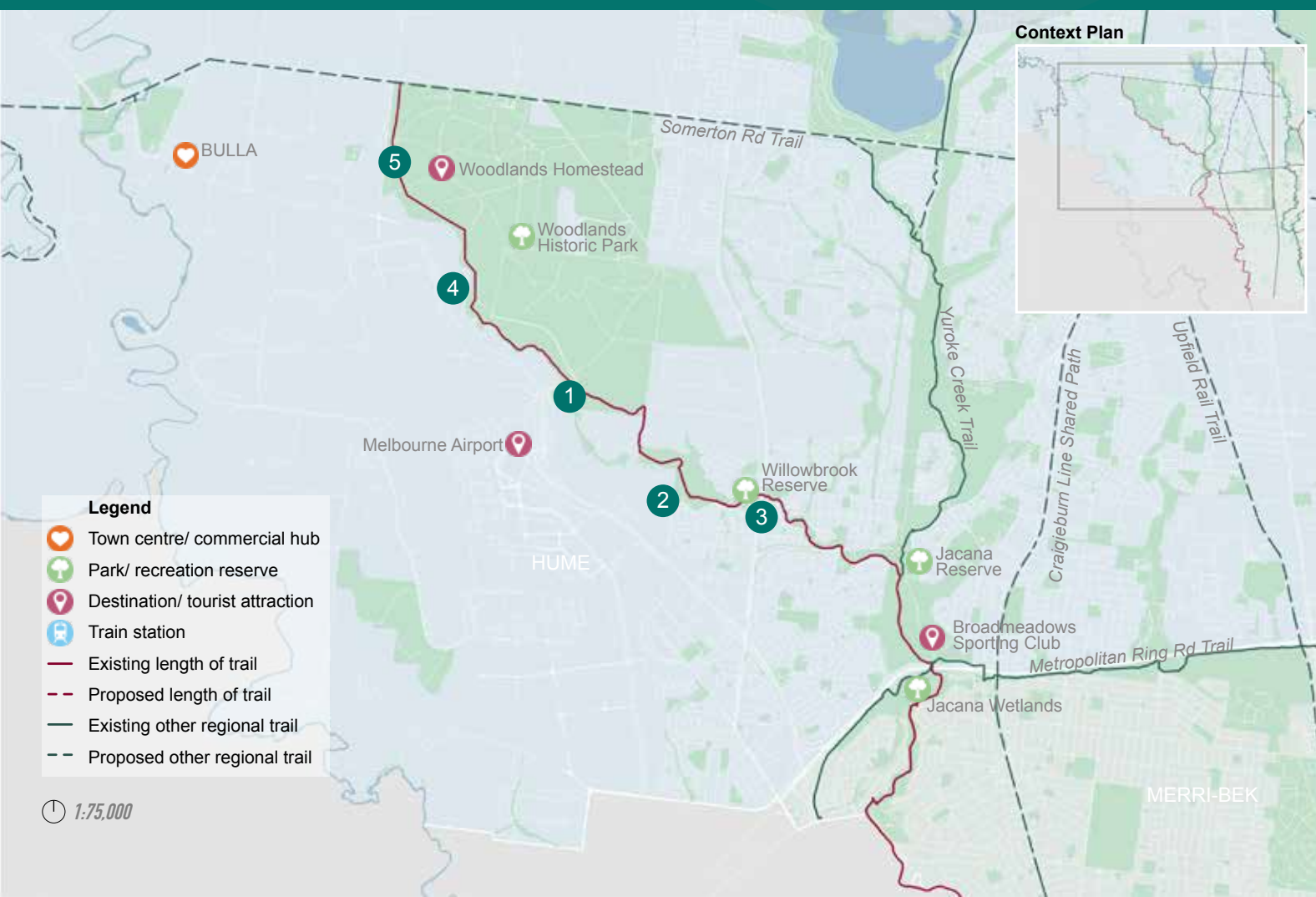
Hume, Merri-bek

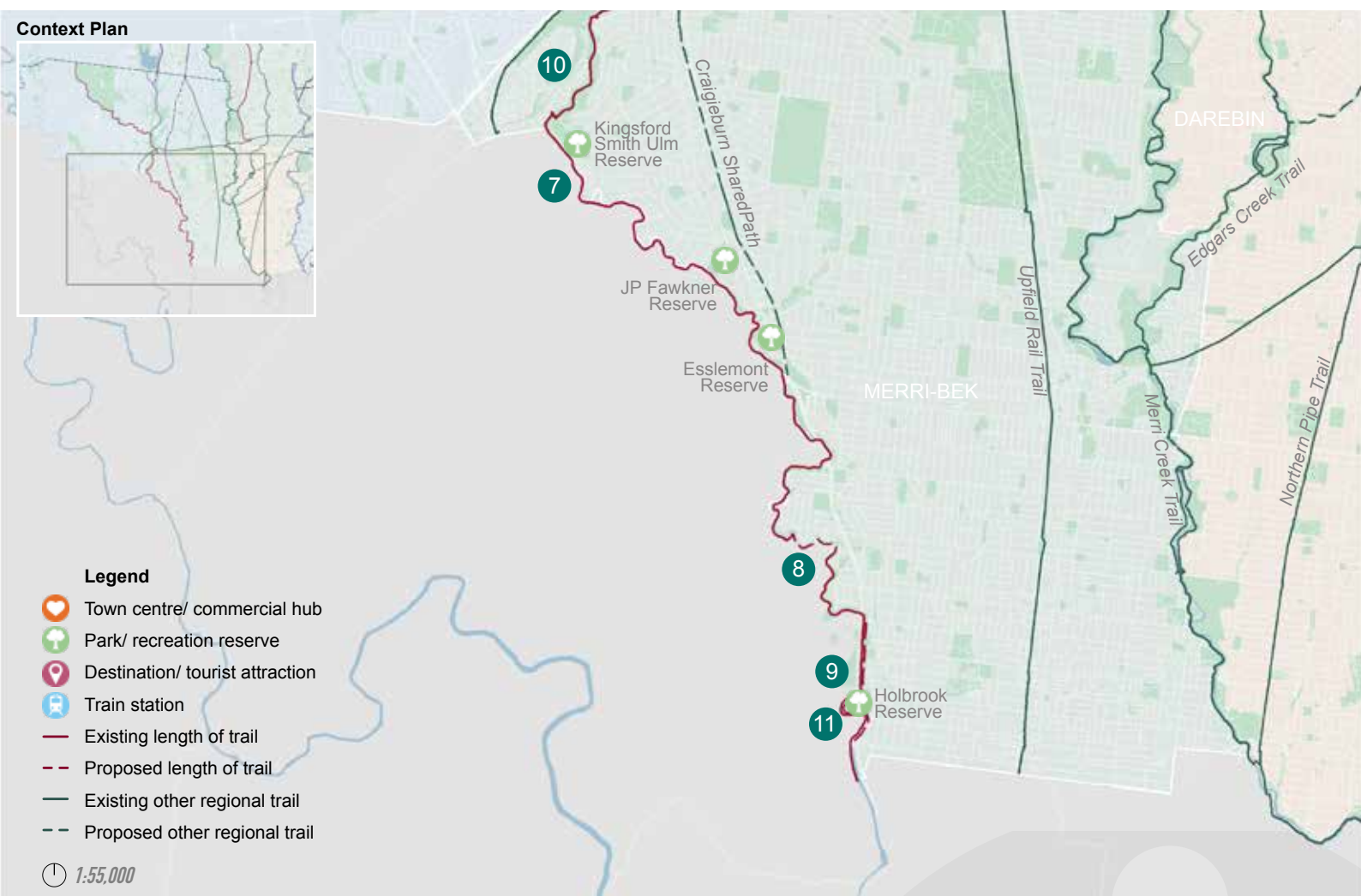
Additional Stakeholders:

