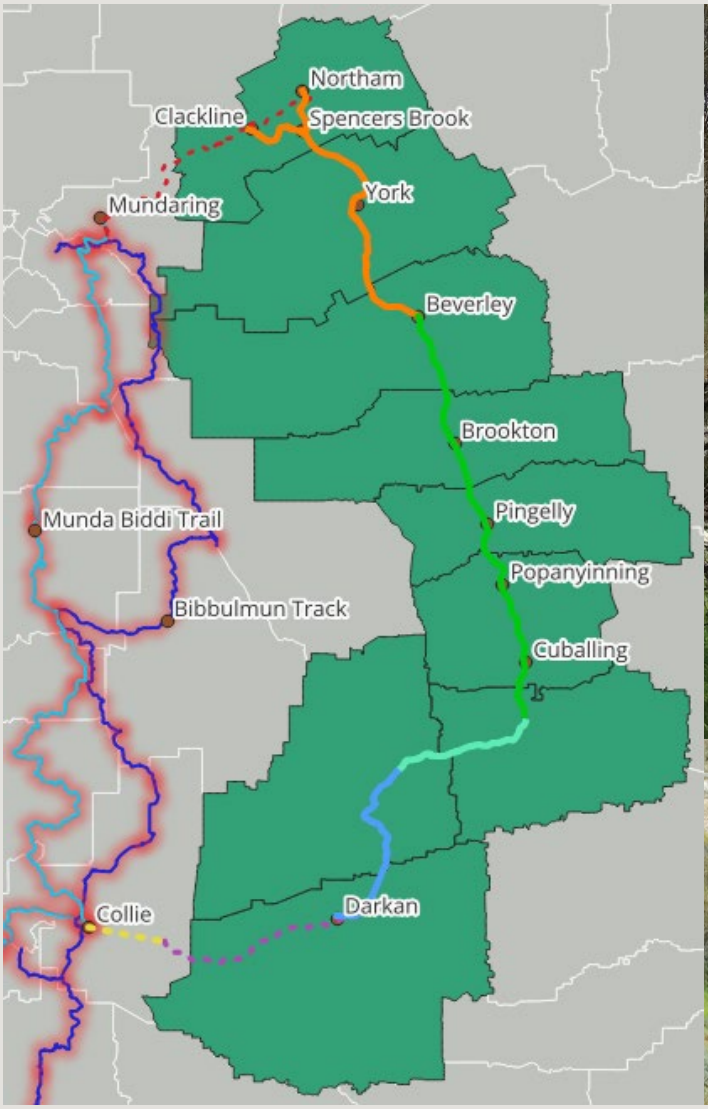
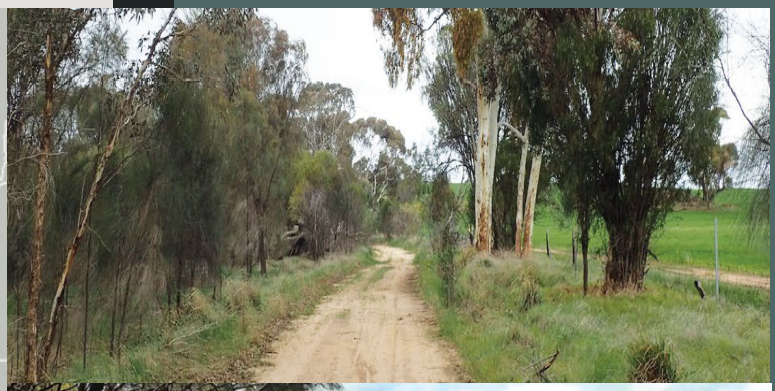
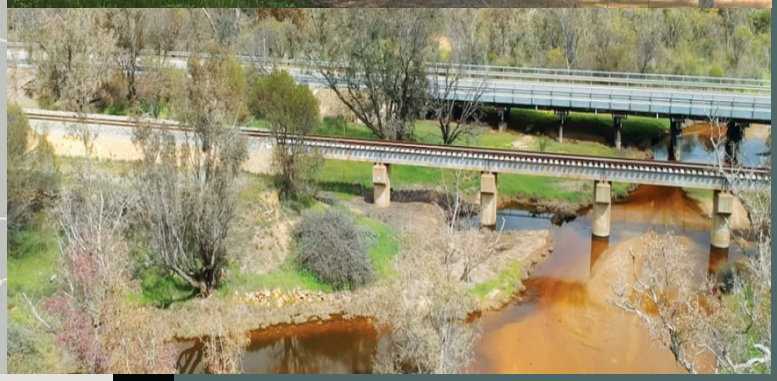
2026

Wheatbelt Rail Trail







Gemma Bassett

Broadview Consult Pty Ltd.

May 2026

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Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

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Report Version Control

Report Name	Version	Date Submitted	Author
Wheatbelt Rail Trail	V0 Draft	23rd March 2026	Gemma Bassett
Wheatbelt Rail Trail	V1 Final	11th April 2026	Gemma Bassett
Wheatbelt Rail Trail	V2 Final	15th May 2026	Gemma Bassett

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

1 Executive Summary

This report presents a clear, forward-looking strategy to progress a connected Wheatbelt Rail Trail Network, consolidating the findings of four studies completed across 2008 to 2025, and translating them into a unified investment pathway.

The Vision, 'To create a connected loop trail from and to Perth through the Wheatbelt and South West, delivering regional and metropolitan benefits.'

The evidence across the studies is consistent, the Wheatbelt network represents a high-value, manageable opportunity to create a region defining tourism and active transport asset. The Beverley–Narrogin corridor is identified as the network backbone, proposed Stage 1, connecting the strongest trail towns and enabling staged expansion to Narrogin–Williams, Darkan–Williams, Collie Connection and York-Northam.

The project aligns strongly with multiple State strategies, frameworks and priorities for regional development, active transport, tourism and community wellbeing.

