



MOUNTAIN BIKING EAST GIPPSLAND

STRATEGIC PLAN
2021-2026





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Acknowledgments

Mountain Biking East Gippsland acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government in the development of this strategic plan through the Sport & Recreation Victoria Sporting Club Grants Program.



The Mountain Biking East Gippsland committee would like to thank GippSport Community Solutions who coordinated the strategic planning process and members who have supported this project.

We also acknowledge the staff at East Gippsland Shire Council, Auscycling and other important stakeholders for providing background information and support for this planning project.



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Introduction

The Mountain Biking East Gippsland (MTBEG) Committee has been meeting regularly since early June 2020 and we have been busy focussing on putting all the necessary arrangements in place to support the operation of a new Club.

Much of the early work has included the development of policies, creation of communication platforms and branding, some trail maintenance and club rides, and some overall thinking and planning for what the group can offer.

It has been a challenging time for the formation of a new club, with bushfire recovery from the devastating East Gippsland fires followed by the COVID restrictions. It has been difficult to meet, plan and resource a community club.

This strategic planning process has been key to understanding what is needed and wanted by club members, the important facility design and construction work already being done and the AusCycling operational changes as the peak body for all cycling in Australia.

It is an exciting time for the sport, as interest in mountain biking and other forms of cycling has grown exponentially and the focus on the development of support infrastructure as a way to grow the visitor economy is creating many new opportunities.

This plan hopes to recognise the development stage of the club at a time when it is hard to attract and retain volunteers and financial challenges are evident in the local economy. However, in time, the enormous potential for the club will be realised in a staged way in partnership with the other organisations already working in this sector.

Recently there has been significant investment into cycling infrastructure including Mountain Bike parks across East Gippsland and additional work is being planned across Gippsland which can be supported by the club who are focused on advocacy as one of their strategic priorities.



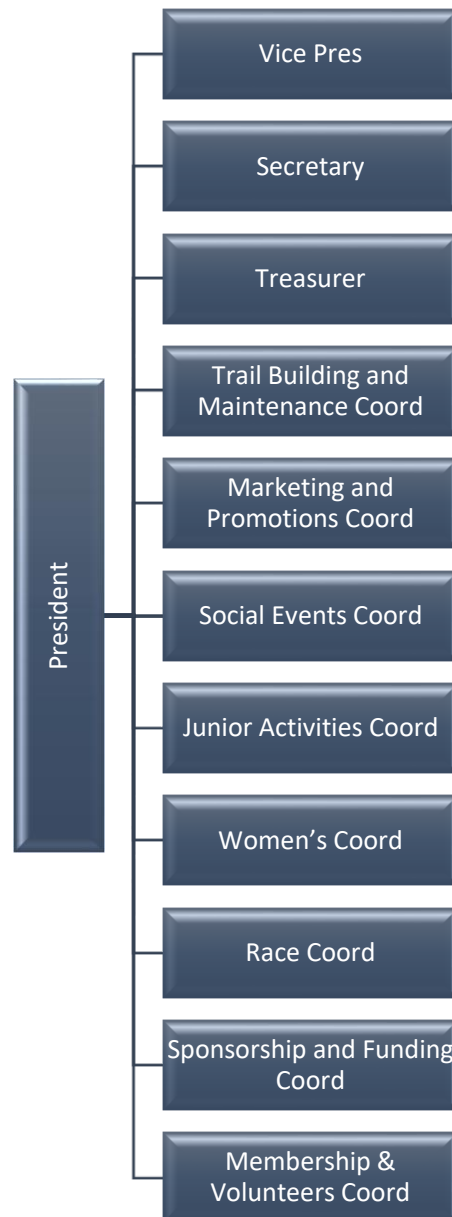


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Organisational Structure

The club follows a traditional Incorporated Association Structure with some identified roles to spread the load more evenly across the committee. There are no paid staff in place.





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Present Strategy

This is the first Strategic Plan for the Mountain Biking East Gippsland Club, however many of the club volunteers have been involved in the sport for many years. The club formed in consultation with the foundation members and it has been difficult to gain momentum or test many club activities due to the restrictions placed by the pandemic.