Crown Land, Melbourne Airport, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, Private landowners, The City of Moonee Valley, VicRoads

Auditor comments:

"A super-highway from the NE fringes of the CBD offering excellent commuter and intra urban off-road cycling options and potentially a wonderful mode of accessing Woodlands Historic Park."





Priority Actions

- 1 Create a trail head at northern end of the trail at Marker Road ensuring alignment is outside federal airport boundary to avoid land access issues
- 2 Upgrade surface and width of trail from Marker Road to and around Willowbrook Reserve to regional trail standard
- 3 Upgrade surface and width of trail from Willowbrook Reserve to Westmeadows Reserve to regional trail standard
- 4 Construct a new section of trail from Marker Road to Living Legends/ Woodlands Historic Park
- 5 Upgrade existing trail from Living Legends/ Woodlands Historic connecting to Somerton Road Woodlands entrance
- 6 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail include at crossing points, connections to other trails and where appropriate to direct users to optimal trail route where alternatives occur
- 7 Upgrade surface of trail from the rail line south to the Essendon Baseball Club
- 8 Construct section of new trail between Primrose Street and Vanberg Road (within Moonee Valley)
- 9 Upgrade trail surface from Boeing Reserve, Strathmore, to Brunswick Road to improve safety and cross grade
- 10 Resurface trail connection from Gladstone Park down the hill to main trail
- 11 Construct a new section of trail from Union Street to the Hope Street pedestrian bridge. Consider a new bridge using former off ramp to Denzil Don Reserve to Victoria St as an alternative if required

6.20 NORTHERN PIPE/ ST GEORGES RD/ CHEDDAR RD TRAIL

Trail information

Length: 14.1km
SCC: Partial (south of Reservoir Station)

Location:

This trail runs relatively north-south through Darebin from Northcote to Thomastown. An additional section of trail is proposed along a series of linear reserves in Preston to connect the trail to Coburg and the Merri Creek and Edgars Creek Trails.

Local Government Area:

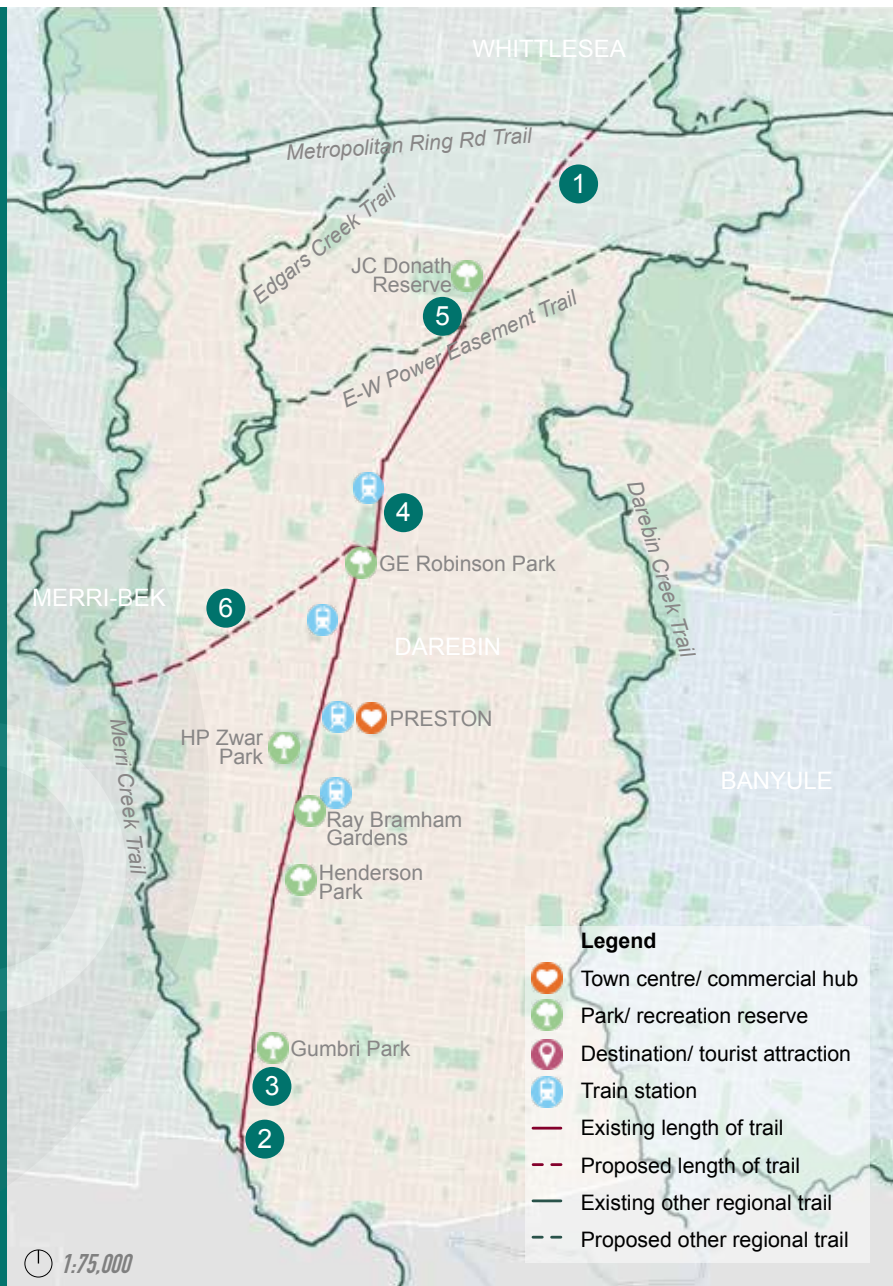
Darebin, Merri-bek and Whittlesea

Additional Stakeholders:

Melbourne Water, Metro Trains, VicRoads, VicTrack

Auditor comments:

"A highly effective commuting corridor with inherent issues where cyclists interact with traffic, and access impediments mar an otherwise excellent urban thoroughfare."