Indicative estimates show Stage 1, Beverley–Narrogin, at approximately $9.5M CAPEX and ~$0.26M OPEX per year. The full connected Wheatbelt Rail Trail, linking to the South West, is estimated at ~ $22.6M CAPEX and ~$.68M annual OPEX. If ARC[1] maintenance trails were accessible, Stage 1 costs may reduce by up to ~$6.8M CAPEX. By adding new regional loops, the Wheatbelt Rail Trail strengthens the Kep Track, Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Trail and boosting visitation. A 10% usage uplift is estimated to deliver ~$6.7M per year.

To progress the project, this report recommends a staged, coordinated approach:

- **Phase 1 Establish Foundations -** Build unified cross-shire support, establish governance and program resourcing, and address early risks. Develop the ARC access case and create a consistent trail brand to position the project for coordinated progress.
- **Phase 2 Build the Investment Case -** Prepare a decision-ready funding package for targeted ministers, advance ARC access through a unified shire position, consolidate risks, and define the long-term network vision. Develop a staged funding pipeline aligned to State processes and investment pathways.
- **Phase 3 Build the Delivery Pipeline -** Coordinate engagement across agencies and partners, progress approvals and corridor access, and sequence delivery. Validate engineering, strengthen the economic case, and define long-term operations and maintenance to prepare for staged construction.

A clear decision is now sought from participating Shires to endorse a unified program approach and governance model, and from the State to support corridor negotiations and establish a funding pathway for staged delivery.

[1] ARC Infrastructure is a private company that leases, manages and operates WA's rail network.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

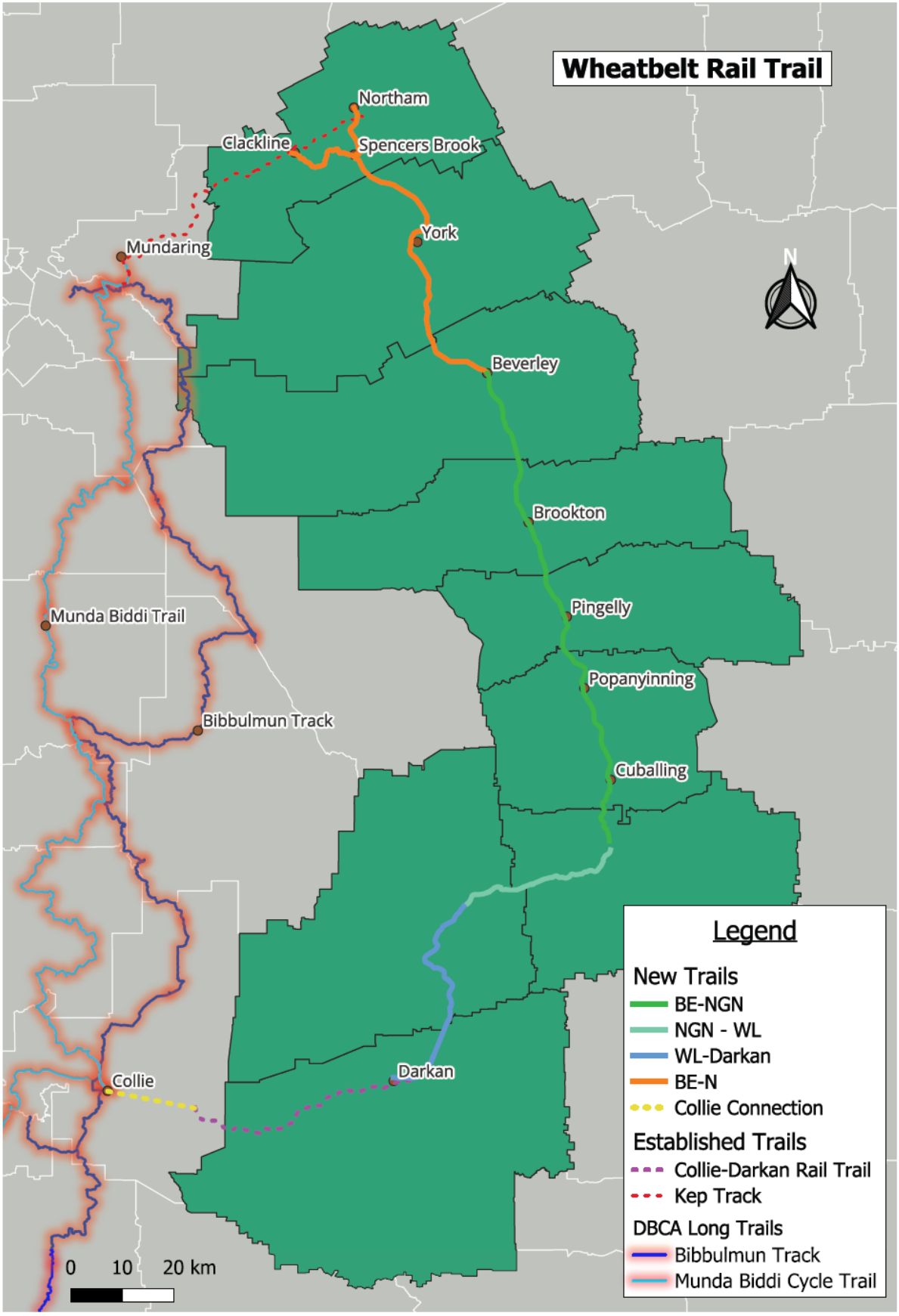

Figure 1 Wheatbelt Rail Trail - Combined Study Proposal

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

2 Project Background

This report consolidates three rail-trail studies and one cycling network strategy completed between 2008 and 2025 to provide a unified, evidence-based case for major State Government investment to establish a Wheatbelt Rail Trail Network.

The studies reviewed include:

- **Avon Central Coast 2050 Cycling Strategy** (August 2023)
- **Narrogin–Williams Rail Trail Feasibility Study** (October 2024)
- **Beverley–Narrogin Transport Trail – Strategic Plan (Vol. 1)** (October 2025)
- **Beverley–Narrogin Transport Trail – Feasibility Study (Vol. 2)** (October 2025)
- **Darkan–Williams Rail Trail Feasibility Study** (November 2008)

The analysis identifies common themes, opportunities for development, indicative costs and emerging risks across the studies, with a focus on the Beverley–Narrogin rail-aligned (green) corridor and its role within the broader regional network.