Current Programs and Activities

Since its inception, the club has held regular online committee meetings with focus on setting up club documentation. Face to face operational activities have been limited due to the impact of COVID 19 restrictions. However, the club has run;

- Trail maintenance/ working bees
- Weekend club rides
- Advocated / attended meetings for trails/ facilities



Until recently, the club has had a closed Facebook group, which now has 518 members. The new open Facebook page has 124 followers. These pages are used to share;

- Club information/ updates
- Cycling information
- Educational videos and much more



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A range of opportunities have been discussed regarding hosting events, competitions teams and new targeted programs which will be incorporated into the plan.

The club has offered a membership through AusCycling which includes a club component. The club now has 60 members.

Project Context

East Gippsland Shire, in south-east Victoria, is the second largest municipality by area in Victoria.

The Shire includes an extensive coastline, major lakes and river systems, rugged high country, extensive national parks and state forests. About 75% of the Shire is public land held as National and State reserves. The main commercial centre is Bairnsdale, a three-hour drive from Melbourne.

The shire's economy is based on tourism, agriculture, horticulture, forestry and fishing. The estimated population in 2020 was 47,725 and is centred around the Gippsland Lakes area. Together with the Buchan Caves, these are a great attraction to visitors and retirees.

The 2019–20 Eastern Victorian bushfires were significant. Lives were lost, thousands of people displaced, and numerous communities temporarily isolated.

The bushfires were unlike any previous fire events because they burned over many months and occurred alongside bushfires across the eastern seaboard and other parts of Australia.

- On 21 November 2019, more than 150 fires had ignited, with 2,000 firefighters and 500 trucks on the ground.
- On 30 December 2019 fires impacted communities in Buchan, Bruthen, Clifton Creek and Sarsfield with many structures lost and significant impacts to these small communities.
- On 31 December 2019, approximately 4,000 people were forced to shelter on the Mallacoota foreshore as fire threatened the town. Over the next 2 days almost 2,000 were evacuated by air and sea.
- On 2 January 2020, a State of Disaster was declared in parts of Victoria that would last 10 days.
- More than 60,000 people are estimated to have evacuated East Gippsland as a result of the warnings and the State of Disaster declaration.



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- When all significant fires across Victoria had been contained in February 2020, more than 1.5 million hectares had been burnt:
 - More than half of the East Gippsland LGA was burnt (1.1 million hectares).

Mountain biking in East Gippsland

Prior to 2018, mountain biking was growing at a slow but steady pace in East Gippsland.

Facilities had been developed over a number of years and most trail maintenance was carried out or funded by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), with contributions from a small group of volunteers in the MTB community.

Relatively low numbers of riders on the trails meant pressure on the facilities and maintenance requirements were fairly minimal. The most significant issues revolved around trail user conflicts, such as motorbike/horse riders using dedicated MTB trails, or vandalism due to an irregular presence of legitimate users in places like Boys Camp at Mt Taylor.

Significant and swift development of local facilities commenced in early 2018, conceived and funded by DELWP. This included the construction of Flow Tk, Big Emu, Tip Run, Southern Cross expansion, Beginners Loop at Colquhoun in the space of 18 months. The picnic area at Mt Taylor also underwent works to reduce vandalism and make the area more enticing to all visitors.

The new trails achieved a sustained growth in usage, while Mt Taylor also increased in popularity with user for a range of activities, including walks, family picnics and camping.

However, communication from DELWP indicated that funding and resource allocation for MTB facilities had essentially dried up. This news, combined with the growing popularity of the sport, led to concerns about the sustainability and future of the trail facilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to an explosive growth in mountain biking as traditional team sports faced significant participation restrictions and more people sought local recreation opportunities. Similar growth was noted in the number of other non-MTB users sharing the same facilities.

This rapid increase in popularity has raised a number of new challenges for the sustainability of facilities and culture of mountain biking locally, and the club has formed at an opportune time to help shape a positive and sustainable future.



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AusCycling

As the peak body, AusCycling represents more than 52,000 members across BMX, BMX Freestyle, Cyclo-Cross, E-Sport, Mountain Bike, Para-Cycling, Road, Track and Lifestyle (recreational and commuter) riding throughout Australia.

The organisation is experiencing its largest growth in cycling in its history and is determined to seize the opportunity.

“Our vision is to make Australia a nation of bike riders, to advocate for our riders’ safety, build strong club communities and to make all forms of cycling accessible to everyone be it on a track, off a jump, in the great Australian bush or on the road.”

Under the Auscycling banner is Ride Nation, which is the place where the cycling community comes to connect, learn, improve and have fun. Wherever you are on your riding journey, Ride Nation is the marketplace for programs, activities, events and adventures that suit your needs.

