

AMENDED ITEM



Item No: 5.5
Title: Notice of Motion - Options for a dedicated MTB Facility
Department: Councillor

10 August 2020 Ordinary Council Meeting

Reference: F2020/00039 - D14101565

Author: Jane Smith, Councillor

Deputy Mayor Smith has given notice that at the Ordinary Meeting to be held on 10 August 2020 she will move the following motion:

- 1 That Council form a temporary Working Group to consider options and potential for a dedicated mountain biking facility to be established outside environmental lands.**
- 2 That the primary focus of the Working Group is to meet the needs of the existing recreational MTB community.**
- 3 That the Working Group be established as a temporary working group with a report coming to Council no later than the last meeting of December 2020 at which time, Council consider whether the Working Group continue.**
- 4 That the Working Group include:**
 - Interested Councillors**
 - Up to 3 Representatives from the recreational MTB community**
- 5 That the Chief Executive Officer make available appropriate staff to support the Working Group.**

Chief Executive Officer Response

The Chief Executive Officer considers that this Notice of Motion has legal, strategic, financial or policy implications which should be taken into consideration by the meeting. As a result, the Chief Executive Officer has provided a report in relation to the Notice of Motion. This report is provided as Attachment 1.

Attachments

- 1 CEO Response - Notice of Motion - Options for a dedicated MTB Facility** D14105131



Title: CEO Response - Notice of Motion - Options for a dedicated MTB Facility

Department: Environment and Planning

10 August 2020 Ordinary Council Meeting

Reference: F2020/00039 - D14105131

Author: Luke Sulkowski, Unit Manager, Environmental Management

Executive: Andrew Roach, Acting Director, Environment and Planning

Summary

This report provides a response to Item 5.5 - Notice of Motion - Options for a dedicated MTB Facility.

- 1 That Council form a temporary Working Group to consider options and potential for a dedicated mountain biking facility to be established outside environmental lands**
- 2 That the primary focus of the Working Group is to meet the needs of the existing recreational MTB community**
- 3 That the Working Group be established as a temporary working group with a report coming to Council no later than the last meeting of December 2020 at which time, Council consider whether the Working Group continue**
- 4 That the Working Group include:**
 - Interested Councillors**
 - Up to 3 Representatives from the recreational MTB community**
- 5 That the CEO make available appropriate staff to support the Working Group.**

Staff Comments:

Participation in mountain biking is rapidly growing and presents opportunities for encouraging active lifestyles, passive transportation, tourism and economic development, as well as increased appreciation of the local environment and heritage. Some regional locations in Australia and beyond have increased tourism income and local economic activity by developing mountain biking facilities of a type and standard that attract visitors from outside the local area.

Mountain biking covers a range of different users including leisure, enthusiast, sport, adaptive mountain biking, independent and gravity. There are different types of trails, including cross country, all mountain, gravity flow, downhill, freeride, park and touring.

There is a classification range for trail difficulty and some trails may have additional constructed technical features to provide the experience sought by riders. Individual mountain bike riders may ride multiple trail types. Mountain bike trails are typically developed in a natural setting, which may be natural bushland, forestry plantation or partly cleared land. There is now a diversity of mountain bikes available to cater for the individual style of riding undertaken by the bike owner.

Within the Central Coast Local Government Area there are only a small number of specific mountain bike facilities available to riders on both public and private land. The Ourimbah Mountain Bike Park in Ourimbah State Forest is the main sanctioned venue for mountain bikers on the Central Coast and is the focus of most organised club events. It has been developed by and is operated by the Central Coast Mountain Bike Club. Mountain bike riding is also permitted on a number of fire trails and management trails in local national parks, state forests and council reserves.

The construction and subsequent use of unauthorised mountain bike trails occurs on both public and private land on the Central Coast and elsewhere. It is often stated that unauthorised trail construction is a result of the large demand for mountain bike facilities not being met. The construction of unauthorised mountain bike trails poses risks to land managers, riders and the community and has the potential to compromise natural environments and heritage sites.

Engaging with the community to develop and implement a Central Coast wide strategic plan to identify and provide mountain biking facilities and trail networks that meet the community's needs, build partnerships, increase tourism, promote active lifestyles, provide passive transport opportunities, protect the natural environment promote experience and appreciation of the local environment and also protect and acknowledge places and landscapes with cultural and heritage significance is a positive way to proceed.