It strengthens the regional development, economic, tourism, health and community benefits of both the Beverley–Narrogin corridor and the wider network, alongside the key constraints and opportunities for progressing cross-shire collaboration.

The report presents a clear, high-level funding case for State Government consideration and outlines the stakeholders required to advance a coordinated, multi-shire trail initiative.

3 Investment Business Case

3.1 Business Case

The Wheatbelt Rail Trail Network presents a significant opportunity to create a region-defining tourism and active-transport asset. By bringing together the findings of four cycling and rail-trail studies (2008–2025), this review demonstrates strong strategic need and clear regional and metropolitan benefits.

The Beverley–Narrogin corridor offers the potential to activate town centres, strengthen regional economies, and position the Wheatbelt as a nationally and internationally competitive cycling destination. The broader network (Avon Region) described across the studies further enhances regional connectivity, community wellbeing, and long-term economic resilience.

This business case establishes the strategic rationale for progressing a coordinated, cross-shire trail initiative that aligns with State priorities for tourism, regional development, active transport and community health.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

3.2 Funding Case Summary

The project presents a compelling case for State investment, offering a high-value, low-risk opportunity to deliver a region-shaping tourism asset with strong metropolitan access and measurable economic uplift across multiple towns.

A staged delivery approach, beginning with the Beverley–Narrogin corridor, provides the fastest, most cost-effective pathway to establishing a connected Wheatbelt Rail Trail network. This stage delivers immediate visibility, strong visitor demand potential, and clear alignment with State strategies for active transport, regional development, and the visitor economy.

The funding case highlights the value for money, the scalability of the network, and the key stakeholders required to advance a coordinated, multi-shire investment program.

3.3 Strategic Alignment

This project aligns strongly with six key State and Regional Strategies for cycling, regional development, health, tourism and destination management. It is further supported by three statewide frameworks, and one state commissioned methodology, that reinforce the value of safe, connected, nature-based regional trail networks.

3.3.1 Supporting Strategies

1. **Department of Transport's Long Term Cycle Network (LTCN)**
   - Delivers a designated Transport Trail linking six towns in Stage 1.
   - Strengthens the Avon Central Coast 2050 Cycling Strategy spine.
   - Provides a safe, accessible long-distance cycling corridor.
2. **Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) Strategic Plan 2024–2029**
   - Strongly supports three of the five priorities – Connected communities, Prosperous Industries and Sectors, and Healthy Living:
     - Builds connected communities through shared recreation infrastructure.
     - Stimulates prosperous regional industries and tourism.
     - Promotes healthy living through active recreation.
3. **Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sports (CITS) WAVES 2033 – Western Australia Visitor Economy Strategy**
   - Creates a new nature-based hero experience for the Wheatbelt–Avon region.
   - Drives regional dispersal and multi-day visitation.
   - Supports tourism industry capability and new business opportunities.
4. **Wheatbelt Development Commission – Wheatbelt Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023–2033**
   - Prioritises nature-based tourism, trails, and regional touring routes as key growth drivers.
   - Strengthens regional connectivity, visitor movement, and cross-shire collaboration.
   - Aligns with the region's 10-year goals for experience development, infrastructure investment, and industry capability.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

5. **WestCycle (with DLGSC & Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA)) – WA Mountain Bike Strategy 2022–2032**
   - Supports the development of sustainable off-road cycling infrastructure across WA.
   - Strengthens WA's position as a national and international trail-based tourism destination.
   - Encourages regional trail networks that connect communities and diversify visitor experiences.
   - Aligns with State priorities for trail governance, environmental sustainability, and industry capability.
6. **Regional Development Australia (RDA) Strategic Plan – Wheatbelt 2025–2028**
   - Strengthens regional connectivity, liveability and economic diversification.
   - Supports cross-shire collaboration and region-shaping infrastructure.
   - Aligns with priorities for tourism development, active transport, and community wellbeing.
   - Reinforces the value of projects that enhance amenity, attract workforce, and stimulate local business.

3.3.2 Supporting Frameworks and Methodology

7. **WA Strategic Trails Blueprint 2022–2027 (DBCA & DLGSC)**
   - Provides the statewide vision for safe, connected, multi-day regional trail networks.
   - Reinforces the need for coordinated governance, consistent standards, and region-shaping trail experiences.
8. **More People More Active Outdoors (DLGSC, 2019)**
   - Defines the health, wellbeing, community and economic benefits of accessible outdoor recreation.
   - Supports investment in safe, inclusive, off-road infrastructure such as the Green Route.
9. **Australia's Golden Outback Strategic Plan 2021–2026 (AGO)**
   - Prioritises nature-based tourism, regional dispersal and multi-day touring experiences.
   - Supports cross-shire collaboration and experience development across the Wheatbelt.
10. **DLGSC – Concentric Circles - Guidance for Trails Tourism Close to Perth (2024)**
    - A State-commissioned, evidence-based method for understanding how Perth residents choose trail destinations.
    - Uses travel-time bands, 'concentric circles' to identify where trail investment delivers the strongest visitation uplift.
    - Identifies travel time as the strongest predictor of trail use, particularly for day-trip and short-break markets.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

- Demonstrates that trails located 60–120 minutes from Perth generate the highest tourism and recreation return on investment, such as the Wheatbelt Rail Trails.
- Highlights the importance of regional trail hubs with accommodation, hospitality and visitor services to support uptake.
- Emphasises the need for multi-shire coordination to avoid duplication and create coherent, market-ready trail networks.
- Identifies long-distance, signature experiences (including rail trails) as priority investment categories for attracting new markets.

