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## SYNOPSIS

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Rail trails are shared-use paths built on disused railway corridors. They provide safe, off-road pathways for everyone to cycle, walk, run, push a pram and enjoy the outdoors. Many are wheelchair accessible and they all have moderate gradients.

A 27km rail trail on the disused rail corridor between Boorowa and Galong is technically feasible and issues raised can be overcome with good design. The corridor would remain in public ownership (see Attachment 1 for a plan of the rail trail).

The proposed Boorowa Galong Rail Trail passes through attractive rural farming scenery. Undulating topography is constant along the corridor. Views of crops, especially the canola when in flower, and of sheep and cattle grazing in the adjoining paddocks adds to the interest. Some infrastructure along the rail corridor remains. The Galong cemetery is a very attractive historic cemetery alongside the railway line; such a feature is relatively rare on other rail trails in Australia. The St Clements Retreat and conference centre just north of Galong is within a few hundred metres of the rail trail and presents an impressive outlook as seen from the corridor.

Existing rail trails in other states, especially Victoria, are extremely well used and are very popular recreational assets of the communities in which they are situated. The success of the Tumbarumba to Rosewood Rail Trail is testimony to the demands for such facilities in NSW. The *Rail Trails for NSW Evaluation Summary* (June 2022) found that the economic activity in the Tumbarumba region during the June to December periods 2019 and 2020 increased by 20% from \$14.0 million to \$16.9 million. It also led to the development of 9 new or expanding businesses in the rail trail's area since the opening of the rail trail (in a period of 12 months). Businesses included accommodation, food and beverage, and bike hire. It was also confirmed that Rail Trail users looked forward to returning.

There has been no outright opposition to the trail amongst landholders (with one exception) though some have raised some issues. A number of landholders support the project seeing it as an opportunity to showcase agriculture.

The project can deliver on a number of agreed community outcomes. For example, a rail trail will help deliver a thriving and diverse economy and enhance a diversified economy in order to attract and retain residents – two of the three strategic objectives for the economy as identified in the Community Strategic Plan.

The cost of developing the Boorowa Galong Rail Trail is estimated to be \$10.8 million, and an annual Operation and maintenance cost of \$50,000. The annual benefit to the local economy will be in the order of \$2.9 million. The rail trail provides a convenient attraction for day-trippers from the Canberra market in particular – a market known to have large numbers of cyclists and walkers. In addition, the rail trail will provide local people with a new opportunity for walking, cycling, fun runs, triathlons, half marathons (or full marathons), wheelchair use and educational opportunities for school children.

The Boorowa Galong Rail Trail is an economically viable project that would provide a major boost to the Hilltops region.