Priority Actions

- 1 Extend the Northern Pipe/ St Georges Rd/ Cheddar Road Trail north to the Metropolitan Ring Road
- 2 Improve access at the St Georges Rd/Merri Parade/ Charles St intersection to connect the Merri Creek Trail to the Northern Pipe Trail and create a direct access point to and from the trail with pedestrian and cyclist priority
- 3 Widen and resurface the section of trail between Clarke Street and Arthurton Road to align with newly constructed sections of trail
- 4 Advocate for trail alignment alongside the train line from Garden Street to Cheddar Road to replace section of trail on the footpath
- 5 Widen trail surface in the Cheddar Road central median from High Street to Hickford Street
- 6 Investigate a new section of trail from High Street (near the Melbourne Water Reservoirs) along the vacant pipe reserve to the Merri Creek Trail at Murray Road. Existing road crossings to be considered

6.21 PLENTY RIVER TRAIL

Trail information

Length: 43.5km
SCC: No

Location:

Following the creek corridor, the Plenty River Trails begins at the Yarra Trail in Viewbank and continues north to Greensborough. The trail is then proposed to extend further to the Township of Whittlesea.

Note: Indicative trail alignment only. Refer to Parks Victoria's Plenty Gorge River Trail design

Local Government Area:

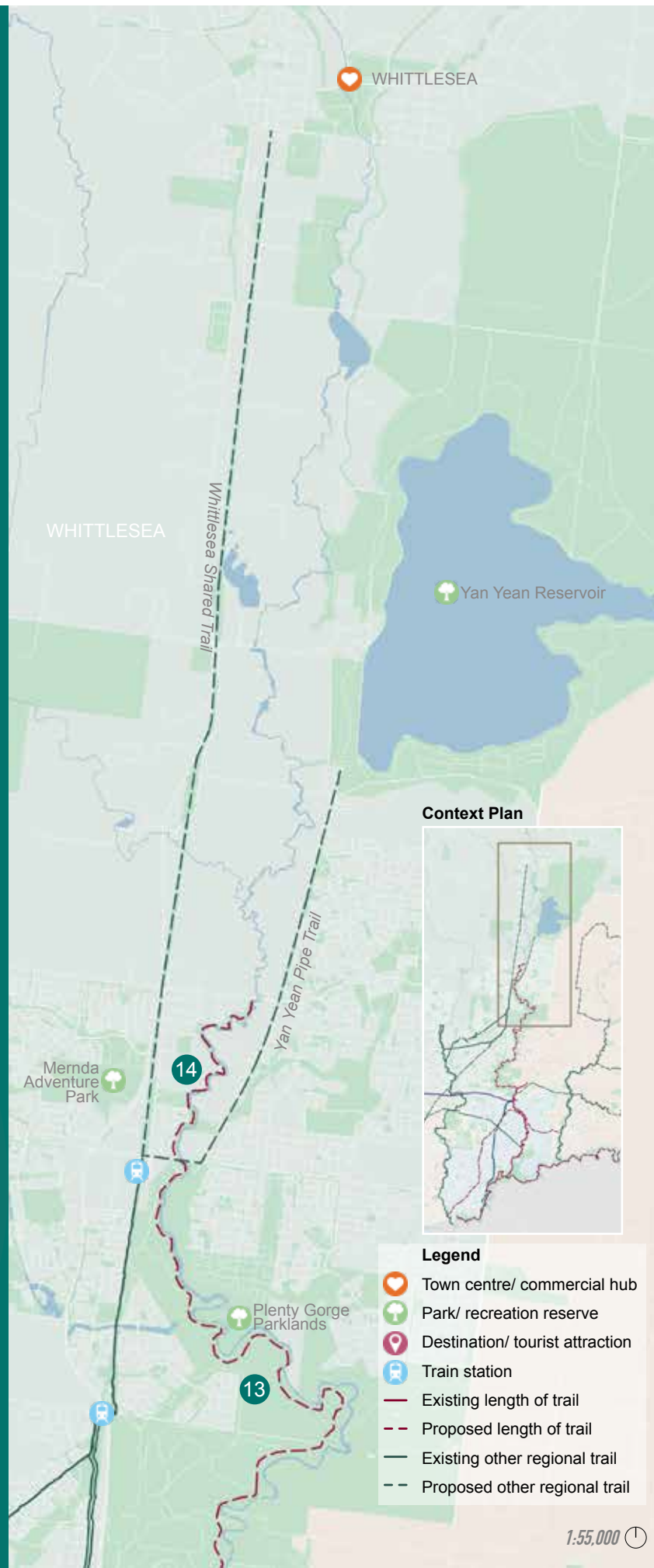
Banyule, Nillumbik, Whittlesea

Additional Stakeholders:

Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, VicRoads

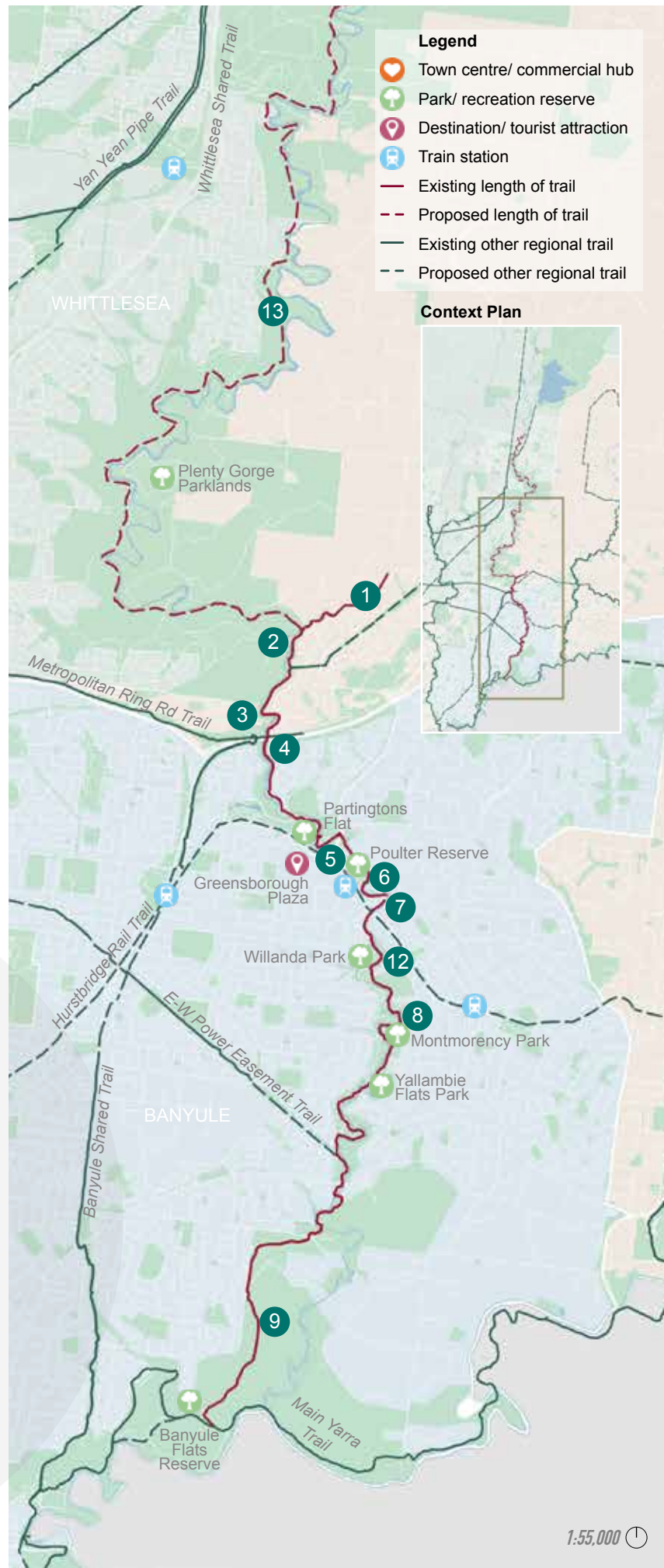
Auditor comments:

"A mostly very scenic trail through urban bushland with quite good flow and continuity, marred mainly by far too much variability in surface quality and width; lacks consistency"

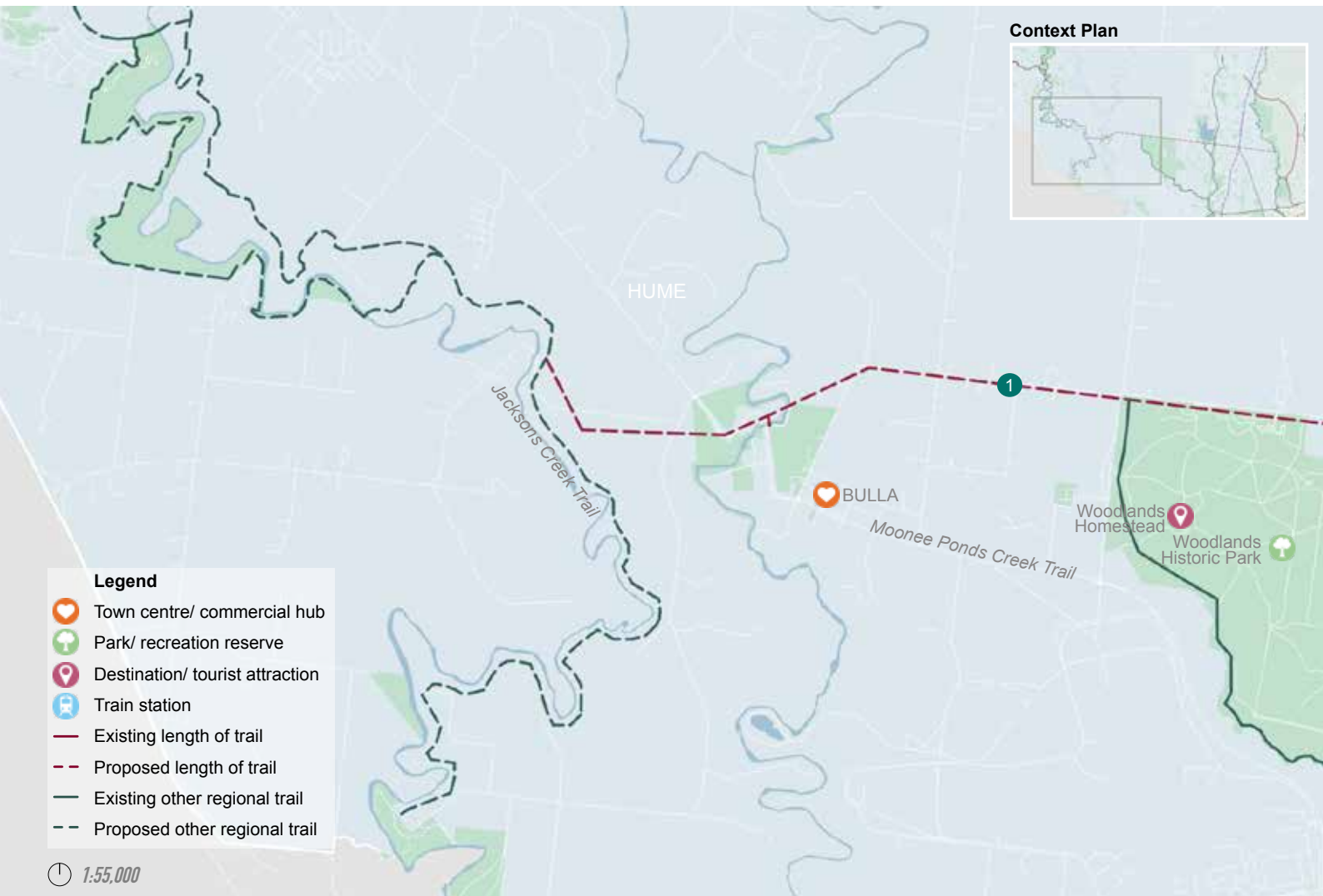


Priority Actions

- 1 Extend trail east to Mclaughlans Lane
- 2 Upgrade and widen section of trail from Punkerri Circuit to Booyan Crescent
- 3 Realign section of trail to reduce grade and provide an underpass at Booyan Crescent
- 4 Widen section of trail under the Greensborough Bypass
- 5 Upgrade and widen section of trail at Main Street
- 6 Improve wayfinding signage at Poulter Reserve to direct users to the wider trail network west of the reserve
- 7 Construct a new section of trail at Bicton Street
- 8 Upgrade and widen section of trail with wayfinding signage at Montmorency Park
- 9 Upgrade surface and realign trail to reduce grade south of Old Lower Plenty Road and through Banyule Flats
- 10 Improve wayfinding signage along the length of the trail
- 11 Upgrade pedestrian bridges on the Plenty River Trail where required and improve sight lines where appropriate
- 12 Investigate the feasibility of realigning the Plenty River Trail to the eastern bank of the Plenty River between George Court and Para Road in order to avoid the steep grade on the west bank
- 13 Construct a new section of trail along the creek through The Plenty Gorge Parklands to Bridge Inn Road. Support the proposal for a bridge connection from South Morang to Hawkestone picnic area to Yarrambat Park
- 14 Extend the trail from Bridge Inn Road north to Hazel Glen Drive



6.22 SOMERTON ROAD TRAIL



Trail information

Length: 17.8km
SCC: Yes

Location:

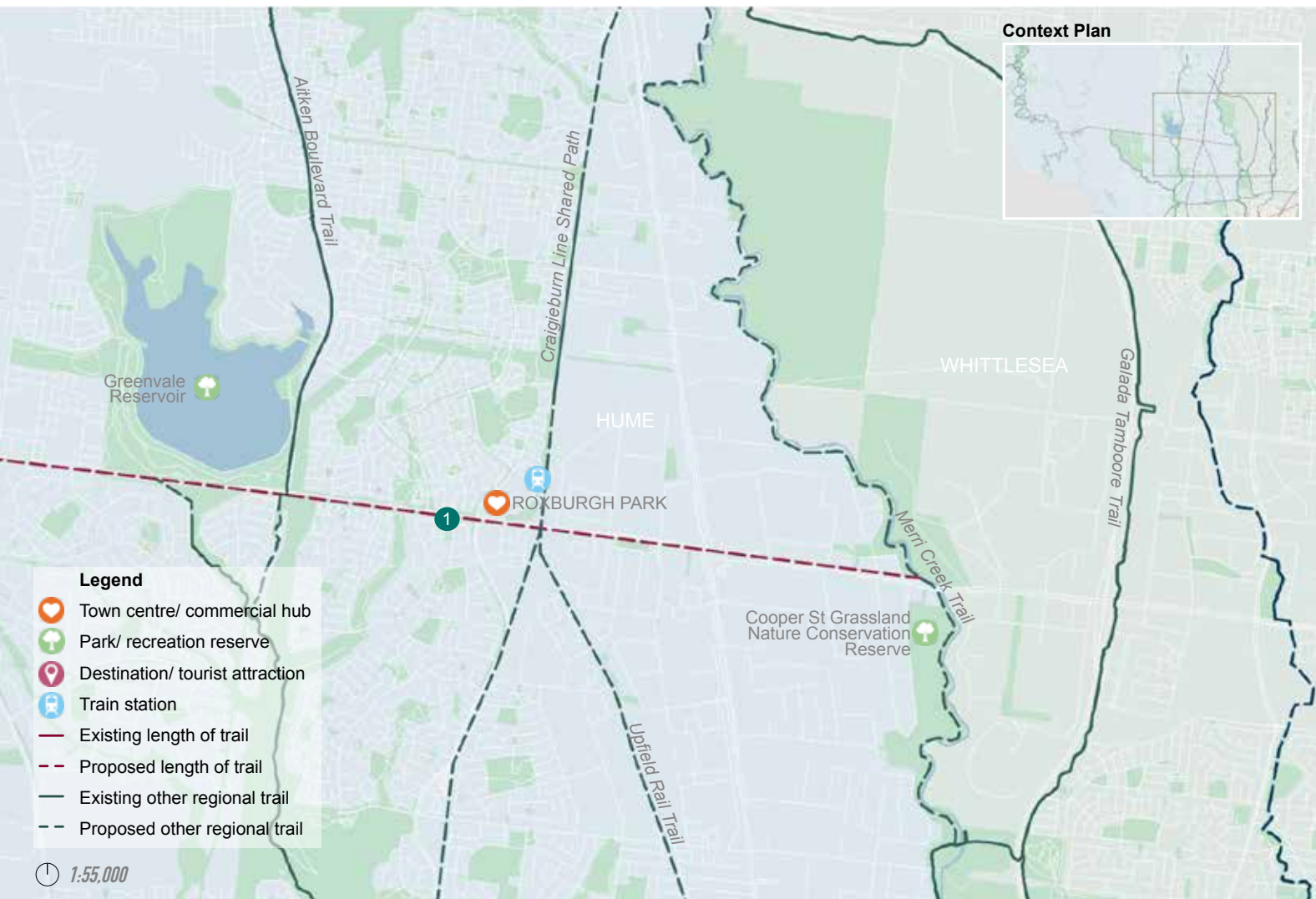
This potential future trail is proposed to run along Somerton Road in Greenvale connecting the Jacksons Creek Trail in the west and the Merri Creek Trail in the east.

Local Government Area:

Hume

Additional Stakeholders:

Major Road Projects Victoria, Parks Victoria



Priority Actions

- 1 Advocate for the construction of a new trail along Somerton Road from Jacksons Creek to the Merri Creek Trail



6.23 UPFIELD RAIL TRAIL

Trail information

Length: 11.6 (extends beyond study area)
SCC: Yes

Location:
 This trail follows the Upfield rail line from Brunswick to Fawcner with a proposed extension to Roxburgh Park.

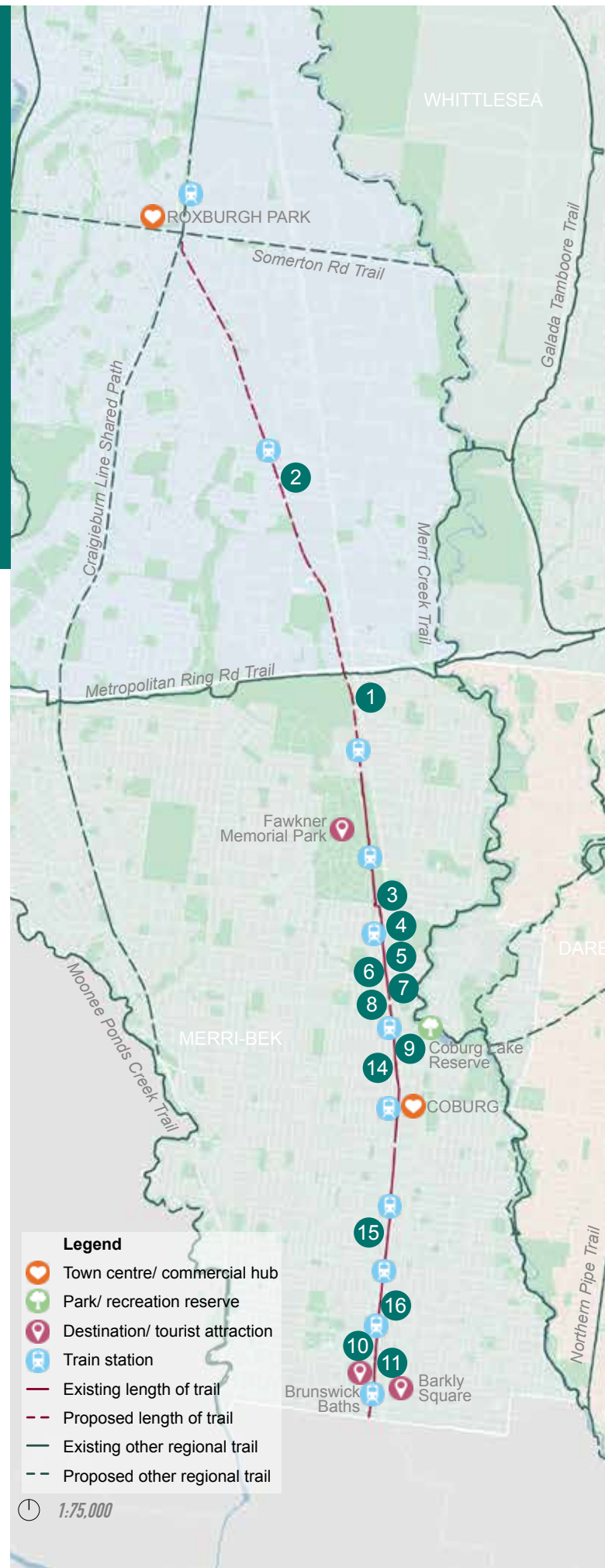
Local Government Area:
 Merri-bek and Hume

Additional Stakeholders:
 Department of Transport, Metro Trains, VicRoads, VicTrack

Auditor comments:
 “A potential cycling ‘super highway’ with enormous scope as the major north-south corridor through the densely populated suburbs from the inner north.”