The recommended staging approach commences with the Beverley–Narrogin **Green Route** because it:

- Delivers the safest, most inclusive off-highway corridor, directly supporting the LTCN, DLGSC recreation priorities, and statewide outdoor activity frameworks.
- Connects the largest cluster of towns, maximising early regional benefit, tourism dispersal and economic uplift.
- Provides the strongest strategic alignment across all State and regional strategies, including tourism, cycling, health, regional development and destination management.
- Establishes the governance, approvals and delivery model required for subsequent corridors, reducing risk and accelerating future stages.
- Aligns directly with the Concentric Circles methodology, sitting squarely within the high-value 60-120 minute Perth travel band and linking the region's most established trail towns, making it the highest-return corridor for early investment.

Further detail is provided in the 'Beverley to Narrogin' section of this report.

3.4 Regional Benefits

The Wheatbelt–Avon Regional Trail Network connects five Shires in Stage 1, and Nine Shires upon project completion. It strengthens regional tourism and small business growth, improves community health through accessible recreation, and supports local employment.

By transforming under-utilised rail corridors into vibrant public spaces and linking town centres via a safe, low-gradient cycling route, the project positions the Wheatbelt as a metro-accessible nature and heritage destination.

Each town can develop short loops, trailheads and local experiences that support daily community use and small business activation, complementing the broader regional tourism uplift.

Beverley, Brookton and Narrogin consistently emerge as the corridor's strongest tourism and service towns. With existing accommodation, hospitality and visitor services, they are natural hubs for early trail activation. Delivering Stage 1 along the Beverley–Narrogin corridor strengthens these towns first, enabling immediate regional spend and supporting small business growth.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

3.5 Metropolitan Benefits

The trail delivers significant metropolitan benefits despite being in regional WA. It is purpose-built for strong Perth uptake, offering a safe, low-gradient, family-friendly cycling and walking experience within easy day-trip reach of the city. It supports physical activity, nature-based recreation, and short-break tourism, while funnelling metropolitan visitation and spending into regional town centres and strengthening WA's portfolio of accessible outdoor experiences. The strong Perth usage of the Mundaring Trails network demonstrates the metropolitan demand for rail-trail and nature-based activities.

This network effectively opens the Wheatbelt and Avon to Perth in a way not previously possible. It creates a safe, inclusive, nature-based corridor where families, older adults, e-bike users, adventure cyclists, schools, and community groups can step into the bush for a day or overnight. It brings the regions closer to the city.

There is also a future opportunity for the proposed network to interface with Perth's Principal Shared Path (PSP) system as a high-quality, off-road metropolitan gateway. This would require separate planning, approvals and funding, and is not dependent on any on-road cycling connections.

The Concentric Circles framework confirms that Perth-accessible trails within 60–120 minutes deliver the highest visitation and participation uplift. The Wheatbelt Rail Trail corridor sits directly within this band, offering a safe, low-gradient, family-friendly experience that is uniquely positioned to attract strong metropolitan day-trip and short-break demand.

3.6 What This Means for Western Australia

A connected Wheatbelt Rail Trail network delivers a high-value, low-risk return for Western Australia, stronger regional economies, increased metropolitan visitation, improved health and wellbeing outcomes, and a region-defining nature-based tourism product aligned with State strategies.

Additionally, it has the ability to position WA as a national leader in accessible, long-distance cycling experiences, with future expansion opportunities.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

4 Study comparison

4.1 Comparative Summary

Table 1 Cross Study Comparison

Study	Shires	Distance (KM)	Scope & Purpose	Core Product
Avon Central Coast 2050 Cycling Strategy (2023)	Beverley York Northam Toodyay Chittering Gingin Dandaragan	~337 (via Road if completely linked)	Regional cycling network plan identifying primary/secondary routes, transport trails, and tourism corridors	Strategic framework for northern connections (Beverley–York–Northam–Toodyay–Perth Hills-Coastal Connections)
Beverley–Narrogin Transport Trail V1Strategic & V2 Feasibility (2025)	Beverley Brookton Pingelly Cuballing Narrogin	~101.1	Long-distance off-road transport trail linking six towns, Green (rail-aligned) + Orange (backroads) routes	Central Wheatbelt spine, major tourism and transport corridor
Narrogin–Williams Rail Trail Feasibility (2024)	Narrogin Williams	~34	Conversion of disused rail corridor into high-quality rail trail	Southern link with strong economic case and short payback period
Darkan–Williams Rail Trail Feasibility (2008)	Williams West Arthur	~47	Conversion of disused rail corridor into rail trail linking Williams to Collie–Darkan network*	Western link completing Collie–Williams–Narrogin loop

*Note Darkan-Collie Trail already exists. This Linkage would essentially expand the current 61.5 km easy (class 2) Trail, composed of Course gravel and compact earth.

In addition to the core corridor studies, two supplementary linkages should be recognised as supporting network connections:

- the Spencers Brook–Clackline spur, referenced in the *Avon Central Coast 2050 Cycling Strategy*, and
- the 'Collie Connection', identified in both the *Collie River Valley Trails Strategy* and the *Bunbury–Wellington 2050 Cycling Strategy*.

Both linkages strengthen the network by improving loop options, enhancing regional ride choices, and supporting overall network coherence. They are referenced here for context rather than full comparative assessment.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

4.2 Shared study benefits

Across all four studies, a consistent set of benefits emerged. The below distils these shared findings into the key themes, evidence and strategic implications relevant to the proposed Wheatbelt Rail Trail network.

1. **Tourism & Visitation**
    - All studies identify strong tourism potential.
    - BE–NGN survey shows 95% of respondents would use the trail.
    - NGN–WL forecasts 7,645 users per year, BE-NGN forecasts a conservative 12,645 users per year

Implication - High-value tourism product with strong metro-accessible demand.

2. **Economic Impact**
    - All studies identify strong economic uplift and increased tourism demand.
    - Economic benefits are quantified in the Estimated Financials section.

Implication - Strong ROI, supports small business, hospitality and accommodation.