Local investment has been directed into Ride Nation- Gippsland as a way to support more participation in riding across the region, which is closely aligned to work being undertaken by Destination Gippsland to promote tourism opportunities through cycling.

The Gippsland Mountain Biking Club was created in 2008 and has been the main club catering for mountain biking in Gippsland for many years. There is a connection between the two organisations and it will be important to further define this in the years to come.

Cycling Infrastructure

Existing Facilities in East Gippsland

Nowa Nowa MTB Park

This dedicated mountain bike park is built on a hill and sculpted with trails surrounded by beguiling bushland.

The natural slope of each trail empowers competent riders to tackle arching corners, log roll overs and little booters with finesse.

Includes 35km of trails: 20km of mountain bike trails and 15km of dual-purpose tracks – walking and cycling. Track: Rough dirt track

Grade: Level 1–3





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Colquhoun MTB Park



Facilities just out of Lakes Entrance include a Pump Track - 0.1km Located right at the trailhead car park - and a mini BMX track which is great for kids of all ages.

MTB Tracks include: Reed Track - 7km which is a shared pedestrian path offers the option of creating a circuit using the Limestone Box Forest Trail and the Gippsland Lakes Discovery Trail (GLDT) and Scalectic Loop (15.5km) - this loop is a very well developed XC (cross country) track. The track starts off as winding single track through the bush. The Lollipop section is an awesome length of descending rollercoaster dips. It features log jumps, natural stump holes, a and b line jumps, bermed corners and over a dozen timber bridges over the gullies.

Mt Taylor

Mt Taylor Mountain Bike Park includes 30km of trails.

This mountain biking wonderland has extreme, intermediate and cross country tracks, including a new 5km ascending track taking you to the summit of the mountain.

There is easy vehicle access as well to help riders enjoy sculptured flowing tracks back down. There are walking and tough running tracks in the park also.



WILD WINTER ENDURO
SUNDAY 29TH AUGUST
MOUNT TAYLOR



U13 - All Mountain & Southern Cross Descent
Junior & Senior - All Mountain & Time to Drop 7
Tip Run

ONLINE REGISTRATIONS ONLY
REGISTRATION OPENS SOON



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The facilities are mostly rough dirt tracks, rocky in sections which are perfect for club and regional events.

Grade: Level 1–3



Advocacy

There is a great deal of strategic and advocacy work for cycling infrastructure by a range of organisations across Gippsland.

The Gippsland Tracks and Trails Feasibility Study is an initiative of the Gippsland Local Government Network (GLGN) with project partners Destination Gippsland Pty Ltd. The study identifies pathway and cycling infrastructure needs across Gippsland, which has resulted in significant investment in recent years.

Along with the infrastructure work, there is a Gippsland Trails Forum (steering group) with representatives from all key stakeholders to progress many related issues including trail maintenance, events, facility development, marketing and tourism opportunities.

Additionally, there are a number of specific plans that identify facility development projects which are at various stages of funding applications and constructions.

MTBEG can be a supporter of the important work already being undertaken and discussed but bring local knowledge and people power to projects identified for East Gippsland.

The Omeo Mountain Bike Destination project has reached its first practical milestone with the completion of a Pump Track and Skills Course opening just in time for the summer school holidays. The pump track, which has been funded by the East



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Gippsland Shire Council, is part of a \$4 million project to position Omeo as an alpine and high-country adventure hub.

The Victorian Government has committed \$1 million to Stage 1 that will include 55 kilometres of cross country and gravity trails of varying difficulty, for beginners to dedicated mountain bike enthusiasts. From Mt Sam's Peak, through the State Forest and Oriental Claims historic area, all trails culminate in the picturesque Livingstone Park and Omeo Township.

There is also strategic work to support new mountain bike trails in Mallacoota in the future.