Priority Actions

- 1 Construct new section of trail from Box Forest Road north to Metropolitan Ring Road
- 2 Advocate to Dept. of Transport to construct a new section of trail from the Metropolitan Ring Road to Somerton Road
- 3 Create a signalised pedestrian crossing over Boundary Rd
- 4 Construct an off-road shared path along Bain Avenue
- 5 Widen section of trail between Plaisted St and Shorts Rd
- 6 Construct an off-road shared path along Ararat Avenue
- 7 Provide a signalised/ pedestrian priority crossing over Bakers Rd
- 8 Construct an off-road shared path along Renown St
- 9 Construct an off-road shared path along Batman Avenue
- 10 Upgrade and widen trail from Victoria St to Jewell Station
- 11 Provide a signalised/ pedestrian priority crossing over Albert St
- 12 Consider long term feasibility of separated cycle path between Park St and Tinning St
- 13 Create a signalised pedestrian crossing over Box Forest Rd
- 14 Create a signalised pedestrian crossing over O’Hea St
- 15 Create a signalised pedestrian crossing over Albion St
- 16 Create a signalised pedestrian crossing over Victoria St



6.24 WHITTLESEA SHARED TRAIL

Trail information

Length: 13.5km
 SCC: Yes

Location:

This trail connects Epping Station in the south west to Mernda Station. The trail is then proposed to continue to Whittlesea.

Local Government Area:

Whittlesea

Additional Stakeholders:

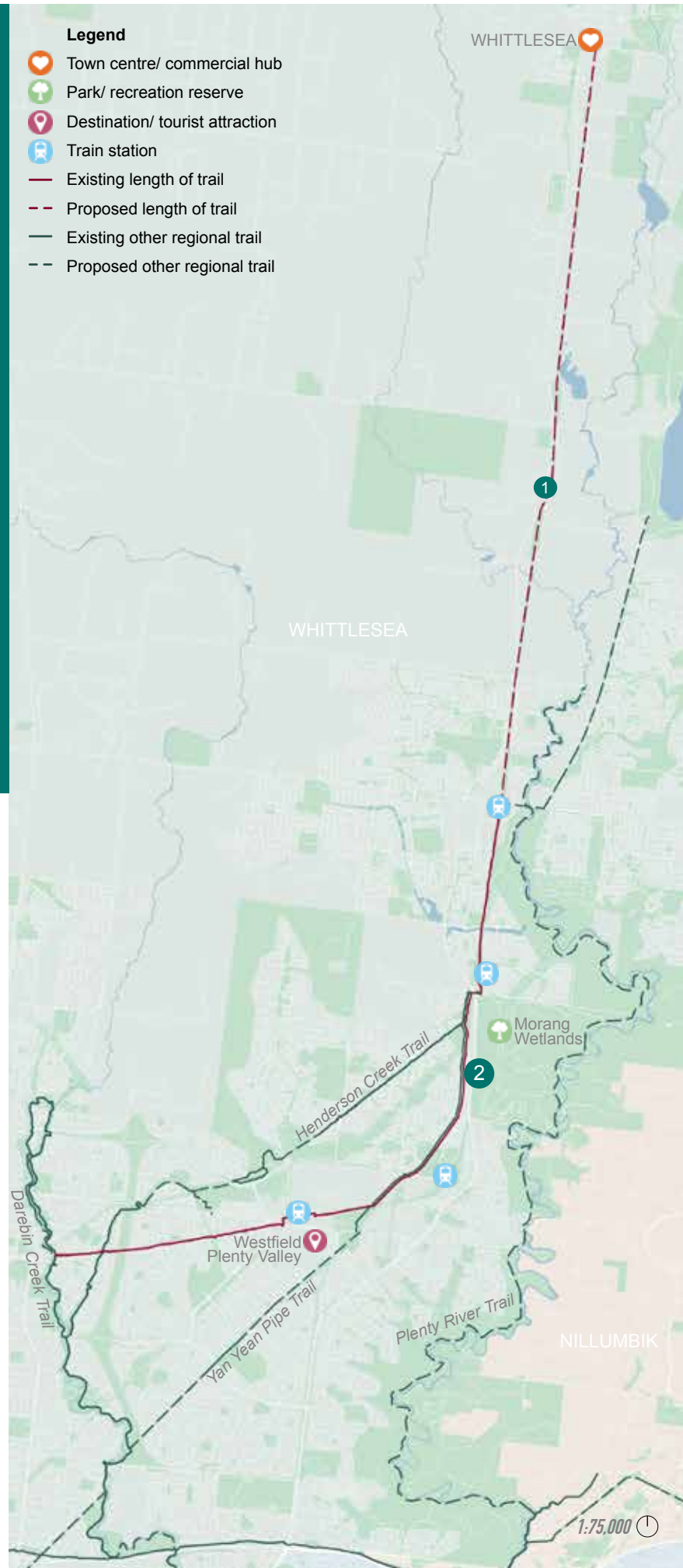
Metro Trains, VicRoads, VicTrack

Auditor comments:

"A fundamentally excellent trail that would only benefit further with a bit more thought regarding flow and continuity at a couple of points."

Priority Actions

- 1 Construct a new trail from Mernda Station to Whittlesea. Ensure there is provision for horse riders on parts of the trail
- 2 Provide a pedestrian priority crossing on the Pipe Track at the Lakes Boulevard
- 3 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail



6.25 YAN YEAN PIPE TRACK

Trail information

Length: 13.5km SCC: No

Location:

The Yan Yean Trail begins at the Metropolitan Ring Road Trail in the south and continues in a north-east direction where it meets the Whittlesea Rail Trail. The Trail then continues from Mernda Station to the Yan Yean Reservoir.