3. **Health & Community**
    - Studies emphasise safe, off-road recreation.
    - Suitable for families, older riders and e-bikes.
    - Provides accessible recreation across multiple shires.

Implication - Broad community benefit and improved health and wellbeing.

4. **Regional Development**
    - Studies highlight the importance of cross-shire connectivity and the opportunity to develop the region through strong collaboration.
    - Strong support for town-to-town links and regional cohesion.

Implication - Creates a unified Wheatbelt–Avon regional network.

5. **Environmental & Cultural**
    - Opportunities for Noongar interpretation and cultural storytelling.
    - Supports heritage tourism and nature-based experiences.
    - Encourages environmental stewardship and low-impact recreation.

Implication – Strengthens and builds cultural tourism and environmental values.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

4.3 Risks and constraints

The five key risk categories identified across the studies are:

1. **Corridor and tenure (ARC Infrastructure / PTA[2])**
    - Requires early coordinated corridor negotiations, clear approvals pathway and consistent access policy.
2. **Cost escalation and engineering complexity (including flooding and watercourse crossings)**
    - Favours a single funding program and early engineering validation on high-risk segments, with climate-aware design and staging to avoid scope creep and reactive rebuilds.
3. **Governance and long-term maintenance**
    - Supports a regional governance and maintenance model (whole-of-life planning, consistent design/operations, and dedicated resourcing).
4. **Landholder and community interface**
    - Requires a consistent engagement approach and mitigation measures (fencing/crossings, rules, reporting/enforcement) across shires
5. **Fire and emergency response**
    - Requires early DFES[3] engagement and a funded fire management and emergency response plan so responsibilities do not fall onto overstretched volunteers

These risks are manageable if addressed early through a coordinated corridor access and approvals pathway, targeted engineering validation of high-cost segments, a funded whole-of-life governance and maintenance model, consistent landholder and community engagement, and DFES-led emergency response planning.

[2] Public Transport Authority
[3] Department of Fire and Emergency Services

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

4.4 Opportunities for Further Development

The review identified several system-wide and study-specific opportunities to strengthen a Wheatbelt Rail Trail Network and enhance its readiness as a unified, region-wide program. The table below summarises the key development opportunities.

Table 2 Identified Opportunities for Further Development

Opportunity Category	**Cross-study summary**
Governance and delivery model	No defined regional governance or asset-management model for a continuous Wheatbelt–Avon network.
Safety, emergency and risk planning	No assessment of fire risk, climate-driven fire behaviour, or system impacts on WA's volunteer firefighting capacity. ***Emergency response planning is undeveloped.***
Brand, visitor experience and activation	No single Wheatbelt/Avon trail brand, marketing strategy, or visitor-journey design across the network.
Benefits and evaluation	No quantifiable health savings, physical activity uplift, or mental health benefits, benefits are largely qualitative. Believed data does not exist.
Digital infrastructure and data	No digital mapping, wayfinding, or data-collection strategy is defined across the program.
Economic case	No economic modelling of a connected, multi-day Interconnected Wheatbelt Rail Trail, modelling is corridor-specific or absent.
Market analysis	Limited analysis of Perth families, e-bike users, adventure cyclists, price sensitivity or seasonal patterns.
Climate, environment and resilience	Limited design framework for climate resilience, heat mitigation, shade and water access

4.5 Benchmarking and Lessons Learnt

Successful long-distance rail trails such as New Zealand's Great Rides, the Otago Central Rail Trail, the Great Victorian Rail Trail and WA's Wadandi Track demonstrate strong demand for town-to-town riding, clear economic uplift, and the importance of coordinated governance and consistent standards. These precedents confirm the viability and value of the Wheatbelt Rail Trail Network.

4.5.1 Evidence of demand from comparable trails

1. **Town-to-town riding is a proven drawcard**
    - Established networks consistently show that multi-town itineraries and strong trail-to-town interfaces drive overnight stays, higher visitor spend and repeat visitation.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

2. **WA has an existing long-distance trail market**
    - The Bibbulmun Track, Mundaring Network of Trails, including Kep Track, and Munda Biddi confirm strong local and visitor appetite for multi-day trail experiences.
3. **International precedent reinforces the opportunity**
    - New Zealand's Great Rides / NZ Cycle Trail network shows how coordinated governance, consistent standards and destination activation can scale a national trail product and attract significant domestic and international use.
4. **Recent State investment signals policy appetite**
    - The $17.5 million commitment to the Wadandi Track illustrates that long-distance trail infrastructure is already a recognised State priority when governance, staging and narrative are clear.

4.5.2 Lessons to Apply in the Wheatbelt Context

Lessons from other regional trail networks provide clear guidance on how to reduce delivery risk and maximise long-term value in the Wheatbelt. These include:

1. **Prioritise Governance**
    - Successful networks establish a lead entity, clear roles and a maintenance/asset plan before major capital delivery.
2. **Experience investment drives uptake**
    - Wayfinding, shade and water access, rest nodes, interpretation and safe crossings materially influence user satisfaction and repeat use.
3. **Tackle the most complex sections early**
    - Prioritising the highest-risk or most technically challenging segments upfront provides the blueprint for resolving similar issues elsewhere. If these constraints cannot be overcome, it is better to identify this early before investing in lower-complexity sections that cannot ultimately connect.
4. **Brand and Activation**
    - A coherent network identity, events calendar and industry partnerships increase visibility and spend per visitor.
5. **A transport-trail model broadens the market**
    - Compared with adventure-oriented products like the Munda Biddi, the proposed Wheatbelt network offers gentle gradients, town-to-town riding and accessibility for families, older riders and e-bike users. There is current opportunity in the market which an Interconnected Wheatbelt Rail Trail can fulfil.
6. **Cultural interpretation as a core experience layer**
    - The Concentric Circles framework highlights a significant opportunity to embed Aboriginal cultural interpretation into trail experiences. Integrating Noongar language, stories and cultural landscapes into the Wheatbelt Rail Trail network strengthens authenticity, deepens visitor engagement and aligns with State priorities for cultural tourism.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

5 Stage 1 - Beverley to Narrogin

The Beverley–Narrogin studies offer two complementary experiences:

- Green Route - a safe, separated, rail-aligned corridor suitable for families, older adults, e-bike users and walkers,
- Orange Route - a scenic backroads touring experience appealing to gravel riders and bike packers.

