



# Bassendean Green Trail

## Pilot project evaluation summary | 2023

### Project background

#### Overview

In 2020, the State Government began construction on a principal shared path (PSP) next to the Success Hill Train Station, closing the final gap in the Perth to Midland PSP. As part of the project, the Department of Transport (DoT), Main Roads WA (MRWA) and the Town of Bassendean (the Town) developed the [Green Route pilot project](#) (the Bassendean Green Trail) to add native landscaping to the area along the new path and broader route.

#### Consultation and engagement

Concept design options were developed for the path alignment to run along Railway Parade and an engagement process was undertaken to present the concepts to the community. This process established that tree loss was a contentious issue in the community and without providing a solution for mitigating tree loss, progression of the project was not feasible.

DoT proposed the Green Route initiative, which aimed to blend path infrastructure with local surroundings, to create a more pleasant walking and riding experience by increasing natural landscaping, shade, shelter and amenity. Funding provided by DoT and MRWA allowed the Town to deliver two key features of the Green Trail, which included engaging a landscape architect to design a **greening scheme** and an **art installation** providing an interactive path user experience.

#### Greening scheme

Through the engagement process, the Town was able to identify opportunities for community participation, which included planting along the route. Community planting started with a community tree planting day, where residents assisted in the installation of street trees along the PSP. Students from La Salle College also participated in planting days. Over 6,000 plants have been planted, extending from the river end of Railway Parade to Bassendean Train Station, to create a scenic walking and riding route, provide local cooling benefits and provide additional habitat within the Town.

#### Art installation

Bassendean Green Trail Gallery is a digital art trail showcasing the talents of young, local artists with the aim of creating moments of engagement for the trail. Between First and Third Avenue, artworks created by Cyril Jackson senior campus art students are on display, accessed by a QR code. Each artwork is designed in collaboration with a sound artist, to create an evocative experience whilst walking along the pathway.



## Evaluation

In 2022, DoT commissioned Solidaria, an independent consultant, to undertake an evaluation of the Bassendean Green Trail initiative, using qualitative research and produce a case study report on the initiative.



Image caption – Bassendean Green Trail Gallery [Source: Photos taken during evaluation] and Community planting [Source: Town of Bassendean website]

## Document purpose

This document is intended to provide a summary of the key outcomes of the qualitative evaluation of the Bassendean Green Trail pilot project.

## Methodology

A qualitative social research approach was used for the evaluation. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with key project stakeholders, including community members, agency stakeholders, school staff, artists and PSP users.

## Key findings

A summary of the key findings from the stakeholder interviews has been provided below, in no particular order of importance. The full evaluation report is also available.

**The benefits of the Green Route were strongly recognised** – One of the key benefits cited was the separation of modes, as this created an increased sense of safety. Participants cited various reasons for using the path (and varied modes of use) including local exercise, leisure and social activities and access to nature, local businesses, work and other places.

Some of the key benefits cited by participants:

- Improved amenity of the path, physical; visual; thermal; and sensory comfort, resulting in well-being and physical and mental health benefits.
- Increased trips, and the likelihood of trips, by active modes.
- Improved social interaction opportunities, intergenerational respect and enhanced sense of security.
- Improved transport linkages and created safer active transport opportunities with greater accessibility for people of all ages and abilities.
- Improved natural habitat, local ecology and climate resilience.
- Improved expression of and connection to place identity and local distinctiveness.

**The importance of authentic community inclusion in the process** – Community members want to be consulted and need to feel heard. They want to be a part of the process and take an active role crafting alternatives and choosing a solution. Community sentiment became more positive once the community felt heard and were invited to share their views and participate. Allowing the community to be an active stakeholder, early in the process, increases acceptance and ownership of the project.

**The approach to community engagement needs to be tailored** – The engagement approach needs to be tailored to the type of infrastructure being built and be responsive to community needs. The initial community reaction to the PSP project showed that more responsive, personal and extensive engagement was required for the project to proceed satisfactorily. Agencies were required to respond in a flexible way and play different but complementary roles. The community recognised efforts by agencies to communicate and respond to community feedback, and reported feeling heard because of the revised engagement approach and the efforts made to involve the community in delivering the Green Route initiative.

**A strong understanding and respect for community and place** – A highly nuanced understanding of how projects can deliver across interconnected social, cultural and environmental outcomes, while also reflecting and respecting place identity and authentically involving and uniting different groups in the community, was considered a necessary approach to creating a constructive processes and positive results. Extensive, early engagement with stakeholders who have this understanding is valuable to providing insight into the local context and community values.

## Lessons learnt

The evaluation report highlighted the following lessons and insights which could be considered in the planning and implementation of future active transport projects:

- Community intolerance of tree loss is here to stay, along with strong support for native planting along active transport routes to create shade, amenity and habitat.
- A lack of understanding of the local context increases the risk of negative community reactions and can create additional time, resources and effort. More extensive early engagement with Local Government Authorities can help ameliorate this risk, helping shape a successful project from the outset.
- Considering cultural and social elements of places where projects are planned can reduce project risks. They can become assets that create novel engagement opportunities, enhance project outcomes and build community ownership.
- The community can be constructive participants in infrastructure design processes, even when projects get off to a shaky start. Communities value authentic and responsive engagement, and this influences project acceptance.
- Active transport project delivery is not the same as road infrastructure building; its impact is experienced as more personal to local communities. Therefore, a collaborative engagement approach and partnership with community stakeholders is required to produce the best possible outcome for everyone.

## Conclusion

The Bassendean Green Trail evaluation showed the Green Route initiative offers significant benefits which are recognised by the community, and the outcomes achieved in Bassendean suggest it could be successful elsewhere. The route has produced significant improvements to amenity and experiences on the PSP and people reported it makes them more likely to use active modes of travel.

Notably, there was unanimous support among respondents for implementing more [Green Routes](#) in Western Australia along active transport routes, and this approach could be considered for integration into future projects.

The findings demonstrate that the Bassendean Green Trail initiative successfully addressed negative community sentiment and improved community engagement and project acceptance. Early engagement is vital and involving the community in the planning, designing and installation of active transport projects can enrich people’s connections to new infrastructure, their sentiment and usage.



**Image caption – Bassendean Green Trail Path [Source: Photos taken during evaluation]**

“For me, it was the people coming out and congratulating the kids and thanking them [for planting the Green Trail]. And I mean, it’s beautiful. So on many levels it’s impacted people. It’s impacted the people that live there. It’s impacted me and my family because it’s where we walk and it’s made it such a nicer place. It’s impacted the kids that actually took part in it with pride and their interest and joining them as a group. So it’s just, I mean, it’s a win, win, win, win.”

*Source: School Interview*

“It’s got beautiful trees, birds, bees, flowers, and all sorts of stuff, you know, and you can talk to people.”

*Source: Path user interview*

“What we really learned here was that you cannot [just inform the community] with active transport infrastructure. It’s more tangible to people. It’s in their face, it’s in their backyard. They’re walking on it, they’re walking their dog on it, and so the intrinsic connection between people is a lot more personal than on a road project.”

*Source: Agency Interview*

**Image caption – Quotes taken from the stakeholder interviews**