Local Government Area:
Whittlesea

Additional Stakeholders:

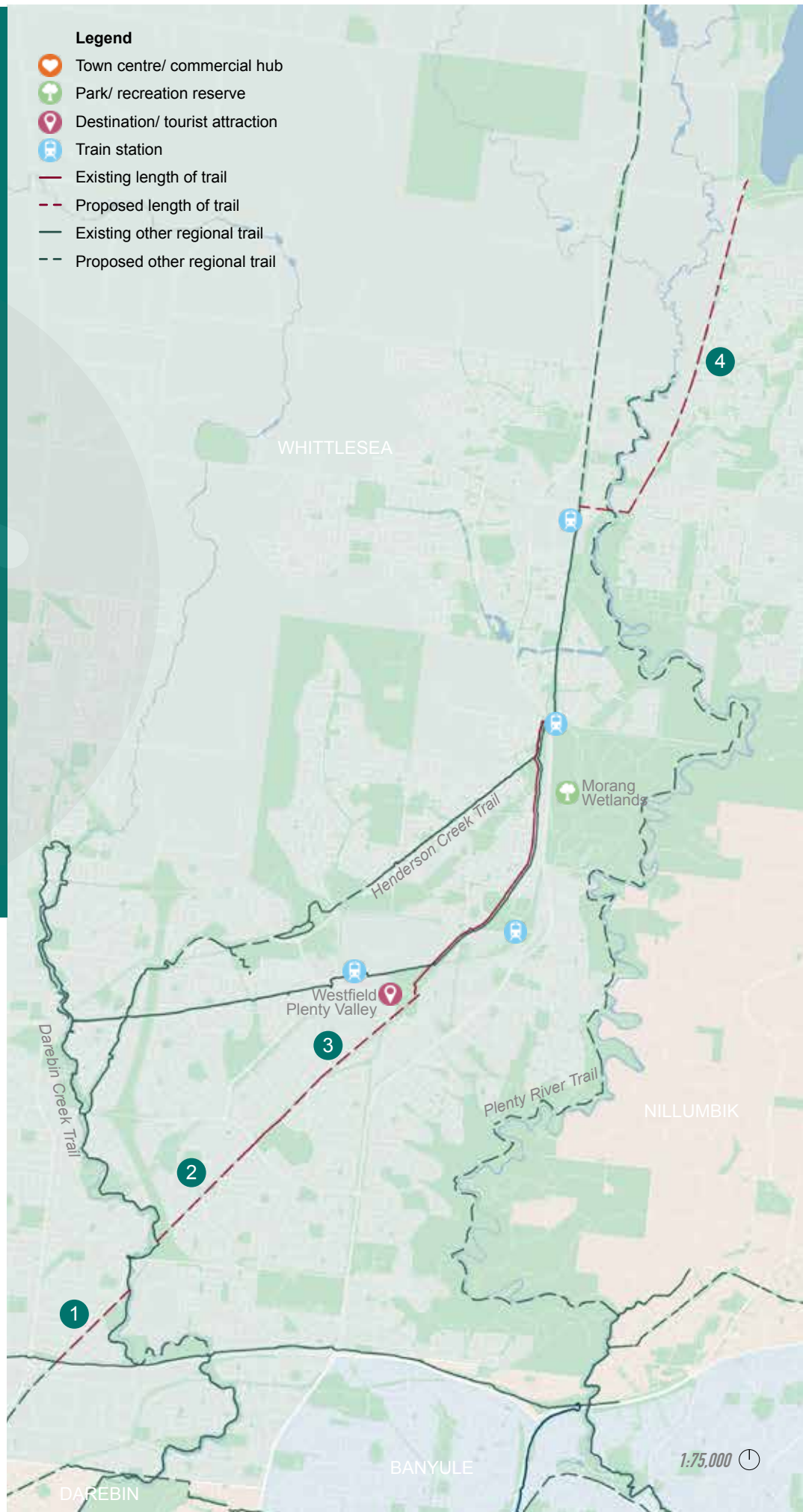
-

Auditor comments:

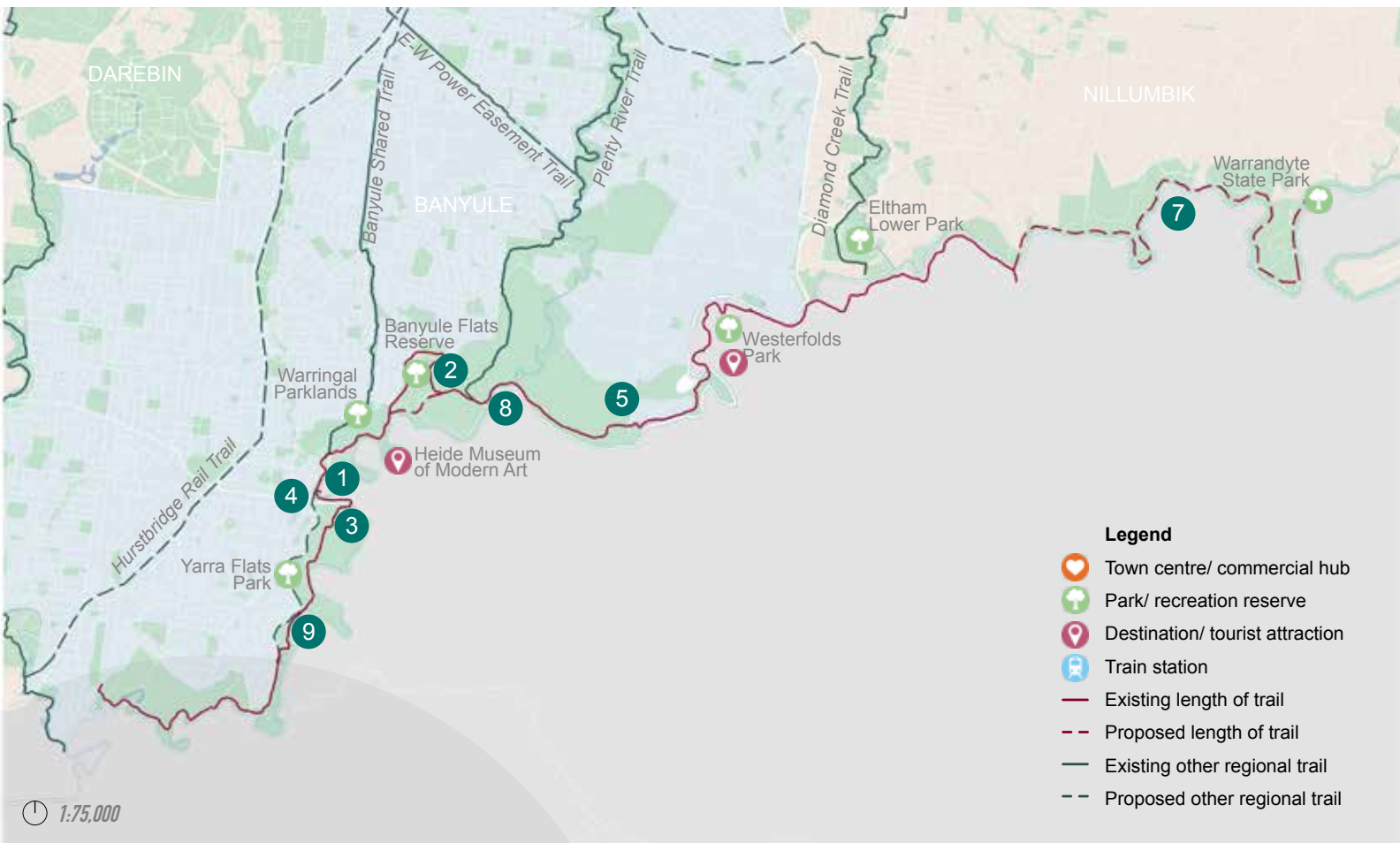
-

Priority Actions

- 1 Construct a new section of trail from The Metropolitan Ring Road Trail and the Northern Pipe/ Cheddar Road Trail to the Darebin Creek Trail
- 2 Construct a new section of trail from the Darebin Creek Trail to Childs Road
- 3 Construct a new section of trail from Childs Road to McDonalds Road and the Plenty Valley Activity Centre
- 4 Construct a new section of trail from Bridge Inn Road to the Yan Yean Reservoir and creating a connection to the Plenty River Trail



6.26 MAIN YARRA TRAIL



Trail information

Length: 26.5km (extends beyond study area)
SCC: Partial

Location:
 Following the Yarra River, the Yarra Trail within the northern region begins in Alphington in the west and is proposed to continue to Warrandyte in the east.