The Green Route provides the safest, most inclusive and strategically aligned foundation for Stage 1 and is the basis for this review.

Beverley, Brookton and Narrogin consistently emerge across all studies as the corridor's strongest trail towns, with multiple existing accommodation, hospitality and visitor services. Connecting these towns first delivers the highest early demand, maximises Perth-proximate visitation and establishes a strong foundation for a multi-day regional trail product.

The Beverley–Narrogin Green Route forms the network's spine, converting separate concepts into a connected, metro-accessible town-to-town experience and establishing the governance, design and delivery model for future stages.

It is recommended for Stage 1 because it:

1. **Connects the strongest tourism towns** - enabling early use and immediate regional spend.
2. **Unlocks the wider network -** linking directly to Narrogin–Williams, Darkan–Williams and Collie–Darkan, and interfacing with northern connections through the Avon Central Coast 2050 Cycling Strategy.
3. **Establishes a replicable delivery model** - by resolving the most complex approvals, tenure gaps and engineering challenges early.
4. **Demonstrates strong early demand** - with the largest Perth-proximate catchment and multiple towns suited to overnight itineraries.
5. **Delivers the strongest strategic alignment** - with DLGSC, WAVES 2033, the Long-Term Cycle Network and the Avon Central Coast 2050 Cycling Strategy.
6. **Positions WA as a national leader** - by launching a flagship long-distance transport trail and a credible pathway to a broader Wheatbelt–Avon network.

Stage 1 should commence with the Beverley–Narrogin Green Route. It delivers the network spine, captures early tourism value, resolves the highest-risk constraints first and sets the blueprint for all remaining corridors.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

6 Estimated Financials

6.1 Project Cost – Capital (CAPEX) and Operational (OPEX)

Table 3 Estimate Project CAPEX, OPEX, ROI (Return on Investment) and Annual Revenue

Study	**No. Shires**	**Distance (KM)**	**CAPEX (~$M)**	**OPEX (~$M)**	**ROI**	**Annual Revenue (~$M)**
AVON Central Cost 2050 Cycling Strategy ***Northam – Beverley Only***	3	~70	$ 6.1M	$0.2M	<2.5 yrs	$2.6M
*Beverley-Narrogin Transport Trai**	5	~107.1**	$ 9.5M	$0.26M	<5.5 yrs	$1.8M
Narrogin - Williams Rail Trail	2	~34	$4M	$0.08M	<4 yrs	$1M
Darkan-Williams Rail Trail	2	~47	$1.4M	$0.12M	<2 yrs	$1M
*Collie Connection***	1	~19	$1.7M	$0.05	<2	$1M
Wheatbelt Rail Trail Totals	**10**	**~277km**	**~$22.7M**	**~$.68M**	**<3.5 yrs**	**$7.2M**

* This has been based on the adoption of the Green Route, without access to ARC infrastructure / existing railway maintenance tracks. **Estimated 6km distance for Beverley Trailhead – Caudle Road (separate Project in progress which is costing this section due to additional engineering complexity). **'Collie Connection re-links the established Collie-Darkan trail, for the Trail Head to commence within the Collie Town Centre.

The study indicates that approximately 76% (81 km) of the Beverley–Narrogin Green Route would require full new construction because ARC Infrastructure does not currently permit rail-adjacent access. If ARC were to support access along the entire corridor and existing maintenance tracks could be utilised, Stage 1 capital costs are estimated to reduce by ~$6.8M, primarily by avoiding new earthworks, fencing, drainage reconstruction and road-reserve deviations. Publicly available data indicates that approximately 20 trains per year operate on the Beverley–Narrogin line at an average speed of 42 km/h, indicating low usage.

Table 4 Estimate Project Variance based on utilisation of ARC Infrastructure Maintenance Corridors

Stage 1 Cost Variance BE- NGN Study	**Distance (KM)**	**CAPEX (~$M)**	**OPEX (~$M)**	**ROI**	**Annual Revenue (~$M)**
Beverley-Narrogin Transport Trail ***WITHOUT ARC Infrastructure***	~107.1	$9.5M	$0.26M	<5.5 yrs	$1.8M
Beverley-Narrogin Transport Trail ***WITH ARC Infrastructure***	~107.1	$2.6M	$0.26M	<1.5 yrs	$1.8M
Estimated Variance		**$ 6.8M**	**$ -***	**4 yrs**	**$ -**

*Opportunities to reduce OPEX through shared maintenance track costs, yet to be quantified.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

6.2 Project Cost Assumptions

Not all studies provided cost estimates for CAPEX, OPEX, annual revenue or ROI. Where data was available, these figures have been used and extrapolated across the relevant trail sections. The table below outlines the source or method used for each estimate.