Part of what is required is a detailed analysis of the diversity of needs, variety of opportunities and spatial distribution of these across the Central Coast. In 2019 Council commenced a Mountain Bike Feasibility Study. The aims of the Study are to assist in planning for recreation in Council's natural reserves by:

- Identifying the role that Council's natural reserves may play in the provision of mountain biking experiences across the Central Coast
- Protecting areas of high conservation and heritage value
- Minimising the key drivers for the building of unauthorised trails
- Maximising the safe use of Council reserves by all visitors

In June 2019 Council conducted extensive consultation to help understand community views, demand, utilisation, opportunities and risks for mountain bike riding on the Central Coast. 1,949 surveys were completed, as well as 25 targeted attendees over two face-to-face focus

groups. During this engagement, Council communicated to the community that a discussion paper would be prepared and made available to the public.

A detailed discussion paper has been prepared that presents the findings of the consultation, a review of the current locations for mountain biking on the Central Coast, a selection of case studies, site selection criteria, a feasibility analysis including options and recommendations. A report will be coming to Council by the end of October 2020 with a recommendation to publicly exhibit the discussion paper and undertake stage 2 engage with the community in November 2020.

The establishment of a temporary Working Group, as proposed in the Notice of Motion, to consider options and potential for a dedicated mountain biking facility to be established outside environmental lands has the potential to build on the work that has been undertaken to date through the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study. Consideration of the survey feedback and recommendations of the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Discussion Paper and the subsequent community feedback will provide a strong basis on which the proposed Working Group can proceed in considering options and the potential for a dedicated mountain biking facility to be established outside environmental lands. There are benefits in aligning the timing of the establishment of the Working Group to follow the reporting to Council on the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study and the subsequent community engagement. Alignment with the completion of the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study would see the temporary Working Group's process commence in early 2021 and be completed in 2021.

The Notice of Motion requests that appropriate staff be made available to support a temporary Working Group. A variety of skill sets are likely to be required including:

- Community engagement and communication
- Recreation planning and facility management
- Environmental management
- Transport planning
- Strategic planning
- Geographical information system
- Marketing and tourism
- Business and economic development
- Administration

The impact of staff support for the Working Group on the Central Coast Council Operational Plan 2020-21 should be considered. In many sections existing staff resources are fully allocated to operational projects. These projects would be impacted in order for these staff to support the Working Group. For some projects, such as the Plans of Management project the impact may result in Council not meeting a legislative deadline.

Staff provide the following commentary in response to the respective items being considered by Council as part of the Notice of Motion:

1 That Council form a temporary Working Group to consider options and potential for a dedicated mountain biking facility to be established outside environmental lands

The formation of a temporary mountain bike working group prior to the completion of the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study and Council's consideration of the discussion paper and community engagement report has the potential to jeopardise the community's confidence in the project including the value placed on the community's involvement in the project. Particularly given that the current study is not limited to lands that are not environmental lands. Staff would recommend that any consideration of a working group firstly await further consultation following Council's consideration of the study.

2 That the primary focus of the Working Group is to meet the needs of the existing recreational MTB community

The community survey undertaken as part of the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study received 1,949 responses. The results of the survey are included in the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Discussion Paper to be reported to Council in late October 2020. The community survey responses included details of the unmet demand for mountain biking on the Central Coast. The community survey results provide comprehensive information about the existing needs of the mountain biking community. Council staff would recommend awaiting the results of further community consultation in response to the study before committing to establishing a working group.

3 That the Working Group be established as a temporary working group with a report coming to Council no later than the last meeting of December 2020 at which time, Council consider whether the Working Group continue

The consideration of options for engaging key stakeholders in the planning and development of mountain bike facilities and opportunities across the Central Coast should be postponed until after the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study has been completed which includes the community consultation phase after Council's anticipated initial consideration of the study in October 2020.

4 That the Working Group include:

a Interested Councillors

b Up to 3 Representatives from the recreational MTB community

There are multiple stakeholders that should be included in the planning and development mountain bike facilities and opportunities across the Central Coast. The stakeholders include but are not restricted to mountain bike clubs, public land managers, private land managers, tourism industry representatives, commercial mountain bike operators, Aboriginal organisations and government representatives. Staff would recommend that broader

consultation occur with the greater community following Council's consideration of the study in October 2020 and that it not be limited to individuals identified in the motion.

5 *That the Chief Executive Officer make available appropriate staff to support the Working Group.*

The allocation of staff to support the proposed mountain bike working group will impact on the delivery of the adopted Operational Plan and other critical projects. Establishment of the proposed mountain bike working group is most likely to have some impacts on capacity to deliver outcomes for the legislated plan of management development for Crown Land for which Council is the appointed Crown Land Manager.

Staff Recommendation

It is recommended that Council consider the following:

- 1 *That Council complete the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study to allow for the recommendations of the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Discussion Paper and subsequent community engagement report to be considered.***

- 2 *That Council give consideration to options for engaging key stakeholders in the planning and development of mountain bike facilities and opportunities across the Central Coast be postponed until after the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study has been completed.***