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SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was developed in consultation with the Committee after review of the survey results and stakeholder feedback.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ New and enthusiastic committee ➤ Welcoming Club culture ➤ MTB Infrastructure located locally ➤ Commercial partners on the committee ➤ Governance focus ➤ Grant writing ➤ Links to AusCycling frameworks ➤ Gender balance in committee and membership ➤ Members have broad interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Operation of the club to date during COVID restrictions, following significant bushfires ➤ Marketing & promotion has been limited ➤ Geographic spread of club members. It can be difficult to service face to face activities ➤ No physical club house/ site presence ➤ Role/ function of the club and its volunteers is still new/ unclear or very broad
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Partnering with a broad range of stakeholders to advocate for facilities and investment ➤ Ride Nation platform ➤ Community Tourism Benefit ➤ New programs and events ➤ External funding opportunities including sponsorship ➤ Growth in cycling participation ➤ Strong relationships with other local clubs/ organisations ➤ Mt Taylor as a major event location ➤ Membership growth ➤ Education/ information sharing ➤ Share the bike love 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Taking on too much too soon for a volunteer committee ➤ Event Management is a huge undertaking ➤ Unrealistic expectations of what the club can deliver/ lack of planning ➤ Financial sustainability ➤ Confusion between the Gippsland MTB club and any additional clubs the form to new customers or external stakeholders ➤ Lack of maintenance to facilities ➤ Major incident at a club event, this is minimised by risk management practices.



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Strategic Plan

Vision:

“Providing community based, inclusive mountain biking opportunities based in East Gippsland while contributing to the improvement of mountain biking infrastructure and skill development”.

Goals:

Mountain Biking East Gippsland will strive to achieve this vision through the following goals:

1. Attract new members and retain existing members to the Club by providing an inclusive and welcoming experience to all.
2. We will advocate for the sustainable development and management of facilities for mountain biking in East Gippsland, in partnership with our stakeholders.
3. As a community MTB club we are a team and our people are important to us.
4. Sustainable financial performance underpinned by stable governance and documentation.
5. Develop a clear marketing & promotional strategy that reflects the club’s activities and values.

Club Values:

- ✓ Developing the love of riding
- ✓ Cycling skill development
- ✓ Strong links to, and promotion, of East Gippsland
- ✓ Sustainable and responsible growth
- ✓ A safe, fun and inclusive environment for all
- ✓ Regular and effective communication
- ✓ Compliance with AusCycling as the peak body



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Implementation Plan

The following is a series of actions that have been developed in line with the club's objectives and values, to be implemented over the coming five years.

Actions have been given a priority ranking scale using Very High, High, Medium or Low. In some instances, 'ongoing' has been allocated as these tasks are required on a regular basis.

A separate monitoring document has been developed to read in conjunction with this plan that allocates responsibility for tasks and progress made.

Goal 1: Attract new members and retain existing members to the Club by providing an inclusive and welcoming experience to all.

1.1	Clarify the new members process and welcoming procedure. Promote this to recruit new members by explaining the benefit to all. Link to AusCycling resources.	Very High
1.2	Develop an annual events calendar, incorporating social rides, races and trail maintenance days across East Gippsland, and communicate clearly on what is involved, including a roster for volunteers.	Very High
1.3	Consider ways to partner with the Cycling Coaches/ business/ Ride Nation & GippSport to offer formal programs and or education sessions.	High
1.4	Ensure club promotional materials and information are easy to read and reflect a broad demographic of users.	High
1.5	Continue to try new strategies to welcome community social members.	Medium
1.6	Target specific areas for membership/ program growth i.e. women, Access for All Abilities, social and design information and options that will better meet their needs.	High
1.7	Develop and deliver social functions that focus primarily on club building, rather than income generation. This is currently a low priority for members.	Ongoing



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Goal 2: We will advocate for the sustainable development and management of facilities for mountain biking in East Gippsland, in partnership with our stakeholders.

2.1	Provide input into all Council/ cycling master planning/ asset management projects with justification to help advocate for the development and maintenance of future facilities.	Medium
2.2	Ensure Council/ DELWP facility hire / event agreement conditions are met and provide feedback about what is needed by the club to improve their use and any documentation.	Medium
2.3	Have regular ongoing communication with Gippsland MTB. Clarify their role in EG and how groups can work together. Consider how satellite programs can be offered in EG i.e. Mallacoota to cater for new areas rather than new clubs.	Very High
2.4	Explore other options for community partnerships that would be of mutual benefit, i.e. reciprocal memberships, shared services or programs including schools and service providers.	Medium
2.5	Implement appropriate meeting processes to ensure conflicts of interest are identified, recorded and managed, and that roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined.	High
2.6	Explore ways to host future MTB events or other multi-sport events to generate participation opportunities, income and activity with suitable partners.	Medium
2.7	Consider how the club could provide opportunities for members to practice for, and participate and represent the club in, competitions, in line with the club's values and budget.	Low



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Goal 3: As a community MTB club we are a team and our people are important to us.