All figures are indicative only, extrapolated from the Beverley–Narrogin Transport Trail Volume 2: Feasibility Study, and assume minimal upgrades to existing ARC track conditions. Further investigation and refinement will be required

Table 5 Estimated Figures Assumptions

Study	**Distance**	**CAPEX**	**OPEX**	**ROI**	**Annual Revenue*** **
AVON Central Cost 2050 Cycling Strategy	Est trail distance BE-N with Rail Trail Alignment*	Est Distance x $87,688 (average km/ CAPEX per BE-NGN*)	Utilise BE-NGN report reference $2465/yr per KM	CAPEX / Annual Revenue	Utilise BE-NGN report reference $254.2/day per visitor est 10,500 – 3x increase due to proximity to Kep Trail & Metro
Beverley-Narrogin Transport Trail	Report	Report plus 6km (uncosted section Caudle Road) calculated with a 15% uplift on 6km, $100840 per km due to engineering complexity**	Report est $2465/yr per KM Gov Maintenance	CAPEX / Annual Revenue	Report
Narrogin - Williams Rail Trail	Report	Report	Utilise BE-NGN report reference $2465/yr per KM	CAPEX / Annual Revenue	Report
Darkan-Williams Rail Trail	Report	Report figure x 1.5 for CPI	Utilise BE-NGN report reference $2465/yr per KM	CAPEX / Annual Revenue	Utilise BE-NGN report reference $254.2/day per visitor est 3500 – consistent with BE-NGN & NGN-WL est. visitor numbers.
*Collie Connection****	Estimated 19km based on WA Trails	Est Distance x $87,688 (average km/ CAPEX per BE-NGN*)	Utilise BE-NGN report reference $2465/yr per KM	CAPEX / Annual Revenue	Utilise BE-NGN report reference $254.2/day per visitor est 3500 – consistent with BE-NGN & NGN-WL est. visitor numbers.

*The Beverley–Northam distance reflects only the direct York–Northam link. If the additional spur from Spencers Brook to Clackline is included (shown in Figure 1), a further 15 km is added, increasing loop options between the established Kep Track and the proposed Wheatbelt Rail Trail.
** The Beverley–Narrogin feasibility study excludes approximately 6 km of alignment, Bevereley Trailhead to Caudle Road. This cost analysis has used the report base 101.1k CAPEX benchmark of $87,688 per/km(costed) and added a 15% uplift of $100.840/km applied only to the 6km previously excluded, to reflect known higher construction complexity. A separate project is currently underway to formally cost this section.
***Annual Revenue is based on overnight stays, no cost estimate on increased revenue from additional employment opportunities such as creation of Trail Tours is included.
****Collie Connection has been included in the cost analysis for context, to reflect the circular loop which would strengthen the network by supporting overall network coherence.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

6.3 Established Trails Annual Revenue

Multiple authoritative sources, including Rail Trails Australia, and the DLGSC Concentric Circles guidance, consistently state that looped or connected routes increase visitor appeal, support higher repeat visitation, strengthen commercial viability, and increase annual revenue generation.

The Table below provides context, a 10% increase in usage across the established Bibbulmun and Mundaring Trails would generate an estimated additional $6.7 million in annual revenue.

Table 6 Estimated Established Trails enhancement with establishing the Wheatbelt Rail Trail

Trail	Distance	Type	Annual Revenue	Annual Revenue WITH Wheatbelt Rail Trails	Variance 10%
Bibbulmun	~1,000KM	Walking	$ 39M	$ 42.9M	$ 3.9M
Mundaring Trails	Various Loops,1-41km	Mixed-Use Network	$ 27.8M	$ 30.6M	$ 2.8M
Totals			**$ 66.8M**	**$ 73.5M**	**$ 6.7M**

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

7 Stakeholder Summary

The studies have a broad and diverse stakeholder landscape, with several stakeholders appearing consistently, and others unique to specific corridors, highlighting the need for a coordinated, region-wide approach. Some stakeholders not identified in the studies have been within this review and incorporated below.

Table 7 Project Stakeholders

Stakeholder Category	**Stakeholders Identified Across the Studies**
State Government	PTA (Public Transport Authority), ARC Infrastructure, Department of Transport (DoT), DLGSC, Tourism WA, DBCA (Parks & Wildlife), DFES (not previously engaged, but should be), Main Roads WA
Local Government	Shires of Beverley, Brookton, Pingelly, Cuballing, Narrogin, Williams, Collie, West Arthur, Northam and York.
Traditional Owners	Noongar groups (Ballardong, Wiilman, Gnaala Karla Booja depending on corridor)
Landholders & Industry	Adjacent farmers, pastoralists, freight operators, utilities (Western Power, Water Corp), private property owners
Community & User Groups	Local residents, trail users (walkers, cyclists, e-bike users, schools, sporting clubs)
Tourism & Business	Local tourism associations, visitor centres, accommodation providers, cafes, pubs, retail, regional tourism organisations
Environmental & Heritage	Local Natural Resource Management groups, conservation volunteers, historical societies, river care groups
Emergency Services	Volunteer Bushfire Brigades (not previously engaged, but essential), St John Ambulance, WA Police, DFES (not previously engaged, but essential)
Project Delivery Partners	Consultants, engineers, surveyors, trail builders, community working groups and (recommended) Project Steering Committee

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

8 Key Review Findings

The review highlights a consistent set of strategic considerations that shape the case for progressing a connected, cross-shire trail network.

1. **Beverley–Narrogin corridor as the network backbone**
    - The Beverley–Narrogin route emerges as the essential spine of the wider network, with early delivery enabling staged expansion across multiple shires.
2. **High metropolitan demand with strong regional returns**
    - The network is well positioned to attract Perth day-trip and short-break users while directing visitor spend into Wheatbelt towns and services.
3. **Clear alignment with State priorities**
    - The project aligns strongly with multiple State strategies around cycling, tourism, health and community strategies, and presents a future (currently out-of-scope) opportunity to interface with the Perth PSP network.
4. **Cost and delivery complexity concentrated in infrastructure constraints**
    - Major cost drivers include crossings, drainage, fencing, tenure limitations and agency requirements. A staged delivery approach is the most feasible pathway.
5. **Manageable risks with early intervention**
    - Key risks relate to corridor access and tenure, landholder confidence, governance and maintenance responsibilities, and emergency response planning. All are manageable if addressed early.
6. **Progress depends on coordinated leadership and dedicated resourcing**
    - Moving forward requires an agreed governance model and a funded project resource to drive cross-shire collaboration, resolve corridor access and standards, sequence delivery, and prepare a whole-of-network investment case.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

9 Proposed Next Steps and Timeline

To progress the Wheatbelt Regional Trail Network from strategy and feasibility to a fundable, staged delivery program, the following steps are recommended. These actions establish the governance, documentation and evidence base required to secure State and Local Government investment. They are structured into four phases:

1. Phase 1 – Establish Foundations and Support
2. Phase 2 – Build the Investment case and Program Pipeline
3. Phase 3 – Prepare for Delivery
4. Phase 4 – Commence Build

9.1 Phase 1 - Establish Foundations and Support

The recommended next steps have an estimated timeframe of 6-8 months, pending endorsement turnaround.