Local Government Area:
 Banyule, Nillumbik

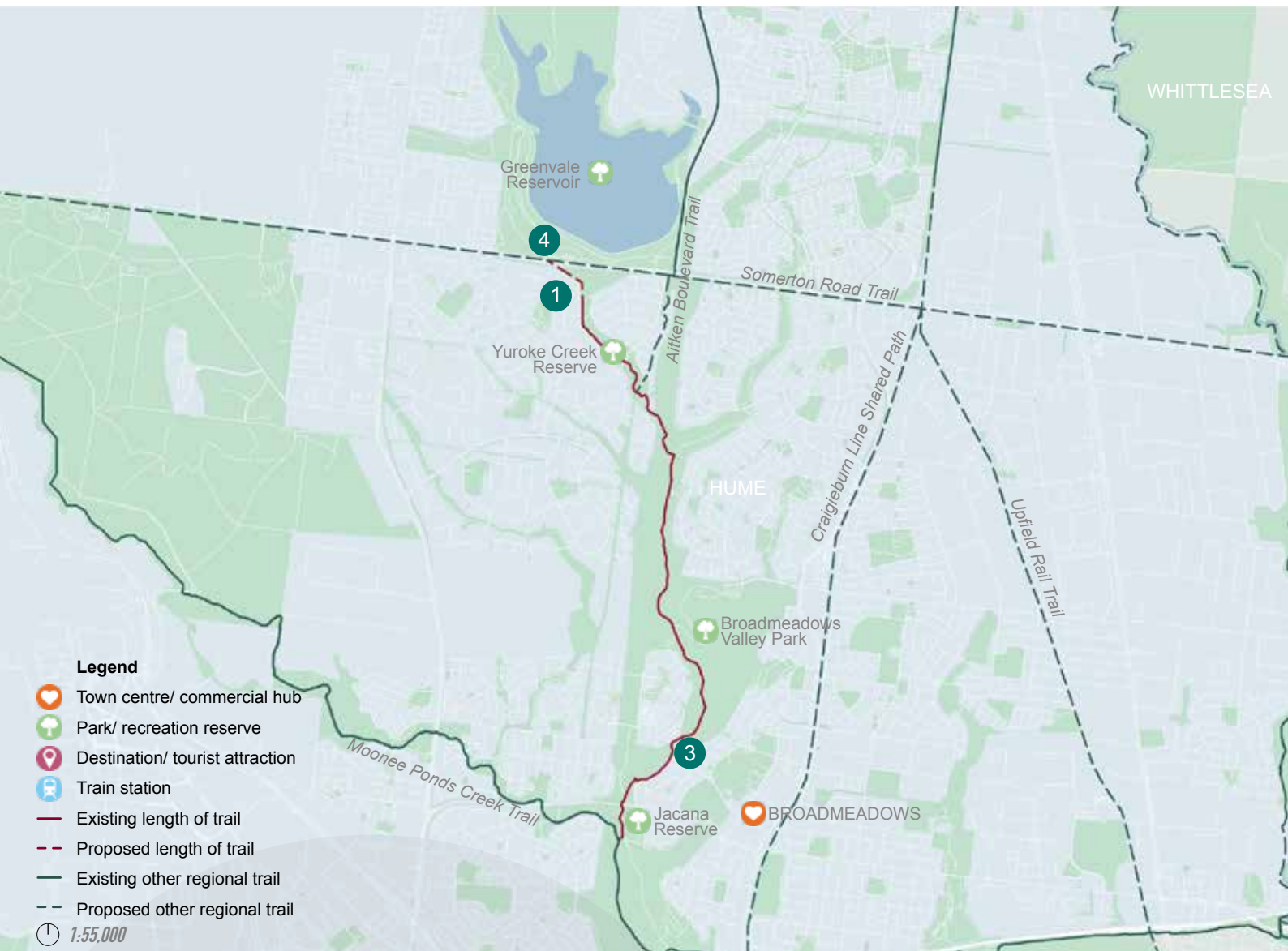
Additional Stakeholders:
 City of Boroondara, City of Manningham, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria

Auditor comments:
 "A long, flowing trail through some beautiful riverland countryside, with a combination of surfaces and levels of quality (concrete, gravel, bitumen) that would benefit greatly from an extension to Warrandyte and beyond."

Priority Actions

- 1 Construct a bridge crossing over the Yarra River to Banksia Park at the eastern end of Yarra Street, Heidelberg
- 2 Undertake improvements to the Main Yarra Trail at Banyule Flats
- 3 Realign the section of trail at the Banksia Street underpass to create a gentler grade and wider trail surface
- 4 Upgrade surface and width of existing trail from Banksia Street to Yarra Street
- 5 Upgrade surface and width of existing trail from junction with Plenty River Trail to Fitzsimons Lane Reserve
- 6 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail
- 7 Construct shared use trail from the Mullum Mullum Creek Trail to the Warrandyte State Park
- 8 Construct a bridge crossing over the Yarra River to Birrarung Park
- 9 Construct a bridge crossing over the Yarra River to Bulleen Park

6.27 YUROKE CREEK TRAIL



Trail information

Length:
6.5km

SCC:
Partial

Location:

The Yuroke Creek Trail runs along the creek corridor from Broadmeadows to Greenvale through the Broadmeadows Valley Park

Local Government Area:
Hume

Additional Stakeholders:

Major Road Projects Victoria, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, VicRoads

Auditor comments:

"A pleasant and meandering trail of adequate width quality, with good access at the southern end from Moonee Ponds Creek Trail, that could be improved with signage and a safe northern access point."

Priority Actions

- 1 Partner with Melbourne Water and MRPV to plan and construct new section of trail along the Melbourne Water Pipe Track from Greenvale Reservoir Park south to the existing section of the Yuroke Creek Trail, including a safe crossing option for Somerton Road
- 2 Provide wayfinding signage along the length of the trail
- 3 Investigate the provision of a pedestrian priority crossing at Dimboola Road, remove bicycle chicanes from either side and improve the path intersection treatment
- 4 Provide a pedestrian priority crossing at Somerton Road to connect trail to Greenvale Reservoir
- 5 Undertake a staged upgrade of the trail to a regional standard width with linemarking