3.1	Further develop/ review the club organisational structure and document, in line with industry standards and the club's needs. Review every six months to ensure the workload is shared across the organisation.	High
3.2	We recognise, thank and value the contribution of all volunteers.	Very High
3.3	Consider the appointment of a Volunteer Coordinator to monitor and support all work completed by volunteers. This role could develop and manage the volunteer roster especially for working bees or future events	Medium
3.4	Develop role descriptions for all volunteers to ensure their workload is clear, realistic and achievable and aligned to the club strategic plan.	High
3.5	Ensure AusCycling standard policies and procedures – Code of Conduct, Child Safety, Member protection etc. – continued to be utilised and are regularly reviewed and updated as needed to ensure everyone is safe and any issues are dealt with promptly and with clearly documented processes.	High
3.6	Run club training/ education sessions for volunteers, members and parents to promote important current sport practices, good governance and club policies.	Medium
3.7	Ensure volunteers are not burnt out by taking on significant projects.	Very High
3.8	Develop a Trail Etiquette or Ride Code of Conduct to guide the way club members engage while riding on the trails.	High



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Goal 4: Sustainable financial performance underpinned by stable governance and documentation.

4.1	Ensure all expenditure is matched with a detailed business proposal or in line with the club budget.	Very High
4.2	Develop a long term financial plan that determines the amount of income required through grants, sponsorship or fundraising. Be targeted in these efforts. Then develop strategies for what is needed i.e. sponsorship proposal.	High
4.3	Benchmark fees against similar clubs, increase with CPI.	High
4.4	Utilise the Strategic Plan to make future decisions and measure performance annually. Formally update the plan after five years.	High
4.5	Monitor industry and Council policy, programs, procedures, strategies and plans that provide opportunities for the Club and implement where possible to strengthen club operations.	Ongoing as needed
4.6	Implement good governance practices including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Committee calendar of activities ➤ Member feedback surveys/ processes ➤ Sound meeting procedures ➤ Risk Management processes ➤ Committee succession planning ➤ Consumer Affairs paperwork 	Ongoing



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- 4.7** Utilise and develop use of the AusCycling/ Ride Nation system and analyse information that it can provide to the club. Know and understand who the club's members/ participants are and track this. Very High
-

Goal 5: Develop a clear marketing and promotional strategy that reflects the club's activities and values.

5.1	Develop a more functional and user-friendly website, while expanding on use of social media platforms to promote the club and facilities to a wide and varied audience. Consider tools to help manage multi-channel communication needs.	Very High
5.2	Continue to communicate to all members and stakeholders, especially good news stories, via a succinct newsletter. Formalise this into a communications plan.	High
5.3	Communicate with members clearly and regularly using their preferred method.	High
5.4	Investigate cloud-based software for filing and record keeping to enable volunteers and staff to work flexibly and remotely.	Medium
5.5	Review/ develop all club documentation to ensure it represents the club's culture and values.	Ongoing
5.6	Communicate the club's vision so members have realistic expectations about how the club can be managed and developed in the future.	Very High
5.7	Utilise the member feedback results to produce club merchandise to raise funds, create identity and profile.	High



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WOMEN'S BEGINNER MTB SKILLS CLINIC

POWERED BY SPOR TAUS
INITIATIVE OF AUSCYCLING

FURTHER INFORMATION & REGISTRATION AVAILABLE VIA THE LINK

SUPPORTED BY:



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MAY 2021

BAIRNSDALE, VIC

FREE
OPEN TO WOMEN AND
GIRLS 16 YEARS +

- * Learn new bike skills
- * Learn about the equipment and how to look after it
- * Meet new people
- * Give aways

LET'S RIDE TOGETHER

Appendix

1. Summarised Survey Results

Disclaimer of liability

The information contained in this report is intended for the specific use of the key stakeholders that have provided input into this planning project. All recommendations by GippSport are based on information provided by or on behalf of the committee, AusCycling and other stakeholders and it has relied upon such information being correct at the time this report has been prepared.

Readers should note this report may include implicit projections about the future, which, by their nature, are uncertain and cannot be relied upon. They are dependent on potential events or technical assessments, which have not yet occurred.

References

The following references have been used in the development of this report:

- Government websites – Planning scheme data and maps, grant information.
- East Gippsland Shire Council website and relevant planning documents.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics – Population data.
- AusCycling resources
- Other Recreation studies and strategies as identified in the document