Table 8 Phase 1 Recommended Next Steps

Action	Purpose / Why It Matters	Key Activities / Detail
Council Endorsement Pack	Build unified cross-shire support and messaging	Prepare councillor-facing brief, align LGAs, confirm shared position
Cross-Shire Governance	Establish leadership and decision-making structure	Confirm lead agency, roles, responsibilities, Operations and Maintenance approach e.g MoU / Project Steering Group
Program Resourcing	Ensure dedicated capacity to drive the program	Secure Program/Project Lead and specialist support
Risk Mitigation Strategy	Address the highest-impact risks early	Agree approach to corridor/tenure, engineering, multi-shire delivery, Orange vs. Green Route
Build ARC Justification Framework	Present clear, evidence-based rationale for access	Comparative visuals, cost logic, shared briefing note/memo.
Establish Trail Brand	Create a unified, professional identity for funding readiness	Develop logo, palette, style guide and sample applications

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

9.2 Phase 2 - Build the Investment Case and Program Pipeline

Phase 2 recommended next steps have an estimated timeframe of 6-8 months.

Table 9 Phase 2 Recommended Next Steps

Action	Purpose / Why It Matters	Key Activities / Detail
Ministerial/Treasury Briefing Pack	Build a decision-ready funding case	Strategic alignment, approvals pathway, investment narrative, costs
Elevate ARC Access Request	Build political support for preferred alignment	Ministerial briefing, unified shire position, utilise justification framework
Consolidated Risk Register	Create a single risk management framework	Safety, fire/emergency, landholder interface, mitigation measures
Long-Term Network Vision	Show how the full network connects	Map, narrative, regional interfaces, future PSP opportunity, established trails linkage
Funding Submission Pipeline	Prepare investment-ready proposals	Package staged submissions aligned to State pathways

9.3 Phase 3 – Prepare for Delivery

Phase 3 recommended next steps have an estimated timeframe of 12 months.

Table 10 Phase 3 Recommended Next Steps

Action	Purpose / Why It Matters	Key Activities / Detail
Stakeholder Engagement Plan	Coordinate engagement across all partners	State agencies, TOs, landholders, utilities, user groups, tourism groups
Program Staging Plan	Sequence delivery identification and manage complexity	Quick wins and parallel workstreams for complex segments identified.
Approvals & Corridor Access	Secure access and compliance requirements	ARC/PTA engagement, fencing, crossings, insurance, corridor rules
Engineering Validation	Reduce cost uncertainty and escalation risk	Targeted design on high-cost segments
Economic & Benefits Model	Strengthen the ROI case	Consistent model, sensitivity testing, quantified benefits available
Operations & Maintenance Model	Define long-term responsibilities and costs	OPEX forecast, asset ownership, service standards

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

9.4 Project Timeline

Based on the key recommendations and critical tasks, the image below illustrates a plausible project timeline.

Figure 2 Project Timeline

9.5 Phase 4 – Build Commencement

Phase 4 timeframe would be quantified throughout Phases1-3.

Table 11Phase 4 Recommended Next Steps

Action	Purpose / Why It Matters	Key Activities / Detail
Phase 4 – Build Commences	Commence Staged Build	Commence Staged Build – Detail to be clarified through Phase1-3.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

10 Conclusion – Why the Project is Worth Doing

The combined evidence from the strategic and feasibility studies demonstrates that establishing an interconnected Wheatbelt–Avon regional trail network, anchored by the Beverley–Narrogin corridor, directly supports multiple State priorities across transport, tourism, health, regional development and active recreation.

Recent State investment in long-distance trail infrastructure provides a clear precedent and confirms Western Australia's appetite and capability to deliver nationally significant trail assets where governance, staging and strategic alignment are clear.

Delivering the Beverley–Narrogin corridor presents known challenges, including negotiated rail-adjacent access with ARC Infrastructure, resolution of higher-cost watercourse crossings, and coordinated delivery and maintenance across multiple local governments. These risks are well understood and manageable. Indicative estimates place Stage 1 at approximately $9.5 million CAPEX with annual OPEX of around $0.26 million, while the full Wheatbelt Rail Trail network is estimated at approximately $22.7 million CAPEX and $0.68 million per year OPEX. Importantly, access to existing ARC maintenance corridors has the potential to reduce Stage 1 capital costs by up to $6.8 million, significantly improving value for money.

The Beverley–Narrogin corridor provides the essential spine of the wider network. It delivers a safe, low-gradient, town-to-town transport trail linking six communities, captures strong metropolitan day-trip and short-break demand, and establishes the platform for staged expansion across the Wheatbelt–Avon region. It also sets the governance, delivery and operational model required to de-risk and accelerate future corridors.

With early State-led corridor negotiations, disciplined staging, and the governance and resourcing steps outlined in this report, the project is both achievable and strategically positioned to become a region-defining tourism and recreation asset for Western Australia.

This report recommends progressing the Beverley–Narrogin corridor as Stage 1 of the Wheatbelt Rail Trail program, securing participating Shires' endorsement for a unified program approach and governance model, and engaging the State to support corridor negotiations and establish a clear funding pathway for staged delivery.

Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075

11 Supporting Documents

- PDF - Infographic Summarising 'Interconnecting Wheatbelt Rail Trails' Report
- PDF - Wheatbelt Rail Trails **map showing the proposed trail**
- PDF - Wheatbelt Rail Trails **map showing trail, accommodation & food options**

12 References

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Gemma Bassett – Broadview Consult Pty Ltd
Broadviewconsult@outlook.com | 0427 851 894 | ABN 689 567 075